

GREET THE EKKLESIA IN YOUR HOUSE

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Victor Choudhrie has been a cancer surgeon. He studied medicine at Christian Medical College in Vellore. After his marriage to Bindu, he went abroad for further training in surgery and was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Colleges of UK, the American and International Colleges of Surgeons. He returned to India after 8 years in the UK, and served for 18 years in a rural mission hospital in the small, tribal village Padhar, of Betul district (M.P.). Later he was invited to serve as Director (CEO) of the prestigious Christian Medical College, in Ludhiana, Punjab. In 1992, he and his wife began a full time church planting ministry. The Lord is blessing this ministry and already a megashift is taking place from the traditional church to the house church movement throughout India and the world.

Jesus mandated His church to go and make disciples of all nations, baptize and equip them to go the ends of the earth as His witnesses. The apostate institutional church disobeyed, built extra-biblical structures, persecuted and murdered her own people by the millions. However, the true church survived throughout the ages as a remnant in secret little house churches. The purpose of writing this book is to start a critical dialogue for a “radical restructuring of the church”, to remove the stranglehold of extra-biblical structures and to restore the original New Testament model, that merges with the culture of the people and resonates with the will of God. Although the book is written in the context of the Indian subcontinent, the basic church planting principles are applicable universally.

A traditional Christian is a passive listener and not a passionate doer. Instead of standing in the gap for the lost nations, he is standing in a corner. He has foolishly built his house upon the quicksand of rituals and traditions- the rains descend, the floods come, the winds blow and his house is washed away. (John 14:24; Matt. 15:9)

A Great Commission Christian resonates with the will of God and obeys the commandments of Jesus, to love each other and to go and make disciples. He has wisely built his house upon The Rock (Jesus) - with gold and silver and precious stones and not with wood, hay and straw and the fires descend but his house does not burn but stands firm. (John 13: 34, 35; 14: 21, 23; 1 Cor. 3:11-17)

You shall know them by their fruits. (Matt. 7:16, 20; 24-27)

THE BIG PICTURE

IT IS TIME FOR CHANGE

God's Vision: All tongues and tribes will stand before His throne and worship Him (Rev. 7:9,10). Jesus changed His heavenly life-style to fulfill His Father's vision. He trained disciples and commissioned them to make disciples of all nations. He commanded them to be His witnesses (Greek=martyrs) to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES: Systems and structures are set up to accomplish a specific purpose. If the primary purpose of a church is worship, then a special worship building, a special day for worship such as Sunday, professionals especially trained to lead worship, financial structures (tithing) to maintain the system, and finally a church government to administer. None of these is to be found in the NT!

MANAGING CHANGE: If the real purpose of the Ekklesia is to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord, which is to go and make disciples of all nations, then specific systems and structures have to be set up to accomplish that task. For this, we need large numbers of especially skilled in disciple making, church planting, lucid communication, team building, networking and empowering common people, to make the strategy actionable. Ultimately, success depends on the quality and the quantity of the ordinary believers. We need to develop different financial (sharing material blessings with the needy) and administrative structures (bivocational elders) and constant evaluation to monitor progress. This requires radical restructuring of the church.

CHANGE OR PERISH: The traditional church might be too old to tango with the NT Bride, but she must change from the conventional to the covenant church and from playing church to planting churches. The existing system cannot be put through the scanner by those who are inside the structure. This would be like asking a drug addict to be the drug controller. Outsiders can identify strengths, weaknesses, processes, train talent and induct crisis management teams. Change is resisted because of the threat of losing control and power. But change is a sign of growth and therefore, inevitable. It is wise to identify the engines of change, otherwise the modern church is heading for the back seat of the bus. The church should be exploding into the world but if it does not change, there is always the danger of implosion from within.

CHANGE HAS A PRICE TAG: When a Jew became a Messianic Jew, he gave up the temple, the synagogue, the Sabbath, the circumcision and the sacrifices. He started fellowships in homes, saturated the city with the gospel, suffered persecution and often became a refugee. When a person of another faith becomes a Christian, he not only gives up the focal points of his religion, but also often loses his family, the community, and sometimes even his life. (Gal. 2:20)

THE MEGASHIFT: A wide-angle snapshot shows that in spite of many weaknesses and inadequacies, an awesome global spiritual megashift is quietly taking place from the visible traditional church to the largely invisible but vigorously performing newly emerging house Ekklesias. There are three sets of major game players in this metamorphosis. Firstly, the **Intercessors** are fasting, praying and marching on their knees. Secondly, the **Prayer Walkers** are bulldozing the bastions of the Devil. Thirdly, the **Apostolics** who believe that the saturation church planting of the planet earth is doable and are going among unheard of people in unimaginable places. Many are illiterate, faceless, nobodies, with amazing flexibility, creativity and entrepreneurship. The rest of us, who are involved in this exciting movement are mere appendages.

THE CHURCH NEEDS OVERHAULING: Another kaleidoscopic snapshot shows the malfunctioning flaccid traditional church with an atavistic mind set, needing to change from a defensive, protectionist and isolationist position, into a ready, willing, able and united to take the world by storm. Non-playing captains, who have never sullied their hands and feet in the mud and slush of the harvest fields, have coached the game players who are already psyched out. They do not have game plans for expanding the global or local frontiers of the Kingdom. Global evangelism requires global minded people. For this, the church has to give up egos, logos, titles and change from event, celebrity and dignitary orientation to a process and purpose driven church. The process includes, humbly learning from godly men and women in the harvest fields, who genuinely and spontaneously resonate a faith, character, commitment and tenacity, necessary for changing the world.

THE CHALLENGE: The blueprint for the NT Ekklesia is radically different from the traditional model. It is not just semantics and terminology but a complete change in form and function. Proper mentoring and true priesthood of all believers cannot be practiced in a large congregation, but only in a small group dynamic. This book is especially written for the *pundits* (priests) and devotees, obsessed with the temple and its dogmas. Some will find it amusing, others informative, yet others will be infuriated, but hopefully some will find it disturbing enough to change their religious thinking and practices. It is not written to criticize pastors or the leaders. There are many godly men, who genuinely love and “*zealously serve the Lord*, according to the traditions, *but not according to knowledge*” (Rom. 10:2; Prov. 19:2). It is the office and the role of the biblical pastor in the Scriptures and history, which is being put through the scanner.

CHURCH OR EKKLESIA? The word “church” is badly mired in confusion and immediately conjures up in the mind, a building, Sunday service, reverends, traditions, tithes, pulpit, pews, programs etc. All these are idols, founded on the quicksand of human ingenuity and not on The Rock, or the Scriptures. The modern church is so consumed with idolatry that it cannot worship without these idols. However, the Ekklesia of Jesus is just a gathering of God’s people, who do not need any of those paraphernalia to function. There are many children of Issachar in the traditional churches today, who understand the times and know that the church needs to claw its way back to the original NT values (1 Chron. 12:32). This book is written to encourage such people to catch the vision and run with it. (Hab. 2:1-3)

Whatever you are today is the product of your vision. Get vision and run with it or else perish. A vision that cannot be implemented is hallucination. The face of Christendom is changing rapidly from a structured monolith to more and more apostolic, like the Book of Acts.

Jesus likes His “oikos” or the dwelling place to be full. He wants us to go out quickly into the highways and byways of the city and bring in the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind, the disabled, the handicapped, the infirm, the hurting, the sick, the mutilated and the mangled and the rejects of the society.

Jesus likes to make our homes His house of prayer, where “all nations” can be disciplined.

The modern church is a barrier and a black hole for the 99% of the disadvantaged of this world. (Luke 14:21-23; Mark 11:17)

THE AIM

DO NOT INVENT - JUST DISCOVER THE VISION: The church suffers from severe amnesia when it comes to fulfilling her mission to complete the task of the Great Commission. The delinquent church thinks that the people out there need to “come” to be church. But, Jesus commanded His Ekklesia to “go” and make disciples of all nations, and send them to the ends of the earth. Jesus called us to follow Him and become “*fishers of men*.” Going and making disciples must supersede all the other activities of the Church. While the demand for disciples is open ended and limitless, the evangelization of the world is bottlenecked because of severe shortfall of disciple makers. Tragically, this is not due to lack of resources but because the church is sitting on a colossal gold mine of untapped resources decaying in the pews. We do not have to reinvent the vision, just discover it and act.

PAUL FOUGHT THE TRADITIONALISTS: As Paul went on his missionary journeys, his enemies followed him everywhere and pressurized the emerging Ekklesias to adopt the Jewish traditions. Paul spent much time and effort, including writing to the Ekklesias, fighting against traditions. It is said that Paul’s famous “*thorn in the flesh*” were these traditionalists who had vowed to kill him. Beelzebub means “*the lord of the flies*”, who goes around dividing the house of God. It is time we went around with fly swatters, systematically swatting the demons of tradition, which cause division in the church (Luke 17:21; Matt. 12:24,25; 1 Tim. 4:1). The main obstacle to world evangelization is the multiplicity of extra-biblical traditions, which “*make the gospel of no effect*”. Jesus said, “*Why do you transgress the commandments of God with your traditions ... and make the commandments of God of no effect by your traditions...teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matt. 15:3-9). It is time to sweep out the rubbish of traditions into a trashcan and foil the plans of the enemy who keeps derailing the process of world evangelization.

CULTURAL OBSTACLES TO CHANGE: 200 years ago, William Carey came to North India; however, less than 1% accepted Christianity. The West is programmed and organized to death. The Western life-style has been adopted in education, administration and business but the church subculture is diametrically opposed to the oriental religious *laissez-faire* culture and failed to impact 99% of the people. This church/community culture gap must be bridged through an alternative indigenous church culture. Non-Christians have great regard for Jesus, but they have rejected the modern church, a symbol of Western culture, colonialism and slavery. We can remain embedded in the Western system and be permanently impaired in changing the destiny of this nation. India is now politically independent. This could be India’s finest defining moment, if she moved into spiritual independence from the Western “spiritual colonizers”. Jesus promised liberty to the captives, which is one step further: to stand in one’s God-given destiny and mission and be interdependent with other nations (ethne), doing likewise. We must develop simple, unambiguous strategy for communicating in the local language and cultural symbols that resonate with the target audience.

SWADESHI (INDIGENOUS) EKKLESIA IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR: There is an urgent need to push through the reform process in the church. Instead of the Western or the South Korean models, we should be looking at the Chinese model, which has surged past all the others. The churches should cobble a common vision statement, to act as a spring board

and craft an effective delivery system that takes the gospel to the masses in their own cultural context. Culture is a major stumbling block. Any attempt to indigenize is dubbed as syncretistic. Actually, it is the other way around - we have syncretized with the Western suburban and self-centered individualistic culture, whereas Christianity is a community and a shared-life culture. The goal of the church is to establish faith communities. Eastern culture of clans and ethnic groups, lends beautifully to impact the entire “*ta ethne*” or the communities. Christianity went from the East to the West and there is no valid reason why the winds of reform should not blow from here to there.

JESUS WAS A MASTER STORY TELLER: The West has a ‘book culture’, whereas in the East, vast majority are illiterate with an “oral culture.” Fortunately 75% of the Bible consists of stories and with poetry and Proverbs added, only 10% of the Bible is abstract intellectual stuff. Most of the people that Jesus dealt, were either illiterate or semiliterate. He took 12 of them and turned the world upside down. Paul took the semiliterate Jews from the synagogues and used them as a bridge to plant churches among the illiterate Gentiles. The Western communication model can cater only to 10% of the elite, while Jesus taught all the foundational as well as the profound theological principles through stories, testimonies and parables. (Matt. 13:34)

THE EKKLESIA GLORIFIES GOD THROUGH DISCIPLING THE NATIONS: The Hindu fundamentalists have 75,000 *shakhas* or training centers, where they make disciples by the thousands. The Muslims have 300,000 schools called *Madrassas*, to indoctrinate the young about *Jihad* or the holy war. From their perspective, they are victimized and the West is decadent and immoral, ready to be vivisected and purified by Islam. Fundamentalist Hindus, Muslims and even Buddhists, are breeding a huge army of militants, in the East and especially in the liberal West, ready to die to reap the harvest of hate. The modern church, however, suffers from profound amnesia that making disciples is, her mission and mandate. It is the *raison d’etre* or the reason for her existence.

WHAT IS AN OFFENCE? An obstacle or an offence in the Bible means digging a trench and setting a trap for someone to fall in, just as hunters trap an animal. The punishment for this deliberate act of being an offence is so awesome that it would be better to have a millstone hung around the neck and be drowned in the deep sea. Jesus came “*to save that which was lost.*” Our most urgent task is to remove all obstacles that are preventing a fast and free flow of lost people into the kingdom. The local Ekklesia should have a caring and sharing image that anyone hurting should head straight for her, just like the sick people who head for the hospital and find both, solace and also salvation. (Matt. 18:6-11)

IN SEARCH OF HOLY GRAILS: Emperor Constantine’s mother, Queen Helena in circa 325, went to Jerusalem in search of the Grail from which Jesus and His disciples drank the wine during the last supper. Fortunately, she did not find it as she was hoping to make it an iconic object of worship. In this book, we search the origins of sacred grails like the buildings, the Sunday worship, the authority to baptize, to serve the Holy Communion, the role of women, the place of hierarchy, a one-man show or fivefold ministry gifts, speaking in tongues, Christian festivals and many other controversial subjects. All the statements in this book either have Biblical basis or gleaned from known history.

DISMANTLE THE EXISTING STRUCTURES TO MOVE FORWARD: Moses met God face to face in a portable tent called the Tabernacle of Meeting (Exod. 33:7-11), which was dismantled and pitched again as they moved from place to place. A paradigm shift or radical

restructuring is traumatic. If it changes from the top by consensus, then the transition is smooth but if it starts from the bottom, then it is coercive and revolutionary, which can lead to bitterness and violence. Changes, which are sweeping the planet, require maximizing transitioning process for dismantling the existing structures and pitch our tents in unreached regions so that the Great Commission will not remain a great omission. A Messianic Jew went through agonizing transition. He had to abandon the temple, the Sabbath, circumcision, sacrifices, the feasts, the Levitical priesthood, kosher meat and even his hairstyle. Worse still, he had to stop hating the Gentiles, stoning sinners to death and instead loving them. For this, he was persecuted by a very hostile community.

RETURN TO THE SIMPLICITY OF THE NT EKKLESIA: Our sacred buildings, need to be converted into debating halls of Tyrannus where seekers can reason all day long, so that all the world can hear the gospel. (Luke 18:22; Acts 19:9,10). Secondly, we need to release the professional clergy to be tent makers and empower them to become truly royal priests. The Sunday religious cacophony must be replaced with daily informal Gatherings for rapid discipling of the nations.

THE STAKES ARE HIGH: The spiritual epicenter is rapidly shifting from the traditional visible church to the exploding house Ekklesia movements, where the process of massive nuclear fission has already gone critical, beyond the point of no return. Jesus is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, as never before by daily adding nuclear fuel to the fire. The church does not need sporadic tame renewal or revival but transition from “sounding brass” to radical restructuring. The stakes are high with no other soft options for world evangelization. The open agenda of the church should be to dismantle existing unscriptural structures and replace them with new wineskins for the new wine. (Jer. 1:10; Matt. 9:17)

RELOCATING THE EKKLESIA: The golden lampstand provided light in the Holy of Holies. Everything in the room was fashioned according to the pattern God had given to Moses (Exo. 25:31-40; 40:24). Gold is precious and speaks of value. We are now the precious possession of God (1Pet.2:9). The oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Without oil, there will be no fire in the lamp. Without the Holy Spirit, the Ekklesia will have no fire and no light. The six branches coming out, all equal in height, represent the unity in plurality. The Ekklesia has multiple charismata, all of which must be allowed to function as equals. The almond blossom on the rod of Aaron represents the priestly authority and the fruitfulness of the Ekklesia. Jesus called the Ekklesia, the lampstand and us, the light of the world (Rev. 1:20; Matt. 5:14-16). He took the lampstand (Ekklesia) out from the *sanctum sanctorum* and relocated it in the homes of the people (1 Thess. 5:5). We, the little lights, have the potential not only to light a home but also light thousands of lampstands in the homes of the people.

YOU SAY IT IS FOUR MONTHS, BUT I SAY THE HARVEST READY NOW: The Lord commands, “*this gospel of the kingdom be preached throughout the whole world, as a witness to all the nations.*” This requires the whole church to go with the whole gospel to the whole world resulting in the *earth getting filled with the knowledge of the glory of God*. Praise God that it is already happening! (John 4:35)

The word “church” is corrupted beyond redemption. It means a building with its infrastructure of reverends, pulpit, pews, tithes, traditions, rituals, programs, professional music and sermons. All of these are idols and therefore, sinful.

The New Testament Ekklesia or the “called out people” require none of the above paraphernalia to worship.

The pulpit is divisive as it stands between the shepherd and the flock.

The pulpit is a den of thieves as it steals the right of the believers and the unbelievers to participate. (Mark 11:17; 1 Cor. 14:23-26, 29-31)

The gap between the pulpit and the pew needs to be abolished by removing the pulpit. (Eze. 22:30, 31)

The pulpit/pew dichotomy has done more damage to the church than any other heresy.

THE NEW TESTAMENT EKKLESIA

THE NEW TESTAMENT EKKLESIA IS THE ORIGINAL MODEL: This book brings out many principles of the New Testament (NT) model of Ekklesia with a brief history of her form and function. It then goes on to tell how the Ekklesia was systematically corrupted over the centuries. No one “went to church”, because they knew that they were the Ekklesia. They met almost daily in the simplicity and intimacy of homes. The network of Congregations in a region functioned as a living organism. The temple, the priests, the Sabbath and all the religious rituals of Jewish and Gentile faiths were gone. The net result was that, even in the face of persecution, the Ekklesia grew and multiplied exponentially.

VISITOR FROM THE JERUSALEM EKKLESIA: Over the centuries, the temple, the priests and the Sabbath have all crept back. If a first century Christian visited us today, he would have difficulty in recognizing this mutant ogre as an Ekklesia. The ornate buildings, the Sunday worship, the sermon, the loud music, institutionalization, tithing to sustain the above structures, fund raising drives for projects, would give an epileptic fit to a visitor from the outer space. Unfortunately, these are now the pillars of the modern church. The visitor will have to go to a 1 Corinthians 14:26 version of a house Ekklesia, to feel comfortable.

LOVE FOR ‘EACH OTHER’ IS THE BENCHMARK: Many people believe that the NT Ekklesia did not have buildings, because they were poor, but that is not the case. Cornelius the centurion, Lydia the seller of purple and the treasurer of Ethiopia, were well off and could have easily built buildings. Even persecution could not stop them from constructing, because persecution was only periodic. The real reason was that the Lord Jesus had given them a new commandment to “*Love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all people know that you are My disciples because you have love for one another.*” (John 13:34,35). The glue of love bonded them, gave them a new identity, set them apart and characterized their whole new way of life.

EXAMPLES OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN HOUSES IN THE NT:

1. Jesus taught at Mary and Martha’s house. (Luke 10:38-42)
2. Jesus healed a paralytic in a house. (Mark 2:1-12)
3. A 12-year-old dead girl was raised in Jairus’ house. (Matt. 9:23-26)
4. Jesus attended a wedding in Cana in a house. (John 2:1-12)
5. Jesus ate in the house of Zacchaeus the tax collector, resulting in his repentance. (Luke 19:1-10)
6. Jesus was anointed with perfume by Mary in the house of Lazarus. (John 12:1-8)
7. The Ekklesia prayed all night in the house of Mary for the release of Peter from jail. (Acts 12:5, 12)
8. Peter went to the house of Cornelius for his first ever meeting in the house of a Gentile. (Acts 10:24)
9. Saul created havoc in the Ekklesia, entering every house and dragging men and women into prison. (Acts 8:3)

10. Paul shared the whole counsel of God in public and from house to house. (Acts 20:20, 27)
11. Paul greets the Congregations in the houses of Priscilla, Apphia, and Nympha. (1 Cor. 16:19, Philem. 2; Col 4:15)
12. Paul dwelt for two years in a rented house in Rome and preached openly before he was executed. (Acts 28:30,31)
13. The first European Ekklesia was planted in Lydia's house at Philippi. (Acts 16:15)
14. Jesus served the Lord's Supper in a house. (Luke 22:10,11)
15. The Holy Spirit descended like tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost, in a house. (Acts 2:1-4)

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NT EKKLESIA AND THE MODERN CHURCH:

1. The NT Ekklesia was communitarian, where everyone shared everything with everybody. The modern church has institutionalized strongly individualistic salvation. (Acts 4:32-35)
2. In the NT times, priesthood of all believers was practiced, while in the modern church only one priest dominates. (Acts 15:22)
3. The NT Ekklesia, ability to question everything was an integral part of Body life. Jesus encouraged this practice. In the modern church, mute acceptance and unquestioning loyalty are encouraged. (Matt. 21:23,24; Acts 17:11,12)
4. In the NT Ekklesia everyone entered His gates with joyfulness, praise and thanksgiving, while in the modern church, members enter with somber faces. (Acts 2:46,47-47; Psalm 100:4)
5. In the NT, breaking bread and eating together was central, while in the modern church, sermon is the focal point. (1 Cor.11:24-26)
6. In the NT , alms were collected for the poor and the itinerant preachers, while the modern church keeps it all. (Gal.2:10; 1 Cor. 16:1-3)
7. The NT Ekklesia appointed practitioners; the modern church ordains theoreticians. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:1,8; James 1:22-27)
8. The NT Ekklesia was open, free, transparent, informal, flexible and chaotic but organized chaos, while the Modern church is highly organized, programmed and institutionalized to fulfill its purpose.
9. The NT Ekklesia was known for fruitfulness while the modern church is known for barrenness. (Acts 2:47; 16:5; 2 Pet. 1:5-11)
10. Women and children actively participated in the Body life of the NT Ekklesia, in the modern church, they have a subservient role.

The true church survived throughout the centuries, not in the cathedrals of the institutionalized apostate church, but in the homes of the believers, through the blood of the martyrs.

Jesus said - wherever two or three congregate in My name, I am present in your midst.

When two of you agree concerning anything on earth, My Father in heaven will do it.

Wherever and whenever two or three congregate in Jesus' name, she is an authentic Ekklesia because Jesus is present. (Matt. 18:18-20)

Jesus said - "Do not fear 'little flock' for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)

Privatization of Christianity from public arena into private homes is the key for acceleration.

THE TRIPLET EKKLESIA

THE DIVINE TRIPLET: The scripture is full of triplets. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is the most powerful and exemplary Triplet. (Matt.28:18,19; 2 Cor.13:14; Luke.3:22)

THE TEMPLE OF THE DIVINE TRIPLET: “God the Father in Jesus and Jesus in us, that we may be made perfect, so that the world may know who Jesus is.” When this awesome symbiosis takes place, we become temples of the living God. (John 17:21-23; 1 Cor. 3:16)

THE INTERCESSORY TRIPLET: Moses, Hur and Aaron made the most powerful intercessory team on the mountain. As they prayed, Joshua defeated the Amalekites on the battlefield. Triplets can move mountains and change corrupt governments. (Exod. 17:11-13; 1 Tim. 2:1-4, 8)

TRIPLETS CAN WITHSTAND ANY PERSECUTION: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego together defied the most powerful monarch on earth. They refused to worship an idol and passed the fire test, resulting in the conversion of the monarch, who commanded that the whole nation should honor the God of the Jews. Their willingness to suffer extreme persecution, rather than worship an idol, led to the transformation of the whole nation. Throughout the history of the church, millions of people have been killed. Most of them belonged to little Congregations that had to suffer the wrath of big churches as well as hostile governments, but they loved not their lives unto death. The blood of martyrs is the seed on which the Ekklesia grows. (Dan. 3:12-30; Rev. 12:11)

TRIPLETS CONSTITUTE AN AUTHENTIC EKKLESIA: Jesus promised that if two or three “congregate” in His name, then He is present in their midst. Triplet does not mean exactly three, but indicates a small unit, which could include two or three families. Just like a seed has all the potential to become a fruit-bearing tree and send out branches. The triplet church is a seed Ekklesia. More people does not mean a more powerful church. This small Ekklesia has all the power because Jesus, the owner of heaven and earth, is in her midst and therefore she is an authentic Ekklesia. This mini Ekklesia has all the authority to bind the “strongman”, expel demons, heal the sick, disciple the nations, baptize and break bread. They can handle money, marry the young and bury the dead, etc. They can also send missionaries. (Matt. 18:18-20; 28:19; Luke 10:19; Acts 2:42; 5:6, 10; 13:3; 1 Cor. 11:24-26)

THREE IN ONE EKKLESIA IS SMALL BUT STRONG: A threefold cord cannot be easily broken, nor can the gates of Hell prevail against an Ekklesia built on apostolic and prophetic foundations with Jesus as the chief cornerstone. (Eccl.4:12; Amos 3:3; Eph. 2:20)

THE TRIDENT: The ‘*trishul*’ or a triple fork, (*shelosh gilleshon*) was used by the Israeli army (1 Sam. 13:21). It was also used by the priests to tackle sacrificial animals on the altar (Exod. 27:3). The Name of Jesus, the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of God make the most powerful three-pronged weapon of mass destruction, capable of destroying any strongholds of the devil. The full force of this weaponry is available to the little Ekklesia. (Rev.12:11; Heb. 4:12; 2 Cor. 10:3-5)

TWO OR THREE IS COMPANY, MORE IS A CROWD: Jesus promised, “*If two of you agree as touching anything, then My Father in heaven will do it.*” In a small Ekklesia, it is very

easy to be of one accord. Without unity in the Ekklesia, God cannot function. The little Ekklesia is able to achieve much, simply because they will immediately agree on anything that glorifies God and He will instantly honor it. Paul and Barnabas were great friends until they exceeded the stipulated number. This was followed by sharp contention, which resulted in their separation. (Matt.18:18-20; John 14:12-14; Acts 16:36-40)

JESUS SENDS SEVENTY CHURCH PLANTERS: Jesus sent out seventy disciples, two by two, wherever He was to go. He gave them exact instructions, which would result in Ekklesias being planted (Luke 10:1-9). Peter, James and John, the triplet, were with Him at His transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His crucifixion. On both occasions, our heroes slept soundly. Jesus still chose them, simply because they had left everything to be with Him. It may be difficult to form a perfect triplet, so find those who are willing to spend time with you. (Mark.14:33-41; Luke.9:27-32; Phil.1:18)

TRIPLET EKKLESIA ARE MUTUALLY INTERDEPENDENT: Triplet Ekklesia is not a prayer cell or a Bible study class or even a fellowship. She is the whole body. She is not merely a part of the body, unable to survive or reproduce herself. Even so, triplet Congregations are not independent loose cannons doing their own thing, but they are part of the network of larger regional Ekklesia. The mobile team of fivefold ministry-gifted elders connects them by constantly mending the net, which keeps them primed for fishing and protects them from heresies by sharing the whole counsel of God. (Eph. 4:11,12; Acts 20:27-32; Matt. 4:21)

PAUL'S TRIPLETS: Paul went on his first missionary journey with Barnabas and John Mark to Cyprus and Galatia. On his second journey he went with Silas and Timothy to Galatia and Greece and on the third journey, he went with Timothy and Titus to Asia Minor and Ephesus. In every region, Paul, like a spiritual father, had mentored local leaders like Silas of Jerusalem, Sopater of Berea, Secundus and Aristarchus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derby, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia, Aquila and Priscilla of Rome and many others. He often sent them in groups of 2 or 3 to minister. Jesus taught His disciples to go two by two and find a man of peace. This is still the best model for discipling the nations. (1 Cor. 4:15; Luke 10:1; Acts 19:22; 20:4)

ROMAN EKKLESIAS WERE TRIPLET EKKLESIAS: The 16th chapter of Romans is full of the names of leaders. Many have the names of two or three households. Rome was obviously full of these little Congregations. Many women were leaders of these Congregations.

THE GENTILE EKKLESIA SENDS THE FIRST MISSIONARY TRIPLET: The Gentile Ekklesia of Antioch was the first one to send a missionary triplet, Barnabas, Paul and John Mark. They planted only a few Congregations, which in turn spread, into all the cities, around the Mediterranean Sea of the three continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. Paul was the greatest missionary of all times but he did not start any "missions." Instead, he planted "Missionary Congregations", which spontaneously multiplied. (Acts 13:1-3, 13; 19:9,10)

THE TRIPLET EKKLESIA CAN MULTIPLY DAILY: The mass movement in Jerusalem took place, not only because the leaders were proactive, but also because every believer was proactive and used his own home to start a house Ekklesia. This resulted in the saturation church-planting of the city. The little apostolic Ekklesia of three baptized families can multiply both in quality and quantity daily. The little house Congregations of Jerusalem "*added to their numbers daily*" and the regional Ekklesia "*grew in grace and in numbers*

daily” (Acts 2:46,47; 16:5). We now have many facilities like rapid transportation, fast communication and printed literature, etc., which Paul did not have; therefore we should disciple, baptize, equip, add more new believers and plant more new Congregations daily. (Luke 19:17)

THE TRIPLET EKKLESIA IS A “GO” EKKLESIA: The little Ekklesia can easily focus on the most important function of the Ekklesia, which is to *“go and make disciples.”* She does not waste her time, money and resources on buildings, ceremonies, dignitaries, structures, committees or raising funds for projects. The Ekklesia does not have to wait for people to come, instead she is always “ready to go” with the gospel as well as a cup of cold water for the lost and the least of this world. She knows the truth (Jesus) and Jesus has made her free to “go” anywhere, any day, anytime, and commit the teachings to faithful witnesses who are able to teach others also. (Matt. 28:19; 10:42; John 8:32, 36; Luke 13:32,33; 2 Tim. 2:2)

THE TRIPLET EKKLESIA IS A WITNESSING EKKLESIA: Jesus commanded his disciples to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). He has given the most powerful tool for world evangelization - *“By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established”* (2 Cor. 13:1). Peter was no great scholar or orator, but he was a great witness. He spoke a very short, simple and direct message about the death and resurrection of Jesus and sometimes the Holy Spirit fell on the people, even before baptism (Acts 10:34-48). The triplet Ekklesia is the best model for world evangelization.

THE PRACTICE OF “ONE-ANOTHER”: The little Ekklesia is designed to practice “love one another,” “pray for one another,” “exhort one another,” “confess to each other,” “admonish each other,” “greet each other with a holy kiss” and all the other fifty “one another’s” in the Scriptures. The Scripture instructs us to rebuke those who are sinning in the presence of all the members (1 Tim 5:20). Paul rebuked Peter publicly when he refused to eat with the heathen at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-13). This is not possible in a large gathering. Mutual accountability or confessing our sins is embarrassing and impossible in a large group (Jas. 5:16). Peter tells us to love one another fervently (1 Pet. 1:22). This will be misunderstood in a large gathering. Sharing our material blessings with each other again is simpler because we know each other’s need. The practice of “one another’s” brings incredible unity, which makes the Ekklesia of “one accord” and then she becomes a very effective tool for the Holy Spirit to do great exploits. (John 13:34,35; Heb. 10:24, 25; Rom. 15:14)

THE PARTICIPATORY EKKLESIA: The Ekklesia must be open and transparent. Everyone, including women and children, must have an opportunity to share psalms, teachings, revelations, dreams, visions, testimonies and prophecy. Children must be encouraged to ask questions (Deut. 6:20). In flexible small group dynamics, people interact and resolve their problems, resulting in rapid maturing of the disciples. They can confidently go and make disciples. There is no comparison between the abundant sweet fruits of a highly interactive small group and the bitter gourds of a large, passive group. (1 Cor. 14:3; 26-31; Acts 2:42)

THE TRIPLETS ARE ASSURED OF THE KINGDOM: Jesus says to the little Ekklesia, *“Well done, you have been faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* (Luke 12:32; 19:17)

God ordained Israel as a nation of priests. (Exo. 19:6)

He commanded them to spread abroad like the dust of the desert, and blessed them to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. (Gen. 28:14)

Israel disobeyed and built synagogues, appointed rabbis to worship, celebrated the Sabbath and despised the Gentiles.

Jesus said, "I will build My Ekklesia." (Matt. 16:18)

He ordained His people as royal priests and commissioned them to go and make disciples of all nations. (1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 28:19)

The church disobeyed and built buildings, appointed clergy to worship, celebrates Sundays and has no time for the Gentiles.

GOD'S CONCEPT PLANS

GOD'S CONCEPT - PLAN A: in God's "end vision", all nations, tribes, languages and people groups will be standing before His throne (Rev. 7:9,10). To accomplish this, firstly He chose Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exo. 19:6). Secondly, He commanded them to spread abroad all over the world, penetrating everywhere, just like the dust storms of the desert (Gen. 28:14). Thirdly, He commanded them to possess the gates of the enemy (Gen. 22:17). Fourthly, He blessed them to be a blessing to all the families of the earth. (Gen. 12:3)

ISRAEL CHOSE OTHERWISE: Israel chose the temple, the professional priesthood and the Sabbath to bless themselves - all very biblical, but not exactly what God wanted them to do. Further, instead of being a blessing to the heathen, they despised them, and instead of spreading abroad, they stayed put in Canaan. But God's purposes cannot be defeated, so He scattered them abroad, where they spent the better part of their history as slaves in Diaspora. Even there they lived in Jewish ghettos, built synagogues and appointed professional rabbis to teach traditions, which God never intended. God then rejected them as His priests and allowed them to be destroyed. (Hosea 4:6-10)

JESUS' ACTION PLAN: Plan A having failed, God put Plan B into action by sending Jesus to accomplish the same task. First, Jesus affirmed the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). Second, He gave a mandate to His Ekklesia to make disciples of all nations so that they would be a blessing to all the families of the nations (Luke 10:5,6; Matt. 28:19). Then He gave the simple but very effective goal-driven strategy to achieve this objective, by commanding them to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

THE CHURCH FOLLOWS ISRAEL: Jesus died on the cross to replace the hereditary priesthood with the priesthood of all believers. His death, desecrated the temple by tearing the curtain of separation, and replaced the Sabbath with daily worship. Sadly, just like Israel, the church chose the temple, the professional priesthood and Sunday as the Sabbath, in order to bless herself, and forgot the mandate to bless other nations.

THE CHURCH BECOMES A CANNIBAL: Worse still, the organized church turned on its own faithful who dared to worship God in truth and spirit in their homes. The established church declared them heretics and murdered them by the millions, all in the name of religion. It started seminaries to train priests to perpetuate the evil system of clergy-domination and the exploitation of ordinary believers.

THE CHURCH OR A DEN OF THIEVES? The church is not just a happy clappy worshipful company of born-again Christians singing beautiful choruses and having a wonderful time among themselves, but she has a task to do. The ignorance of the church regarding her task of discipling the nations is not just tragic but pathetic. She has effectively slammed shut the door of salvation on millions of lost people who should be disciplined into the kingdom. Jesus chased the Jews out of the temple and declared, "*My house shall be a house of prayer for **all nations**.*" Those of other faiths should be so moved by what happens in the church that "*falling down they will say that God is truly among you.*" Without nations being disciplined, the church is a den of thieves. (Mark 11:17; 1 Cor. 14:24,25)

NEW WINE IN NEW WINESKINS: Having patiently waited for 2000 years, and seeing the atrocities the harlot church committed, the Lord is now putting Plan C into action. He is now preparing new wineskins (House Gatherings) for the new wine of the Gentiles that is coming in. In the last decade, millions in third world countries have entered the kingdom through these humble houses. (Mark 2:22; Matt. 9:17)

AN AWESOME PARADIGM SHIFT IS TAKING PLACE: Already there is a significant shift from ornate buildings to humble houses, from professional clergy to the priesthood of all believers and from a Sunday service to believers gathering informally everyday. This shift has resulted in an astronomical increase in the number of believers all over the world. With huge networks of intercessors being formed, the chances are that there will be an exponential growth of the Ekklesia in the near future.

Going to a church makes you no more a Christian than going to a repair shop makes you a mechanic.

Sermons are multipoint discourses, therefore difficult to remember.

Stories are interesting events and easy to remember.

Good news is not systematic theology or a set of doctrinal statements.

The good news is the story of Jesus.

Christianity is not going to church every Sunday but inviting Jesus into your house every day when He knocks on the door to have a meal with you.

Christianity is loving God and loving each other. It is sharing a meal and the story of Jesus with the lost.

On the basis of accumulated evidence, the institutional church stands convicted of manslaughter of millions of Christians and for depriving salvation to billions of non-Christians.

Jesus was not born in a holy place but in a dirty cowshed.

Jesus was not a priest of the sanctuary but a priest of the street.

Jesus was not buried in a church cemetery but hung on a cross outside the city.

Jesus did not proclaim from the holy of holies in Jerusalem but from Caesarea an idolatrous city that He would build His Ekklesia.

(Matt. 16:13-18)

Jesus did not come to give placebo sermons to sedate the righteous but to call the sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32)

Jesus has not chosen you to be a Sunday worshipper but to be a daily discipler.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

THE APOSTOLIC LEADERSHIP REPLACED BY EVIL MEN: The Ekklesia started with a big bang on the day of Pentecost. On day one, she consisted of 500 men and women, who had seen the risen Lord, 120 men and women, who were bathed in the Holy Spirit, including the twelve apostles and 3000 multinational believers. Soon 5000 families would be joining. There would be no deacons, elders, bishops or pastors, office, structure or organization, but believers would increase daily and new Ekklesias will be planted everyday. Soon the temple precincts will be out of bounds and the discipling venue will shift into homes, resulting in city saturation with multitudes of believers in hundreds of house Ekklesias. Persecution will follow with thousands fleeing, resulting in exponential growth of the Ekklesia. Christianity will go global in the first few months of the launch as the international Pentecostal pilgrims return to their respective countries and plant Ekklesias all over the world. The golden era will last as long as it has apostolic leadership (1 Cor.15:6; Acts 1:13-15; 2:5, 41; 4:4; 16:5). Jesus had forewarned that false Christs and prophets would arise (Matt. 24:24), who would scatter and destroy the sheep. Paul, Peter and James, also warned about such ungodly, impious men, false teachers and even cursed them (Gal. 1:8-10; I Pet. 2:1,2; Jude :4-19). The church history eminently proves that in the last two millennia, evil men, misled the Bride and made her a compromised harlot. (Acts 20:29,30; Rev. 17:1-6). Nevertheless the true church survived, not through the structured church but through the blood of the martyrs.

DENOMINATIONALISM - THE SEED OF DIVISION: The Greek word for the Devil is *Diabolos*, which means deceiver, accuser, one causing division, etc. (Rev. 12:9). Devil's strategy is to destroy the Ekklesia by driving a wedge between the people of God (Matt. 13:25). Today, there are about 33,000 denominations. Every denomination has problems of doctrine and practices. Satan has sown such a fruitful bitter seed of division, which has corrupted nearly all the churches. The Ekklesia is one Body, *"joined and knit together for effective working, with every part doing its share, leading to its numerical and spiritual growth"* (Eph 4:16). If the church is serious about reaching the ends of the earth, then it is incumbent upon her to partner with others and define her strategy and communicate it to others in unambiguous terms. This is necessary to win the global war against *Diabolos*. Marketing the divisive sectarian values of "us versus them" to the already fragmented cultures and communities, should be banned. The Hydra-headed serpent of denominationalism has been a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions causing religious fundamentalism and doctrinal division in the Body of Christ. The churches have a choice: either synergize all our efforts today and swim together or loose the opportunity for generations and drown separately.

JESUS HATES THE CLERGY/LAYMEN DIVIDE: The first false teaching came into the Ekklesia through Nicolas, mentioned in the Assemblies of Ephesus and Pergamos of the seven Assemblies of the Book of Revelation. Perhaps he was a contemporary of Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:5). Significantly, Nicolas means, "conquering the laos or the ordinary people." In contrast, Jesus called the "laos" or the ordinary people His brothers and sisters (Mark 3:31-35). It was Nicolas who started the division between "listening brothers" and "speaking brothers" where the speakers claimed a higher status. Jesus condemned this division and compared it to idolatry and fornication (Rev. 2:6, 14,15). Yet the clergy/laymen division continues in our churches even today. According to the Scriptures, every believer is a royal priest and never just a layperson. (I Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 14:26-31)

THE EARLY EKKLESIA GOES THROUGH PERSECUTION: For the first 300 years, the Ekklesia flourished in the simplicity and intimacy of people's homes. During this time the house Congregations suffered much persecution. Jews, Gentiles and Roman Emperors took particular pleasure in persecuting Christians. They were fed to hungry wild animals for the entertainment of the crowds, even sawn in pieces and persecuted in many other ghastly ways. However this was only a foretaste of what the established church was going to do later on.

CONSTANTINE SEES A VISION OF JESUS: Constantine (280-337 A.D.) was born in England into a Christian family. His father Constantius was a virtuous man who encouraged Christianity. He died in A.D. 306 and was buried in York, England. His son, Constantine, went to defeat the tyrant emperor Maxentius of Rome, but was afraid of him because the latter was a sorcerer. However, Constantine saw the cross of Jesus in a vision, went forth, and defeated Maxentius in A.D. 312.

IT WAS THE BRICKS AND MORTAR THAT KILLED THE EKKLESIA: Constantine became the Roman emperor and brought much relief and happiness to the Christians. But, with the best intentions, he permanently damaged the Ekklesia. In A.D. 313 through an Imperial edict, Christianity became a state religion. He gave many facilities to the Christians including tax-free salary to the priests. Constantine proclaimed himself the Head of the Church. He built the first grand cathedral (313-320 A.D.) modeled on pagan temples. All the people who used to gather in the houses of the believers now started meeting in religious buildings designed on pagan architecture. The intimate environment of the house Congregations came to an end. The mandate to disciple the nations in the homes of believers, was permanently lost. Jesus is building His temple with living stones and not with the man-made mass-produced dead bricks.

CHRISTIANITY BECOMES A STATE OWNED RELIGION: When Constantine left Rome to settle down in the newly built city of Constantinople (A.D. 330) in Turkey, he bequeathed his palace to the Bishop of Rome who began to live like a lord. The priests gradually took over the governance of the church all over the world and wherever their diktat was questioned, the believers were persecuted and even killed. The state governments began to keep control over the people by financially supporting the priests. All over Europe, even today, with few exceptions, the government pays the salaries of the priests. Power intoxicated, the churches strayed far out, and instead of worshipping their Lord, they started serving their benefactors. Constantine's own son Julian (A.D. 361) became an idolater and the grand cathedral, built by Justinian (527-567 A.D.) with pale pink domes called Hagia-Sophia in Istanbul, straddling Asia and Europe, became a mosque.

HOUSE EKKLESIAS BANNED BY LAW: In their battle against the Arians who did not believe in the divinity of Christ, Catholic Emperor Theodosius made church membership compulsory for all citizens. Thus churches were filled with unredeemed worldly people. As they did not have enough priests, pagan priests were hurriedly ordained and appointed. The Roman empire became officially Christian but in reality entered into the Dark Ages, which lasted for over 1000 years. The house Ekklesias were banned by law in A.D. 380. Those who disobeyed were put in prison or killed. Even today, the little house Ekklesias are persecuted by their big brothers. As recently as 1997, the Orthodox Church pressurized the Russian government to declare house Ekklesias as unlawful. The church

was led by principalities, powers and rulers of darkness and the golden era of the early Ekklesia, led by the apostles, prophets, elders and brethren came to an end.

CHILD BAPTISM INTRODUCED: In 416 A.D., child baptism was declared compulsory in order to increase the membership of the churches. The parents were threatened that, unless their children were baptized, they would go to hell. This way, the number of people in church membership was raised through manipulation and deception.

MARY WORSHIP BEGINS: Promoting Mary and demoting Jesus is not new. In 431 A.D., the council of Ephesus declared Mary to be worshipped as the mother of God. In 1997, millions of Roman Catholics petitioned the Pope to make Mary a Co-Redeemer with Christ. Even Mother Teresa was a cosignatory, who believed that Mary is equal to the Lord. When John Paul II was elected Pope, he went to Poland and prostrated himself before the Black Madonna. Later he was buried with a big “M” (for Mary) on the casket. The Scriptures clearly teach, *“everyone has sinned and come short of the glory of God”* and needs washing with the sinless blood of the lamb. (Rom. 3:23)

ELDERS REPLACED BY WINE BIBBERS AND SEX OFFENDERS: Peter, James and other apostles set a good model by taking their wives with them when they traveled for ministry (1 Cor. 9: 5; Matt. 8:14). The early Ekklesias were led by married elders. In circa 325 A.D., following the example of the pagan priests, Pope Leo I (440 A.D.) made it compulsory for priests to remain celibate all their lives. This led to sex scandals, which permanently afflicted the church. To cover these sins, by 500 A.D., the priests were asked to wear white gowns. Thus, the biblical leadership of *“an elder who is blameless, not given to wine and husband of one wife,”* came to an end. (Titus 1:5-7)

POPE DECLARES HIMSELF THE BRIDGE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN: After the downfall of the Roman Empire in 607 A.D., Boniface III, the Bishop of Rome, declared himself as Pontifex Maximus or Pope, meaning “builder of big bridges.” This was the title of the Roman emperor who was considered the high priest and god of the Roman Empire. The Pope is now supposed to be a bridge between God and man, and can make no mistakes, though history tells us otherwise. It is the Popes who persecuted the innocent believers, preyed on them like wolves and had millions killed mercilessly. (Acts 20:29,30)

IDOLATRY ENTERS THE CHURCH THROUGH THE BACK DOOR: The worship of the holy relics of the saints as well as idols began in 709 A.D. Idols of Mary, Jesus and the saints were installed in churches, and every day of the calendar is now dedicated to the worship of some saint or the other. In the process, Jesus was completely forgotten.

THE CRUSADERS BECOME LOOTERS: For a thousand years, the church forgot to pray and instead believed in “might is right.” For the last 13 centuries, the unsheathed sword of Islam also had a free run and reached almost the ends of the earth. To stem the growing tide of Muslim invaders, in 1096 A.D. the Crusaders (soldiers of the cross) killed, looted and raped thousands of Muslims and Jews. As a result, they hated Christians. Belatedly some intercessors are taking the same route as the crusaders and going from country to country asking for forgiveness. This identificational repentance is already bearing fruit.

THE CHURCH MURDERS BY THE MILLIONS: From 1184 A.D., if anybody dared to question the ordinances of the church, he was immediately declared a heretic and burnt at the stake. This caused much terror among the people. It is said that the church killed about 25 million people who dared to take a stand against it. At a press conference in Rome on

22nd January 1998, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, said that there are 4,500 volumes of old archives, in Rome, in which the names of these martyrs are written. He believes that they contain the names of only about one third of the martyrs. Most of these martyrs were from small house Ekklesias. The unrepentant church has never expressed collective remorse, not even shed a few tears of anguish. More people were killed by the church than in all the wars in the human history, put together. It is sobering to think that the millions of martyrs are now rejoicing in heaven while the murderous religious Mafia is in hell. (Rev. 6:9-11; 14:13)

EUROPE POLLUTED BY BLOOD: Europeans think they are a highly civilized, but dig anywhere in the city center and you will find the land soaked with the blood of martyrs. Successive governments, the church, the Crusaders and Hitler, are all in the long list of murderers who polluted the land. This has brought a curse on the land, which needs to be broken by repentance. The Reformation was not started by Martin Luther, but millions died, to keep the Bride pure and faithful. (Eph. 5:27)

COMPELLE ENTRARE PRECIPITATES SECULARISM: In the parable of the wedding feast, “Go and *‘compel’* them to come in” (Luke 14:23; Matt. 22: 6-9), the first Bible translation by Girolamo in circa 405, the *Vulgata*, implied “*compelle entrare*” meaning “entry by force”. This mistranslation gave license to the church to kill, burn, conduct murderous crusades and whole scale genocide etc. to force conversion. All those who dared to differ from the ecclesiastical potentates prevailing at the time, paid dearly. Fortunately, Protestantism gave birth to “Secularism”, which gave freedom to people to choose their own faith. Now the word “compel” means an “invitation”. However, God never gives an invitation because it implies an option to make a wrong choice. God always commands and rejecting God’s command has consequences. The Scriptures imply persuasion rather than coercion.

THE CHURCH REFUSES TO FORGIVE: John Wycliffe was disenchanted with the church because the gospel of Jesus was so badly defiled by the monks, friars, bishops and the Pope, that he started calling them agents of Lucifer. Pope Gregory sent a message to silence the man, but Wycliffe survived because of many influential friends. Later he died and was buried in Lutterworth in 1384. However, the church never forgave him. In 1415, they decided that he should not rest in peace, dug up his bones, burnt them to ashes and scattered them.

ERASMUS INTRODUCES THE GREAT COMMISSION: In 1515 A.D., a religious reformer named Erasmus translated the Bible from old Latin into the simple German language. In his introduction, he explained that until the Great Commission is accomplished, the kingdom of heaven cannot come to earth. It had such an impact on all the religious leaders of that time that it sowed the seeds of reformation in the churches. Martin Luther always had a copy of it on his desk.

MARTIN LUTHER’S ENCOUNTER WITH REALITY: Luther was a devout Catholic priest. When he visited the holy city of Rome, he crawled the last 20 miles on his knees. But seeing the Pope, his concubine and his child born out of wedlock, he was so disgusted and complained that all the sins enumerated in Rom.13:13, like fornication and drunkenness etc., were being openly committed by the Pope and the priests.

STOCK MARKET PRICE OF HEAVEN PRECIPITATES REFORMATION: In 1517 A.D., Martin Luther ignited the Reformation by nailing his 95 Theses or doctrines to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral. This rocked the Catholic Church. He reminded the people that the NT teaches “*we are saved through faith, by grace that is a free gift of God*” (Eph. 2:8). Until that point, salvation could be bought for a price. They also believed the Pope to be infallible and unable to make mistakes. The situation was so bad that certificates signed by the Pope called “Indulgences” for pardoning sins, were being sold by the priests for money. However, the deal was a fraud because it did not guarantee heaven but only a reduction in the time spent in Dante’s Purgatory.

LUTHER PLAYS DING DONG: In 1526 A.D., Martin Luther called the members of the house Ekklesias the true followers. He encouraged them to gather for prayers, Bible study, baptism, the Lord’s Supper and other Christian activities in their homes (W.A.1944). Just four years later in 1530 A.D, the same Martin Luther, under political pressure, retracted this statement and declared that any believer who is not a priest, and yet preaches, even though his preaching may be right, should be put to death (W.A 10, 11). Because of this statement, Martin Luther was responsible for the deaths of thousands of believers.

ADULT BAPTISM SUFFERS DEATH FROM DROWNING: On January 21, 1525, Felix Manz baptized Blourock who baptized fifteen others. They rejected infant baptism and opted for believer’s baptism. This is the birthday of the truly baptized believer’s Ekklesia after 1000 years of apostasy. All were martyred within ten years. Blourock, a fiery speaker, was burnt alive. Manz, who was in the habit of questioning every tradition of the church, was drowned as a joke by ridiculing baptism by immersion. Michael Sattler (1527) another reformer, who suggested adult baptism, had his tongue cut off, his flesh torn with hot tongs, dragged behind a carriage and slowly roasted alive. His wife, along with thousands of other women, was also killed by the church.

PAEDO-BAPTISM A POLITICAL DECISION: In 1525, the Municipal Committee of Geneva ordered baptism within eight days of birth; otherwise, the children would be confiscated. While baptizing, chants were used by the priest to remove evil spirits, and the sign of the cross was made on them with spit and oil. Melanchthon, a comrade of Martin Luther, asked Fredrick, the Prince of Germany, permission for a public debate on the practice of child baptism. The Prince rejected his request saying that it would cause riots, and in 1526 A.D., declared that there should be no change in the practice of the church regarding infant baptism.

THE ANABAPTISTS AND *SITZRECHT* (1525): In defiance against this political decision, thousands took “believer’s baptism”, in spite of sprinkling in childhood. They were called “Anabaptists”, which means “second baptism.” They also believed and practiced 1 Cor. 14: 26, “*sitzrecht*” i.e. the “sitter’s right” in the church to lead singing, teaching, breaking bread and baptizing etc. They also questioned the magisterial right of the church to kill people on the basis of their religious beliefs. Anabaptists who practiced biblical Christianity were condemned to death by Luther, Protestants and the Catholics alike. Mennonites (Menno Simons 1496-1561) are descendents of the Anabaptists but many of them no longer practice Sitzrecht or believers’ baptism.

OPEN PARTICIPATORY EKKLESIA SUFFERS PREMATURE ABORTION: In 1660 A.D., Labadi organized small house fellowships called “*conventicles*” in France. Until then, worship was conducted according to the Gregorian order of service, which consisted of chants,

Scripture lessons, sermon, and dismissal. Labadi advocated that everyone had an equal right to participate (1 Cor. 14:26-30). The Catholic church hounded out Labadi and the clandestine meetings of the Covenanters for participatory worship came to an end.

MARTIN LUTHER'S INCOMPLETE REFORMATION: The reformers did a lot of good but their goal was only a theological shift related to doctrine of "*salvation by grace through faith*" and not a structural shift related to practice. Luther actually forbade structural changes. He preached priesthood of all believers but advocated the primacy of the hierarchical priesthood. Preaching by laymen in the church was to be punishable by death. He forbade the destruction of idols (Catholics call them images) in the church. He believed in a modified form of transubstantiation, called consubstantiation that the wine turns into actual blood, when a priest prays over it. The priest ate the bread and drank the cup by himself believing the communion too holy to share with the common people. Andreas Karlstad (1527) created history, when he first shared the communion with the laity, which was continued by Luther. Luther brought the pulpit to the center of the church building and raised it high up to promote sermons. In doing so, he further dichotomized the clergy/laymen divide. He was a brilliant musician, wrote hymns and introduced congregational singing, but unfortunately manipulated it as a build up for his sermons. Many churches and celebrity preachers follow his example. Finally he had a very low image of women and did not encourage their participation in the church. The NT house Ekklesias bring about a megashift in the theological as well as structural paradigms of the church.

THE PAVLOVIAN POUCH: Early in the 20th century, a Russian scientist, Dr. Pavlov, operated on the dogs and made a pouch out of the stomach, to collect gastric juice. He would then ring a bell and give food to the dog. The dog realized that bell meant food and his stomach would start producing the juice. Once he got used to it, even when no food was given, the dog still produced copious juice, whenever the bell was rung. The dog was now conditioned. The church is pretty well in the same state. The Congregations are so conditioned to the bells and smells of the church and the powerful mind numbing traditions, that they are unable to distinguish the substance from the shadows. In the meanwhile, Dr. Levite is able to milk all the juice he needs, in his pouch.

ABILITY TO QUESTION IS KEY TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH: The one key difference between the modern church and the NT Ekklesia is "no lecturing but questioning". Jesus was pelted with questions every day on every issue, even His authority was questioned. There were times when He Himself countered them with questions (Luke 20:2; Matt. 21:23). The early Ekklesia searched the scriptures to verify whether Paul's statements were correct (Acts 17:11). The NT prophets are not spared either "*the spirits of the prophets are subjects to the prophets*" (1 Cor.14:32). Reasoning, dialogue, questioning, are key to spiritual growth. The Ekklesia revolved around free and frank dialogue while the modern church expects mute submission. The church needs a speech therapist as only one tongue functions while the rest suffer from tongue tie.

THE GREAT MISSIONARY MOVEMENT: While the established Church became synonymous with barbarism, with an unenviable record of a millennia of persecution, gruesome murders and perpetration of inhuman crimes against her own people, true Christians obeyed their Master's call to "*go to the ends of the earth and make disciples of all nations.*" The 18th century saw the birth of a plethora of missionary societies. By 1790,

in Africa alone, 19 out of 20 missionaries died within two years, but today 50% of that dark continent is Christian. A huge suicidal stream of Christians, exchanged the comfort and security of their homes for the unknown distant lands, where they also suffered and died by the thousands, but in the process transformed the world.

GLIMPSES OF INDIAN CHURCH HISTORY

GOD SETS THE STAGE IN INDIA: 4000 years ago, after the death of Sarah, Abraham married Keturah and had many concubines, whose children he sent eastward, presumably some came to India (Gen. 25:1-6). Fifth century BC, Queen Esther and King Ahasuerus of Persia ruled from India to Ethiopia. Ahasuerus appointed Mordecai, a zealous Jew, to be the Prime Minister. He sent administrators to India (Esther 1:1; 8:9, 17; 9:16). 75,000 people were killed by the Jews on the Day of Purim. We do not know how many were killed in India, but “*Asuras*” were greatly feared in India. Many synagogues were established during this period, which were replaced by the local pantheon. *Ramah*, *Vishnu* (*Ish Nu* = Noah), *Krishna* (Ethiopian word for black), *Brahma* (A-Braham), *Shiva* (seven in Hebrew and auspicious in Sanskrit) (2 Sam. 20:25) or *Mahesh* (*Maha*=high; *Ish*=god man=Adam), with a serpent around his neck, clothed in animal skin, born without father or mother, half man and half woman and one of his two sons, was murdered. Earlier 95% of Tribals and others did not worship the graven image of Shiva, the god of Asuras. He was later reduced to a mere phallic god by the Aryan followers of Vishnu. The transgression of the first Adam brought death while Yeshua the last Adam brought life (1Cor. 15:21,22). The Aryans (Aaron) were non-idolaters. Interestingly, many Indian gods have Jewish names.

COMMUNICATING IN LOCAL LANGUAGE IS THE KEY: The Kerala (coconut) church survived probably because the Messianic Jews returning after hearing the good news in their own language at the Pentecost (Acts 2:5-12), spoke to the natives in their language. There were many synagogues in the West coast of India, but there is no evidence of ancient Christianity, probably because, the Jews lived in isolation and failed to communicate. Jesus communicated in the Aramaic, but the NT was strategically written in the Greek, the international language of the time. Failure to recognize the importance of local language can be fatal for the expansion of the kingdom.

THE THOMAS TRADITION, MYTHOLOGY AND MULTINATIONAL BUSINESS: Traditionally it is believed that Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, came to Kerala, but in spite of the Gondaphorus legend and the discovery of Roman coins, there is no solid evidence. His tomb in Madras is only a 14th century memorial. Meanwhile Saint Thomas is peacefully buried in Cyprus. The Kerala church, with its mythology and traditions, has suffered from caste, creed and arrogance problems for 2000 years and utterly failed to spread the gospel. Many think that they come from a high caste background, but Aryan Brahmans came to Kerala only in the 8th century. The vast majority of believers came from Munda-Dravidian background. Interestingly, there were no temples and church buildings before the Aryans. Muslims (23%) outnumber Christians (19%) in Kerala, while 3% Brahmins and Nairs dominate the government and the business. On the Day of Pentecost, *devout men from every nation under heaven were dwelling in Jerusalem* and heard the good news in their own native language (Acts 2:5-11). Presumably Jews in the Diaspora from India and the east were also there. We do not need Saint Thomas to come

all the way to India, as these devout men must have brought back the good news, not only to Kerala, but to all the Jewish settlements in India. We thank God that first century Christianity survived in Kerala.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD: The Knai Thomman, or Thomas of Cana landed in Cranganore in 345 A.D. He was a Syrian businessman who came to make money, and his descendents are still busy doing the same. Making money in the name of religion is now a multimillion business. The coastal cities and the airports are major gold importing and smuggling routes, dominated by Syrian Christians. Jesus does not need smuggled gold and Gulf money to build His church. All He needs is a few broken and contrite hearts. (Psalm 51:17)

THE COCONUT CHURCH NEEDS TO BREAK OUT OF ITS SHELL: The Kerala Christians only became active after the CMS missionaries came from London in the 17th century. Not much can be expected of the Orthodox churches because they owe their allegiance to foreign countries. The cash and talent-rich Marthoma church, which came into existence after the impact of the London mission, like the Jews, only succeeded in planting Marthoma ghettos all over the world but failed to have any significant spiritual impact. The much hyped Christian Fellowships denied baptism and the Lord's Supper to the natives of North India (Titus 1:16). The church got a real boost only when the Pentecostals stormed Kerala, about 60 years ago. Thousands gather in Kerala conventions, but pray self-centered prayers about finding jobs and brides in the Gulf countries, rather than for the lost people of Kerala. In the meantime, the Malabar Mappila Neighbors of the north and the Dalits who form 80% of the Majority community are left out. The church also completely failed to follow up the social reformation started by people like Sree Narayana Guru about 150 years ago. The massive Sabarimala-Ayyappan cult goes on unchallenged. The focus must change from Kottayam to Varkala, the holy city of Ezhava Dalits and instead of demolishing each other in the courts of law, to demolishing demonic strongholds. Kerala is the one of the few states in India, which has yet to catch the vision of the house Ekklesia. This way the coconut church can be cracked open and the vast resources and the captive Christians, can be released for God's greater purposes.

THE PROTESTANT CHURCH INVASION GETS UNDER WAY: Although the British, the Danes and the Portuguese brought Protestant chaplains for their own employees, as early as the 17th century, they failed to evangelize because they were here to make money, not converts. However thank God for the British. The sword of Islam was no match against the British gunpowder, otherwise, India would be a Muslim country today.

THE SOUTH INDIAN CREAMY LAYER SPOILS THE CURRY: The First Protestant German Lutheran Missionaries, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Pluetschau, arrived in July 1706. After suffering great persecution, they established the first Protestant church in Tranquibar in Tamil Nadu. Denominationalism is the curse of South Indian churches where several denominational churches exist in the same village. There is also the worst kind of caste discrimination, where the Nadars of Tamil Nadu dominate the Pariahs, and the Malas of Andhra look down on the Madigas. In the Ekklesia, there may be no Jews and Gentiles, but in the South, the low castes cannot eat together, nor can their daughters marry the sons of high caste Christians. They must sit separately in the church and buried in separate graveyards. The best way to bury the hatchet of the evil caste system and

demolish the demon of denominationalism is to have fellowship meals at homes (Luke 10:7,8). The Tamils, Telugus, the Banjaras, and Kannadas, now have one of the fastest growing house Ekklesia movements.

THE BENGAL TIGERS OF EAST INDIA: In 1792, William Carey came to Calcutta from England, and serious church-planting work began in East India. Carey was an exemplary multifaceted missionary who changed the face of this country. The fish-eating Bengalis are ripe and ready to become fishers of men, but are still waiting for a John Knoxer who will lead them into house Congregations. (A John Knoxer is someone, who, like John Knox, burns with a passion for God to move in an area. John Knox's great cry was "Give me Scotland, or I die!") In the meantime, neighboring Bihar is being transformed from the graveyard of missions into a vineyard, while Bangladeshi are way ahead in planting "*jamats*" or house Gatherings among Neighbors. In fact Bangladesh, in the last five years, has seen nearly 500,000 "*gusl*" or immersions. The Ekklesia there has a flat model with no authority-centered power structures. The gospel is being reached from house to house by the believers themselves, who are strong in faith and willing to lay down their lives for Isa (Jesus).

THE NORTH-EAST: With 90% Christianity (mostly nominal), the missionary success story is well-known, even though they have miserably failed to evangelize Assam, Tripura, Bhutan and Sikkim, and many tribes are yet to hear the gospel. They followed the Western model, including AIDS, drugs, and music, wasting money and energy on buildings, guitars and intertribal wars. Incredibly, they voted for BJP in the last general elections, showing how compromised the Christians are. Even so, Mizoram alone has sent over a thousand missionaries. On the basis of population and per capita income, Mizoram is the largest missionary sending church in the world today. The house Ekklesia movement has started among the Bodo tribe.

NORTH-WEST INDIA: In 1834, John Lowry came from USA to Ludhiana in Punjab and opened up the Northwest of India, much of which is now in Pakistan. On the boat trip over, he lost his wife, his friend and all his worldly possessions. Through the intercession of Praying Hyde, God raised up the greatest Indian saint, Dit, a small, dark, disabled man from the untouchable Churha community in the Gurdaspur district of Punjab. Dit saw nearly 58,000 people baptized in his lifetime, without taking a single penny from the church. Both Indian and Pakistani sides of Punjab and Haryana now have a very active house Ekklesia planting movement going on.

THE NORTHERN REGION: In 1885, the Moravians came and worked in the northern Himalayan region of Laddakh and Lahaul Spiti. Unfortunately, they became involved in social activities. Hardy potatoes and Stokes apples are famous and had a great impact on the economy, but failed to have any spiritual impact on the Buddhists, the Shia Muslims and others. Unfortunately, Stokes himself became a Hindu. Once again, house Congregations are now being actively planted on the hills and valleys of the Himalayas, including Jammu and Kashmir, as far as the Tibetan border. Neighboring Nepal, of course, is on fire. This decade has seen nearly 700,000 people come to faith in Christ.

CENTRAL INDIA: Seven German Lutheran missionaries came in 1868 to a remote village called Karanjia. All seven died of cholera within six months and are buried in a mass grave in Mandla town. Later on, Donald McGavran, the father of modern missions, came to Takhatpur village in the Bilaspur district of Chhatisgarh. There, in the late thirties, he

developed the “Homogenous Unit Principle” to bring about a mass movement among the Satnamis. His basic thrust was church growth through reaching a specific people group with the same culture. The state government passed a Draconian anti-conversion law and ironically called it “The Freedom of Religion Bill”. The Indian government promptly gave marching orders to all the foreign missionaries, a great blessing in disguise. Later, McGavran taught these principles in the now famous, Fuller School of World Missions at Pasadena. Central India is now the home of “Home Ekklesia Movement.”

PEOPLE GROUP MOVEMENTS: These have taken place in the past within the Brahmins, Nadars, Pariahs, Pulia and coastal fishermen of the South. Others include the Churha movement of the Northwest, the Mizo and Naga movement of the Northeast, the Oraon and Munda movement of the East and now of the Maltose and Santhals, the Satnami and Gada movement of Chhatisgarh, the Bhil, Kukna, Gamit and Vasava movements of Gujarat, and the Mahar movement of Maharashtra. The Lalbegis, Bhangis and Balmikis and the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh also have a house Ekklesia movement.

THE SPIRIT OF CONTROL KILLS THE MOVEMENT: Many of these movements were arrested because cross-cultural missionaries tried to control the movement by discouraging development of local leadership. Imported leaders, imported buildings, imported models of worship, all conspired to slow down the spontaneous spread of the gospel. The spirit of control, however well intended, has been a sure recipe for killing the free movement of the gospel. (John 3:8)

100,000 CHURCHES IN 300 YEARS: In spite of many blunders, the church grew. We thank God for thousands of missionaries who came, many of whom are buried here. Because of their work and sacrifice, over these past 300 years, about 100,000 congregations have been established throughout India, but mostly in the South. Many villages have more than one church while a large number of churches are located in the cities. After Independence in 1947, the Nehru government put the brakes on foreign missionaries. The church went into a tailspin as many Indians tried to grab the huge church properties and jockeyed for vacant hierarchical positions left by the Western missionaries, with criminal waste of resources in the law courts.

THE BRIDE BEGINS TO MULTIPLY AND FILL THE EARTH: In the beginning of the 20th century, the Pentecostals stormed the whole world, speaking in tongues. Later this turned into the Charismatic Movement with signs and miracles. In the middle 80s, it became a worldwide intercessory movement. In 1993, through the efforts of the A.D. 2000 Movement, millions prayed for the countries of the 10/40 Window. Since then the Great Commission movement of making disciples and planting multiplying Congregations has taken over.

INDIA ON THE BAND WAGON: Today in India, we have 300,000 church planters, 50,000 cross cultural missionaries and 200 missions. At least 1000 house Congregations are being planted every week. Though the movement is in its infancy, it is spreading like a bush fire in several states such as Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, the North-Western states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, even as far as Jammu, Arunachal and now Assam. It is also spreading in big cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Ludhiana, Varanasi, Bhopal, Nagpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad. House Ekklesia movements have also started among many people groups.

THE MEGA CHURCH PHENOMENON: Mega celebrations are the product of number crunching, human cerebration. Macro celebrations do not provide the same Body life as the micro Gatherings do. They are not reproducible, and the growth is mostly by transfer. The empty churches in the neighborhood are a silent testimony. Even though they meet under one roof, the reality is, that like a cinema theatre, batches of people come and go, without ever meeting each other. Despite claims of astronomical amount of money being given for the missions, per capita giving is abysmally low, as large amounts are siphoned off for resource hungry internal projects. However, some are reaching out through cell churches, which do not have the same freedom as the house Ekklesias, yet it is a step in the right direction. The Allahabad Agricultural University campus simply turns into an Ekklesia every Sunday, with as many as 30,000 people gathering for healing and deliverance. Unless steps are taken to disciple the new believers, all these large Gatherings are a temporary phenomenon. Churches that had 300,000 attendees, 10 years ago, like the once famous cinema-church “Ondas del Luzy Amor” in Buenos Aires, are almost gone. However, when security is not an issue, it is good for believers to meet each other periodically, to see what God is doing in other places.

FIVEFOLD MINISTRY SPIDERS AND THE MEGA WEB OF EKKLESIAS: Many Ekklesia planting movements are led by doctors, engineers, soldiers, professionals and rarely by theologians. The mega-network occasionally gathers to celebrate. Mostly they are “regional webs” visited by fivefold ministry spiders, who keep them ready to catch all wayward beetles. MP, Chhatisgarh, Orissa, UP, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal, AP and many other states have rapidly multiplying webs. Each web has a membership of several thousand baptized believers. The world wide web of house Ekklesias, links many continents and countries such as Africa, Canada, USA, South America, Europe, New Zealand, Australia and of course many countries of Asia.

THE ELECTION MANIFESTO: Politics is about power, legitimate power. But that is not what happens in the secular or godless politics. Late in 2003, the nationalist political parties, talked about *Bijli, Pani, Sadak* (electricity, water, road) and made a clean sweep of some of the states of India. They immediately started implementing the hidden agenda of sectarian ideology in the country. Sure of their victory they opted for immediate federal elections. Worried by the turn of events, the Christians formed the National Prayer Network and mobilized millions of intercessors to cry out to the Lord. God faithfully answered their prayers, and the communal parties were completely routed. The losers did not know how they lost it and the winners also did not understand how they won it. They called it the “X” factor, but we know that it was the “Prayer factor”. The intercessors, through united prayer changed the government of the day. We know that through fasting, repentance and intercession we can put legitimate political power in place and rule the nation. (2 Chron. 7:14)

RULE THE NATIONS THROUGH INTERCESSION: During the 2004 American elections, 250,000 gays, abortionists and liberals took out a protest rally, exposing their underwear with obscenities written on them, against the outright Christian stand of George W. Bush. Over a million Christians in India networked together and interceded to God to choose the right person. Millions in other countries also prayed, but we feel that our million intercessors tilted the balance and put the right man in the White House. House Ekklesias are praying for all those who have rule and authority over us. We can bathe the government in prayer and rule the nation. We can already see the impact, as anti-conversion law is repealed,

education is freed from sectarian ideology, corruption in high places is being exposed, justice is increasingly available in the courts, and the media and government is focusing more and more on the plight of the poor. (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

TRADITIONAL CHURCHES TAKE THE BACK SEAT: Out of a billion people, the total population of Christians in India is estimated to be 68 million (Jan. 2005 New York Times). Until recently, Roman Catholics were the biggest church, but they are facing a serious downturn (26%). Protestant churches are seeing an even greater loss, especially among the youth (28%). Meanwhile, the little independent Ekklesias are mushrooming, and they have already overtaken the traditional churches (53%). The total % is higher than 100% because many people subscribe to mixed traditions. However we must note that only about 2-3% of Christians are the Great Commission Christians, who are doing all the work of planting Ekklesia. Even with this limited number of active Christians, God willing, by the end of this decade, there will be house Ekklesias in all the 600,000 villages of India.

FROM *JESU BHAKTAS* (DEVOTEES) TO *JESU SHISHYAS* (DISCIPLES): There are 3000 endogamous people groups (PGs) in India. “Endogamous” means “castes, which can intermarry”. There are 165 mega PGs, each with a population of one million or more, who can be reached within a short span of time, provided there is a time-bound, goal oriented strategy and a willingness to partner with others. Over the last 300 years, only about 200 PGs and fewer than 100,000 villages were reached. But just in the last ten years, it is guesstimated that 600 additional PGs and another 100,000 villages have been added. 85% of the Christians come from 33 PGs while 98% come from 104 PGs. The secret is to see Christ incarnated, not only in individuals, but also in each of the 3,000 endogamous PGs. through their own *oikos* or extended families. The clarion call of every Ekklesia should be “Let us equip *Yesu Bhaktas* into disciple making *Yesu Shishyas* from each community”

The Lord Jesus is the King of kings and our High Priest. (Rev. 19:16; Heb. 2:17)

The King died to make us priests and kings. (Rev. 5:9, 10)

*The mysteries of the kingdom have been revealed to us, His saints.
(Eph. 3:5, 6; Col. 1:26-28)*

*As kings, we are to seek His kingdom first and reign by proxy under the
Kingship of Jesus. (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 5:17)*

*The NT Ekklesia is an assembly of priests and kings who are treasures of
God beyond measure chosen to proclaim His praises, not only on Sundays
but everyday and everywhere. (1 Pet. 2:9)*

*We are the Ekklesia, the paradigm, the media and the message that Jesus is
the good news. Our business is to introduce the lost people to the person of
Jesus.*

THE MODERN CHURCH IS CONSTANTINE'S MODEL

The early Ekklesia managed to function effectively for three hundred years without church buildings, musical instruments, Sunday worship, Christmas, Easter, Good Friday or regular tithing. Constantine took many years to build the cathedral. Then, in order to sustain the structure, a completely new set of extra-biblical traditions was introduced.

HOW DID SUNDAY WORSHIP START? After the first cathedral was built in Rome in 322, Sunday was declared a day of worship. People used to get drunk on Saturday night anyway, so everyone thought it was a good idea. Unfortunately, the six other days, when the believers used to meet in each other's homes were lost. Meanwhile, the heathen continued to worship every day of the week. Each day was dedicated to different gods - Monday was dedicated to the moon, Tuesday to "Tiu," Wednesday was dedicated to Woden, Thursday was given to Thor, Friday to Frigg and Saturn was worshipped on Saturday. In India, various planetary gods are worshipped on these days. The introduction of Sunday worship did enormous damage to the Ekklesia. Until then the NT Ekklesia met in the homes and multiplied every day.

CHRISTMAS AND EASTER ORIGINATED FROM FRENZY AND ORGY: Three billion people i.e. half the population of the world, worship female goddesses. One billion Catholics venerate Mary as the mother of God and the Queen of heaven. Pope Paul John II declared himself the slave of the Black Madonna. One billion Hindus worship Mahakali (black goddess with a huge red tongue and a necklace of skulls around her neck) and another billion Buddhist worship Tara. In Babylon, Ashtoreth or Ishtar was worshipped widely as the Queen of Heaven, who was incorporated by Diaspora Jews and hated by God (Judges 10:6; Jer. 7:18; 44:17,21). Notwithstanding God's judgment, Christians continue to celebrate Easter, instituted in memory of Ishtar, the queen of heaven. Even Good Friday is not good, because the Lord was not crucified on Friday, but on Thursday, otherwise He could not complete the mandatory three days and three nights in the grave like Jonah (Matt. 12:40). Jewish feasts were called "Special Sabbaths" when all customary work was prohibited (Lev. 23:3-8, 38). That particular week, apart from the regular Saturday Sabbath, there was the "Special Sabbath" of Passover on Friday. Hence Jesus could not be crucified on Friday. He was crucified on the "Day of Preparation" for the Passover, which was Thursday (Luke 23:54). Saturnalia, a carnival with unrestrained license, was celebrated for the Roman god Saturn, which was changed to Christmas to celebrate the imaginary date of the birth of Christ. Eating, drinking and carousing go on but the humble carpenter who was born in a cow-shed, is conveniently forgotten. Jesus was not born on 25 December, but around August/September, because that was the time of year when itinerant shepherds visited Bethlehem.

WHY DO PEOPLE WEAR GOOD CLOTHES ON SUNDAYS? Jesus was worshiped for the first time in a cowshed. The congregation consisted of worshipful company of mooing cows, bleating sheep, donkeys making charismatic din and bedraggled shepherds dressed in coarse clothes joining the angelic choir. Later, the believers gathered in the homes wearing ordinary clothes. However, after the building of the cathedrals, they began to copy the dress code of the Roman officials and the landlords of Europe. This tradition of "Sunday best" continues even today. Of course, the necktie is a great help, because it effectively strangulates the blood supply to the brain, transporting the soporific

Churchians for a weekly visit to slumber land, the heavenly abode of Somnus, the Roman god of sleep. This protects the gullible from the noxious effects of the monologue being bellowed out from the pulpit. To “*worship in truth and in spirit*” we must go to the earthly abode of a believer.

IDOLATERS DONATE THE PULPIT AND THE LONG ROBES: In the heathen temples of Greece and Rome, the priests wore long robes. Under the influence of evil spirits, they used to go into a trance, climb up the Greek “*Ambo*” or the Roman “*Pulpitum*” to proclaim oracles. During the reign of Constantine, large scale conversions took place and these heathen priests joined the church, with their religious regalia and the pulpitum. Jesus did not wear any religious clothes, nor did He need a pulpit. He simply sat on a rock, out in the open to deliver His famous “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt. 5:1). The fancy clerical apparel divides God’s people (James 2:2-9). The only clothing prescribed in the scriptures, is repenting in sackcloth (Matt. 11:21). We need to get out of the holy huddle of trendy fashion paraders and reach the ragamuffins. Jesus warned us a long time ago “*Beware of the long robes.*” (Luke 24: 49; 20:46)

MARTIN LUTHER SHIFTS THE PULPIT TO CENTER STAGE: The NT Ekklesia did not need a pulpit because there were no sermons. It was a family gathering where everyone participated (1 Cor. 14:26). In the post Constantine era, an altar was established in the center of the building. It was a sacred place as the bread and wine were kept on it. It had mysterious and cultic significance as often a holy relic was also kept on it. In pursuit of his “*sola scriptura*” or Scripture as the sole basis for reformation, Martin Luther brought the pulpit to the center of the hall and had it raised high so that everybody had to look up to the speaker. These unscriptural pulpit sermons gave spondylitis (pain in the neck) to people, which was good business for the osteopaths. In the NT, people sat facing each other as they worshipped and maintained eye contact with each other during interaction. Our Lord did not need a pulpit. He used the simple facilities available in the homes of the people (Luke 10:38-42; Mark 3:34). The word pulpit does not exist in the NT. Jesus hates the Nicolaitan system that divides God’s people (Rev. 2:6). There is no place for pulpit performers in the Ekklesia of Jesus. Pulpit also refers to a wooden beam projecting out from the side of a boat, which the fisherman uses to cast his net and pull in fresh fish. If you must use a pulpit, then please use it for catching fresh fish but not to give pain in the neck to the captive fish.

CONSTANTINE WAS THE FOUNDING FATHER OF FUNDING FATHERS: When Constantine started giving financial support to the churches, many heathen priests declared themselves Christians without any real conversion. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of nominal Christians from 4% to 84% in the 4th century, in the Roman empire. Constantine, was also the original father of “*rice Christians.*” Nominalism is a phenomenon of institutionalized churches. In a small Ekklesia, there is constant mutual accountability. Any unbeliever either becomes a believer or quits. Peter and other founding fathers of the NT Ekklesia, delegated the responsibility of management to the local Greeks and devoted quality time to ministry (Acts 6:2-4). Sadly, many of our functionaries have little time for ministry because they are constantly chasing funding fathers.

SUNDAY SERMONS COME FROM A HEATHEN: A Greek scholar named Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) wrote a book called “*Rhetoric*” about giving a good speech (rhetoric). He taught that there should be three main parts: Introduction, the main Theme and a good short

Summary. This is to be presented in a dramatic way. Today seminaries teach homiletics, hermeneutics, sermonics, oratory etc. Some even teach “humor-oletics” or jokes to keep them from falling asleep from sheer boredom. All these have no Biblical basis, but taught by Aristotle, a heathen, homosexual philosopher. Socrates (470-399 B.C.), another Greek philosopher, believed that truth is found by extensive dialoguing. He called it “*dialectic*”. Unfortunately, the church opted for rhetoric and shunned Socratic dialogue. Jesus dialogued extensively in His daily ministry. He was pelted with questions all day long and He handled them deftly. It is still the best method for convicting the doubters.

ACTION PACKED EKKLESIA, NOT JUST HOLLOW ORATORY: Jesus and His disciples, were not orators (Acts 4:13; 2 Cor. 10:9,10). They healed the sick, delivered the demonized, raised the dead, proclaimed the gospel and changed the world. “*For the gospel did not come to you in word only but also in power...*” However, Paul does not give the highest place to the gift of miracles, amongst the gifts of the Spirit. He was not pandering just cure or deliverance but salvation. The greatest miracle is not physical healing or deliverance but transformed lives. (1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:17-25; 2:4,5; Acts 17:32,33)

CROSS OR A DOUBLE CROSS: The word “cross” and “crucify” are not to be found in the original Greek NT. The Greek word “*stauros*” is consistently translated “cross” from the Latin Vulgate “*crux*”. The primary meaning in both the languages, is a pole or a stake. Some believe that Jesus was hung on a pole with His hands nailed above His head. The modern cross came into prominence through Constantine, who saw the vision of cross superimposed on the sun (the solar cross), which led to his victory over Maxentius of Rome in A.D. 312. After this, people started wearing crosses on their bodies, clothes, belts and helmets. Even though Constantine professed to be a Christian, he was not the regenerate but the hybrid variety, who continued to venerate the sun. Tau or “t” was a symbol of Tammuz or the sun god, hated by our God (Eze.8:13-16). When large numbers of pagan priests joined the church, they brought their religious symbol “t” with them. It is immaterial whether Jesus died on a single or a double beamed pole, His death and resurrection are central in our belief. God did not provide multiple solutions to our multitudinous problems but only one all-sufficient perfect sacrifice, “*For by one sacrifice, Jesus has perfected forever those who are being sanctified*” (Heb. 10:14). The entire message of the gospel is summed up in “*Stauros*”, a symbol of shame and humiliation, which Jesus suffered publicly. We are exhorted to “*take up our stauros daily and follow Him*” (Matt. 16:24). We have reduced it to a trinket, a decoration or an iconic object of veneration. The hucksters and profiteers have commercialized the cross. Hybrid Christians go around with ornate gold or silver crucifixes hanging from their necks, to show off their hackneyed religiosity, but are not prepared to move outside their comfort zones and suffer shame and humiliation for His sake. (Heb. 13:13)

THE SITUATION THEN AND NOW: The world is no more sinful now than it was, though the quantum might have gone up due to population explosion (Gen. 6:5; 19:1-30). Idolatry was rampant with huge temples dedicated to gods, where millions throng even today. Occult practitioners, like the sons of Sceva, could be found on every street, just as it is today (Acts 19:13-17). Prostitution, homosexuality and lesbianism were as common then as they are now (Rom. 1:23-27). Once celibacy was introduced, sexual abuse and alcoholism became rampant in the church and continue to be a curse today. Gay rallies are openly held similar to those that occurred in Sodom (Gen. 19:1-30). Legal judgments were loaded against Christians, as is increasingly happening today. Violence against

Christians, both by the government and the citizens, was rife in the Greco-Roman world. Today it has reached alarming proportions in many countries.

LAND DEFILED BY BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION: Felix, the governor, expected a bribe before releasing Paul (Acts 24:26). The priests unscrupulously robbed the people by selling indulgences. Every year, leaders pilfer ten billion dollars from the churches of the US alone. The Indian church is the largest private landowner with prime property in the cities. Scams, scandals and kickbacks, in the church and the secular world, are part of the daily news. The church usually does not take any action, if they are high profile leaders. The land is defiled by all these sins and vomits out its people as refugees. We need to repent and break the curses; otherwise, millions will remain dispossessed in this country. (Gen. 3:17-19; 4:10-12; Hos. 4:3; Lev. 18:22-30)

NARCISSISM AND TUNNEL VISION: In Greek mythology, *Narcissus* was a very handsome young man. Many beautiful goddesses wanted to be his bride. One day he knelt down to drink water from a pool, fell in love with his own image, pined away and died of starvation. The Bride of Christ is the most beautiful woman in the world with no spots or wrinkles (Eph. 5:26,27), but sadly, TV, Radio evangelists and convention speakers, like Narcissus, are abnormally infatuated with their own image and will not share the limelight with others. The only difference is that the modern day Narcissus does not die of starvation but of overeating. Sadly, 95% of the people who watch these shows are Christians and so these programs, unless specifically targeted, have little impact on the lost. It is time to get out of the egocentric ghettos and become Christocentric. Many Christians suffer from tunnel vision and cannot see the multitudes of lost Gentiles on the road to hell. God's vision is global, that every tongue, tribe and nation, should stand before His throne and worship Him. Today, we can see this happening. As the Bride, we can also partner with Christ and hasten the day of His coming. (Col. 1:26-28; 2 Pet. 3:9, 12; Rev. 5:9, 10)

The NT Ekklesia is sometimes referred to as the “primitive church” as if the modern church is an evolved and an improved creature.

Actually, it is other way around. The traditional church is the strange extra-biblical dinosaur with one big mouth and many deaf ears that is ready for extinction.

The single act of constructing the church building and appointing professional churchmen, was to forever destroy the relational fabric of the Ekklesia.

Instead of worshiping, prophesying, dialoguing, loving, edifying each other, sharing meals together and pulsating with organic life, the church is organized to death and reduced to an organization of dummies.

Jesus was relational. He said that whoever does the will of the Father is My brother, My sister and My mother. (Mark 3:35)

God did not say, “Build synagogues and send your children to be taught by the Rabbi” Jesus did not say, “Build seminaries and send your children to become theologians” Both are human inventions.

We need to reform, remodel, restructure and if necessary reinvent the teaching methods of Jesus and stop producing fakes who have no transformational impact on the society.

A home Ekklesia needs homegrown leaders.

Jesus modeled strategic recruitment, practical skills, effective discipling, instant baptism, and mandatory flocking. Jesus was not just event oriented but a process person.

Jesus said: open your eyes and see that the harvest is ready now. A church, which is high in the abstract and thin in the concrete, needs “skills audit”, if she is not busy reaping the harvest of souls? (John 4: 35)

SEMINARIES

BIRTH OF SEMINARIES: After Martin Luther's Reformation, Catholic priests and nuns rushed to get married causing considerable commotion in the Catholic Church. The Pope called a special council in 1545 A.D., which felt the priests and nuns were not properly indoctrinated and therefore easily misguided. It was decided to start seminaries to rectify this problem. Perhaps this is the reason why seminarians give so much importance to solemnizing marriages today.

CATCHING FISH IS A SKILL: Clearly, the cognitive, analytical approach favored by systematic theology has dominated Western theological schools for sixty years, producing four generations of bookish debaters who imagine that "high quality" lectures and reading will save the world. Just the opposite has happened: the American churches experienced a free fall into rapid decline and the European churches nose dived into post Christian era. The Seminaries are driven by knowledge-based curriculum requiring a plethora of books, tons of paper work and enormous waste of resources. However, the final product suffers from a huge "skill's deficit" for converting the sinner into a saint and therefore, misfits for the expansionist agenda of the church. Jesus' method was life-driven, dialogical, spontaneous and practical. It transformed lives.

JESUS REJECTS THE SOFT GENERATION: Jesus rejected the soft generation of the religious scholars of the temple. He chose ordinary fishermen to be His disciples. This was a masterly recruitment policy, because one works all day and night in wet, dirty, smelly, uncomfortable and dangerous conditions for very little money. Jesus needed hardy people, who would be willing to work day and night, walk long distances and survive under all kinds of hostile situations, often without food and other facilities. (Luke 9:57-62)

THE HARVEST FIELD IS THE BEST PLACE FOR TRAINING: Figures being quoted are, that 68% of people coming to Christ in India are doing so through the ministry of the grass roots type of leaders or what David Bennett calls '*Type 1 & 2 leaders*'. Many have zero formal, traditional Bible training and are only "functionally literate". Others have gone through highly effective workshop approach like George Patterson's "Train and Multiply" and "Paul and Timothy Training", which present simple biblical practices with little abstract theology. Participants learn in small groups then translate their insights into goals that they implement through church planting. Over the past 500 years, Christian Leadership has been based almost exclusively on "knowledge", without spiritual activism. Today, we must return to true leadership based on greater emphasis on character, obedience and the ability to win souls. Making a binding covenant relationship with Jesus to release the captives from the fetters of darkness and suffering persecution can only be taught through direct interaction in the context of the school of hard knocks. There needs to be a reversal of flow of learning from the grassroots to the corridors of knowledge, to expose the truly amazing happenings. We need to affirm the unspoken Heroes of The Faith, who are spreading the kingdom in the context of their humble, deep, real and personal encounter with the Living Jesus and humbly learn from them.

JESUS, THE BAPTIST, SETS THE BENCHMARK: The Pharisees accused Jesus of baptizing more disciples than John (John 3:22,26; 4:1). Jesus did not baptize but His disciples did. Jesus modeled strategic recruitment (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 3:13-19), practical training (Luke

10:1-9), effective discipling, instant baptism (Matt. 28:19), mandatory flocking (Matt. 12:30; John 10:16) and sending them out (John 17:18). Jesus was not just event oriented but a process person. Sadly, in the quest for academic excellence, the performance indicators of discipling, baptizing, equipping and soul winning are constantly sacrificed. Throughout the NT, the number of baptisms was a constant barometer of overall reproductive health and spiritual effectiveness of the Ekklesia. Jesus clearly expects thirty; sixty, or even one hundred fold return on investment (Matt. 13:23; Luke 19:11-27). He commanded that the non-fruit bearing branches should be thrown into the fire. Yet we see an abundance of barren branches that cling to the church, like parasites because of their academic credentials. (John 15:6; Luke 13:6-9)

KEYS OF THE KINGDOM: Jesus took the authority from the religious leaders and gave it to ordinary people like Peter to build His Ekklesia. He gave the keys of the kingdom to them (Acts 4:13; Matt. 16:19). Unfortunately, the keys are back again in the hands of those who neither enter into heaven, nor do they allow others (Luke 11:52). Jesus said to the leaders, *“Woe unto you hypocrites, for you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourself”* (Matt. 16:23). Jesus gave us the keys of the kingdom to shut the gates of Hell and open the gates of heaven for the perishing. Sadly, most Christians do not even know that they have the keys. Equipping the next generation and handing over the keys to them is an important part of the deal for all Christians.

FLOCKING IS A PROCESS AND NOT AN EVENT: Jesus gave us a clear directive, *“Whoever gathers is with Me and he who scatters is against Me”* (Matt 12:30). Win the winnable is an irrevocable principle of missiology. Where the harvest is ready, it is sinful to just haphazardly pick up a few sheaves here and there and exult, but we must put a combine harvester to systematically reap the entire harvest (Mark 4:26-29). Jesus left the greater task of gathering the harvest to us (Luke 10:2; John 14:12). Paul always planted Ekklesias wherever he went. Flocking the sheep is just as important as finding the lost sheep. (John 10:16). Many mistakenly think that they have preached the gospel and now it is up to the Holy Spirit to do the rest, or worse still, leave it to those who have no burden for the lost. This is abdication of responsibility. Discipling is a process, not a one shot event. The work of the Holy Spirit and the application of intellectual gifts are equally important for edification. (1 Cor. 14:12-15; Rom. 12:1,2)

THE TOWN CLERK SAVES PAUL AND PARTY: “Clergy” was originally used for town clerks. The city clerk of Ephesus saved Gaius and Aristarchus from mob violence for desecration of the many-breasted goddess, Diana (Acts 19:28-41). For ages, the priests have functioned as village dignitaries and their secular verdict carries authority. Even today, many seminary graduates end up as administrators.

SCHOOL OF PROPHETS: Moses reproduced seventy prophets just by interceding (Num. 11:14; 24-30). Paul spoke boldly for three months in the local synagogue, reasoning and persuading them, but the Jews only spoke evil against The Way. Then Paul shifted his base to the school of Tyrannus at Ephesus and within two years, all Asia heard the gospel. This was accompanied by unusual miracles, which glorified God (Acts 19:8-12). In the OT, the prophets Elijah and Elisha had schools for prophets. God has promised that in the last days He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh and they will prophesy. It is time our prophets seriously started preparing the saints through home schooling, for the Spirit to

impart prophetic gifts to the budding prophets, so that the entire world can hear the gospel.

THE IMPORTED LEADER IS A CONTROLLER: There is no room in the Scriptures for outsiders to control and direct the local Ekklesia. The white man came and imported more white men, similarly the South Indians copied and controlled the church. Many mission agencies have become employment agencies for convenient cousins, who come and usurp local authority. Managers need to transform into leaders/mentors/ coaches/disciplers, rather than controllers and authorities. Today, “control” is a dirty word and fast dissipating from the management parlance but not so from the church and missions. Jesus handed over within 3 years, His disciples within months, while Paul within weeks to the local elders (Acts 6:2-7; 14:21-23). The battle to pass on the baton should start from day one to the sons of the soil. The only mistake a cross- cultural missionary can make is to hang on too long.

SAVE A ROGUE AND BE SAVED: *“Any one who turns a wanderer from truth, will save a soul from death and in the process cover a multitude of his own sins”* (James 5:19,20). *“You shall know them by their fruit”* (Matt. 7:16, 20; John 15:5, 6). No fruit, no entry into heaven. Every church has a remnant of achievers. They must be equipped and released into the harvest fields. Thieves, rogues, perverts and wicked people of all kinds cannot be saved in a traditional church. They need privacy and persistence to come to Jesus. (Dan. 12:3)

WE ARE THE EKKLESIA AND WE ARE THE MESSAGE: Jesus said, *“The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation but by violence and the violent take it by force”* (Luke 17:20; Matt. 11:12). This does not mean religious fanatics armed with sophisticated weaponry. This simply means we as the temple of the living God, constitute a walking, talking, mobile, a triumphant Ekklesia, ready to storm the demonic world and herald the kingdom of God. Jesus walked the dusty roads from city to city and from house to house, where He reasoned, argued, admonished, persuaded and did mighty acts. Dialogue, confrontation and encounter were His preferred methods. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and His methods have not become out of date either. He is equipping people, who are releasing the kingdom of God, using the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. It is time to serve notice to all inert Christians to demolish all the strongholds of injustice in their communities or quit. The church will be much better off without the nonfunctional impedimenta. (Matt. 11:12; John 2:15,16; Acts 19:8-10; Eph. 6:17)

THE EKKLESIA NEEDS MENTORS AND MARTYRS BUT NO GEHAZIS: Jesus summed up the role of leadership when He said, *“I am here not to be served but to serve”* (Matt. 20:28). No one with problems needed an appointment to see Jesus (John 1:37-39). Often times He would voluntarily offer to go to them (Matt. 8:7). Neither Jesus, nor His disciples retired with a pension, for they were all martyred. Peter exhorted the elders as *“a fellow elder”* (1 Pet. 5:1). James called himself *“a bond servant of God”* (James 1:1). Throughout the NT we see young people being mentored for martyrdom (2 Tim. 2:10-12). When Stephen, James, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Silas and many others died early, the young leaders picked up the flag and marched forward. Jesus demolished the hierarchical pyramidal structure of the temple by calling His disciples, “friends” (John 15:14, 15). Elisha sent his servant Gehazi, with his staff to the dead child, with no effect. He had to go there personally and

resuscitate the child, who would have been lost. Treating evangelists or disciples as servants is unscriptural; but sadly, the church is full of worldly masters and ineffective Gehazis (2 Kings 4:27-36). Jesus sent seventy disciples, two by two, to all those places, where He himself intended to go. Likewise, we must go alongside our friends and not act as masters. (Luke 10:1)

A BIG HARVEST IS COMING, GET THE LABORERS READY: Discipling is not a set of rules, principles, formulae, training programs, curriculum, books, tapes or VCDs. They are helpful but by themselves, result only in decorative dwarf potted plants that bear no fruit. It is not climbing the ecclesiastical ladder but a process like farming where the field has to be prepared by weeding, plowing, seeding, watering, manuring and protecting the crop until it is ready for the sickle. Similarly, preaching, teaching, baptizing and equipping must go on until he is ready to go and make disciples. A new born spiritual baby needs intensive nurturing until he is mature. Every Christian household should be a maternity room, giving birth to new baby Ekklesias. (Gal. 2:2; Matt. 9:37,38)

THE HOME GROWN VARIETY MAKE THE BEST PASTORS: The seminaries need radical restructuring if they want to become relevant for the salvation of every tribe and tongue. All the degrees and diplomas need to be junked out of the window and replaced with character building, obedience, fruitfulness and harvesting of souls. Discipling of the nations should be the core curriculum. Medical schools train doctors for the sick, while seminaries train pastors for the saved. There is no valid reason why they should not be restructured to care of the sinners. Paul laid the foundation of “bless others” discipleship program, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim. 2:2). Herein lies the whole secret of healthy growth and multiplication. There are four generations of people here. “Paul” is the first generation, “Timothy” is second, the “faithful men” are third and “others” are the fourth. One on one is the most effective method of discipling. Jesus took the process, from off the sanctuary, on to the streets and into the homes. All discipling in the NT took place informally and spontaneously. The house Ekklesia is the best place for producing the “home grown” variety of talented and gifted servant leaders. This method protects the Ekklesia from the preacher-creature dichotomy.

SEVEN BASIC TASKS OF THE EKKLESIA

1. **PREACHING** - Our God is the God of whole creation. Jesus shed His blood to reconcile the whole creation, not just human beings. Therefore we must proclaim the good news to the whole creation. Preaching must be accompanied with signs and wonders and expelling demons. The venue; where Christ has not yet been named. Preaching like our Master has to be instant, spontaneous, extemporaneous and never a well prepared sermon. It should be dialogical in character with room for questions. (Mk 16:15-20; Col. 1:19,20; Acts 19:8-11; Rom. 15:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 14:26)
2. **SPIRITUAL WARFARE** - God is the Lord of hosts and the Ekklesia is His army. *"To bind and to loose in the name of Jesus"*, is the most powerful evangelistic weapon on earth, resulting in the immediate meltdown of the Hell's angels (Zech. 14:12). This is the most ill understood and therefore most underutilized weapon, resulting in a church with hollow rhetoric and noisy worship but no firepower (1 Thes. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:5). Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil. He has seated His Ekklesia beside Him and asked her to shoot live missiles of the manifold wisdom of God at the principalities and powers of the prince of the power of the air. We must first bind the "bully", destroy his works and then the God of peace will help us to crush his head under our feet. (Matt.16:18,19; 12:29; Eph.2:2, 6:10-18; Rom.16:20; 1John 3:8)
3. **STRATEGY FOR MAKING DISCIPLES**- Disciple making is a process and not a series of haphazard events. It needs a well planned; goal oriented and time bound strategy for reaching the unreached. Making disciples of all nations, tribes and tongues is a deliberate act that comes through praying and preparing. Strategy is not something that is made annually at the budget session, but it should be part of our "daily" thinking. Jesus taught us to lift up our eyes and see the harvest "now". (Rom.15:20; Phil. 3:13, 14; John 4:35)
4. **COMMUNITY REPENTANCE AND MASS BAPTISM** - John the Baptist immediately baptized all those who repented. Jesus baptized more than John. Jesus is the Lord of nations and not just a personal savior nor is Christianity just a personal faith but a community of the faithful, the Body of Christ, wherein all members, repent, die to the world and acknowledge Lordship of Jesus. When Jonah preached in Nineveh, the king and all the subjects put on sackcloth and ashes, fasted and repented. Ezra did the same with those who had returned from the Diaspora. Thousands of Jews received baptism during the Pentecost in Jerusalem. Even today, during the Lent period, Christians corporately, go through the process of repentance and spiritual rejuvenation. During the 40 days of Lent, everyday, Christians hold small meetings in their homes. If this were to be continued throughout the year, in which the people of other faiths would be invited, then we would be back in NT model and the Ekklesia would grow rapidly. All those who repent should be baptized immediately. Repentance and baptism are inter-linked in the NT, hence there is no room for delay (Mark. 16:16). Baptism was never a priestly function. Any believer can do it, including women, where the repentants can comfortably confess their sins. Individual baptism is rare in the NT, household or community baptism is the rule. (Acts 2:37-39, 41; 10:44-48; 16:14-16, 30-33)
5. **BREAKING BREAD** – Whenever believers come together, eating a "communal meal" is the central act of worship. This is to be repeated "as oft" as the Ekklesia comes together. Breaking bread was never a priestly function so no priest is required,

because the Lord's Supper is not a religious ritual. Any believer can serve the Lord's Supper. Breaking of bread signifies breaking of His body, the Ekklesia, which must multiply. The sermon is not a part of worship. Sermons were introduced by Greek professional *Sophists* in the early Ekklesia, who made their living by delivering sophisticated lectures to the public. Many church fathers and celebrity evangelists belong to this class of brilliant orators. Oratory or eloquence does not necessarily mean speaking the truth. Apollos of Alexandria was an eloquent expositor of the Scriptures but did not accurately know "The Way" (Acts 18:25-28). Largely, it is the brilliant orators who have done maximum damage to the Ekklesia by manipulating the truth, hogging all the glory and effectively emasculating the common people from participating. Martin Luther made it worse by calling the church, *Mundhaus* or a speech house. Jesus did not say, when you gather together in My name, somebody should give a sermon. We are simply to gather in His name and at best, have a fellowship meal, as oft as we do. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20, 24-26; 10:16, 17)

6. **EQUIPPING** - The aim is to make every member of the body to be a fisherman. They must learn to share whatever they have learned from faithful people, who will, in turn, share it with others. The members of the household of God should be equipped for different ministries by the fivefold ministry-gifted teachers. They should be equipped to function as prophets, priests and kings to reign on earth now and bring in the righteous kingdom of God. They should also be equipped in sound doctrine so that they can exhort and convict those who contradict. Ability to convict those who contradict is the acid test of being sound in doctrine. Many Christians cannot handle objections raised by practitioners of other faiths. A truly equipped person should be able to deftly handle all their questions and quickly bring them to repentance and baptism. (1 Cor. 14:26-31; 2 Tim. 2:2; Eph. 2:19,20; 4:11,12; Rev. 5:10)
7. **SENDING** - Lay hands and send them out two by two to find "persons of peace" and plant Assemblies. Like the demon-infested Gadarene and the sinful Samaritan woman, once delivered, they can start witnessing immediately. The testimony of the freshly redeemed is very powerful and opens doors, which can later be reached by others. The ultimate function of the apostolic Ekklesia is to make everyone "fishers of men." Jesus said, "*As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.*" His Ekklesia is specifically designed and mandated to reach the ends of the earth and make disciples of all nations. (Acts 13:1-3; 1:8; Matt. 4:19; Luke 10:19)

The business of the church is to set people free.

It is time for the Church to set her own captives free, so that they can go and set others free.

Jesus did not designate the church building to be a place of worship.

God said that from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same His name shall be great among the Gentiles and incense will be offered in His name “every where” (Mal. 1:11)

Jesus said that neither in this mountain nor at the temple in Jerusalem or in a church building but true worshippers will worship the Father in truth and spirit “every where”(John 4:21-24)

Paul said that he desired that men should lift up their holy hands and pray “every where” (1Tim. 2:8)

EKKLESIA KIDNAPPED BY CULTURES

CULTURAL CLASH: Most of our traditional churches are Western in culture, faith and worship. This has been the greatest disaster for the spread of the gospel, as the foreign culture effectively closed the door on the indigenous cultures. Some believe that we should be *Hindu in culture, Christian in faith and Oriental in worship*. Understanding culture is extremely important for the spread of the gospel, for in it lies the secret of reaching entire communities and subcultures or what the Scripture calls “nations.” Jesus left His heavenly culture and was born into the Jewish culture. He adopted their customs, clothes and language. He was part of the local scene, but His vision was global. Initially, He sent His disciples only among the Jews, whose culture and language they understood, but when they were ready, Jesus commanded them to go and make disciples of all nations. (Matt. 10:5, 6; 28:19)

THE JEWISH BONDAGE: Accordingly, the disciples preached among the Jews (Acts 11:19). Almost all the early disciples, even outside Palestine were extracted from Jewish synagogues. However, when they ventured out among the Gentiles, cultural issues became a major problem. Many believed that before becoming Christians, the Gentiles should be circumcised and made to follow Jewish customs (Acts 15:1). Even eating food together became a major problem. When Peter went to the house of Cornelius, “*those of the circumcision contended with him because he had eaten with the heathen*” (Acts 11:1-3). The Jerusalem council was convened and it was wisely decided that the Gentiles did not have to become Jews before converting to Christianity (Acts 15:6-23). After this, Christianity spread rapidly throughout the known world (Acts 13:41-52). However it must be noted that within the first century itself, when the overarching influence of Judaism was lost, the church went into Greco-Roman bondages. She even adopted pagan cults, customs and rituals of heathen temples, which are still prevalent in the modern churches. The church now must address this can of worms and find creditable alternatives.

THE GREEK BONDAGE: The teachings of the great Greek philosophers like Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, were pitted against the fledgling Athenian Ekklesia consisting of Dionysius the Aeropagite, Damaris and a few men (Acts 17:34). Many practices in the modern church have directly descended from Greek culture and heathen temples. The NT was written in the Greek language. The Greek Orthodox Church opted for clanging bells, spicy incense, burnished Byzantine chandeliers, gilded icons and flickering candle lights, with bearded priests adorned in splendid multicolored regalia, chanting unintelligible liturgies, all very romantic, but very pagan and far removed from the simplicity of the NT Ekklesia. The church now must articulate against such non-NT religious rituals with all the lung power she can muster.

THE ROMAN BONDAGE: Baseleus means king. The *cathedral* was patterned on the *basilica* or a royal edifice, which housed the *cathedra* or the clergy’s throne. *Ex cathedra* means “*spoken from the throne*” just like the words of the Roman magistrate. This is how the tradition of not questioning the words spoken from the pulpit came, which is the throne of the clergy. Standing up and singing to welcome the priest, the regalia and putting candles on the altar are all, gifts of imperial Rome. The title Pope or *Pontifex Maximus*, which also means *chief of pagan priests*, was the worst possible gift of the Roman Emperor. Emperor Constantine also gifted his royal basilica to the bishop of Rome, when he left for

Constantinople. The bishop of Rome declared himself the Pope, which simply means Papa or the spiritual father to most Catholics. Instead of the gospel penetrating the world, the Roman top down hierarchical structure and cultic culture, completely vitiated the Ekklesia. The gospel was translated into Latin and the Roman church took control of Christianity and led it into dark ages for over a thousand years. All worship was conducted in Latin, the language of God, which the common people did not understand. The Catholics were strictly forbidden to read the Bible, until Pope Pius VI (1778), Pope Pius VII (1820) encouraged Catholics to read the Bible and Pope Benedict XV (1914-22) actually distributed the Gospels. Even so, many Catholics do not read the Bible, resulting in gross spiritual darkness.

THE HOLY RELIC BONDAGE: Helena, the mother of Constantine, was the first to take religious pilgrimage to the holy land and allegedly collected trinkets, the nails and pieces of the original cross. She placed the relics on the altars, to make them holy. The religious tourism to holy places and worship of unholy relics, which includes hair, teeth and bones, is downright scandalous. Sadly, relics continue to adorn many altars even today. Biblically, the altar should be made either with earth or stone but not with hewn stones. Application of iron tools, pollutes the altar (Exo. 20:24-25). God does not reside in relics but in human hearts.

THE HEAVENLY LANGUAGE BONDAGE: In the 16th century, the Scriptures were translated into many languages. As the people began to read the Good News in their own language, the Christian faith grew vigorously. The translators of the Scriptures had to face the wrath of the religious authorities. However many of the translators, themselves embedded in the current traditional hierarchical religious culture, reflected this by sprinkling in authority phrases, which were not in the original manuscripts. In the 16th century, there were more Muslims than Christians. They refused to have the Koran translated, because they considered Arabic to be the language of Allah. As a result, there are just over a billion Muslims in the world, while there are twice as many Christians. Today the world is divided into 5000 clusters, speaking 13,500 different languages. One day, all these different language clusters will stand before the throne of God. We need to prioritize to reach all the different ethno-linguistic groups in their own heart languages. (Rev. 7:9,10)

GLOBAL INTERCESSION BREAKS BONDAGES: At the beginning of the 20th century, the Pentecostal renewal took place, resulting in the rapid expansion of the kingdom with a new fire. Initially this movement was confined to speaking in tongues, but fifty years later it changed into a charismatic movement, accompanied by signs and wonders. There were large healing and deliverance crusades. In late eighties, it became the global intercessory prayer movement, culminating in the AD 2000 Movement, when millions prayed for the 10/40 Window. This intensive united prayer movement precipitated an Ekklesia planting movement in the middle nineties. This prayer movement also precipitated unprecedented economic prosperity in the third world, including India.

BONDAGE OF COMMUNIST ATHEISM: Eastern European countries, such as East Germany, Russia, China and others came under various brands of atheistic Communism. At one stage, it appeared as though the whole world would be engulfed by communism. However, the intercessors were not quiet. Suddenly, like the Jericho wall, the Berlin wall also came tumbling down and Communism suffered a domino effect in all the countries

of the world. However, the Maoists of India and the neighboring countries, sometimes called Naxalites, are not sitting idle.

BONDAGE IN 10/40 WINDOW AND THE NRIs: This is situated in the 10 to 40 degrees north of the Equator. It comprises of 68 countries, spanning the globe from western Africa to eastern Asia. Of the four billion people who live here, over a billion have yet to hear the gospel message even once. Many lack religious freedom, which is dictated by their political masters. Every major n5

on-Christian religion is based here. Islam is predominant religion in 47 countries, Buddhism in 12, Hinduism in two, tribal religions in two, Christianity in four, Judaism in one and atheism in one. 43 of the 50 worst countries in the world are known for persecution of Christians by tyrannical dictators and evil fanatics. 26 countries in the Window are gospel ready. It is time the Indians stopped making a beeline for the West and focused their prayer and resources to send missionaries to 10/40 countries. Many Christians are already there as nurses, doctors, engineers and other workers, who can be trained as Ekklesia planters. Many non-Christian Non Resident Indians (NRIs) not only build temples and mosques but also heavily fund the training and support of the militant organizations. Unfortunately, the Christian NRIs lack vision and waste their resources on big houses, three cars, a swimming pool and other gizmos. Others waste it on making church buildings etc., but invest very little on training and Ekklesia planting, which is the fastest growing business in the world, with best returns on investment. The Christian NRIs have enough resources to fund the entire Ekklesia planting movement in their own countries and send missionaries to all the 10/40 window countries.

JESUS MUST INCARNATE IN EVERY SUBCULTURE: About 2500 years ago, India was one of the 127 provinces over which a Satrap and many administrators were appointed to rule by the then Prime Minister Mordecai, a hard-core Jew. (Esther 1:1). The Jews established synagogues, which were later converted into Brahma (from A-Braham) temples, with no idols. The *Vedas*, do not prescribe any idol worship. Led by the wily Parsuram (Hebrew: Pur = crush; Ramah = height), perhaps during the Purim, the Brahmins crushed the Kshetriyas (locals) 23 times. Muslim and British invaders are hated in India, but the Aryan invader, colonizer and creator of the evil caste system, Parsuram and his descendents continue to be worshipped. Later the Jains and Buddhists, campaigned against the bloody ritual sacrifices and the Muslims against idol worship, but failed. Finally God sent Christians to blur the caste boundaries and redeem the cultures. Even they failed, because they preached the gospel in the Western cultural garb. Christ must incarnate not only in individuals, but also in every subculture. This will eliminate the divisive systems, and the redeemed people from every caste, culture and class will stand together before the throne of God, as brothers and sisters.

THE INSTITUTIONAL BONDAGE: The earliest missionaries were church planters. Then the intelligentsia came and institutionalized the church by setting up schools, colleges and hospitals. Preaching of the Gospel and planting churches were put on the back burners. These institutions successfully attracted major financial and human resources. As a result, the growth of the churches suffered. Today these institutions have become a liability. Non-Christians have great reverence for Jesus but shy away from the symbols of Western culture, Gothic buildings and worship. All these conspire to kill the free movement of the Spirit.

INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS REFORMERS IGNORED BY THE CHURCH: Our people eagerly go to study Western theology, which has failed. The liberals are busy debating the theology of homosexuality. In USA, 86% were professing Christians in 1990. In 2001, it dropped to 77%. By this projection, USA will be without Christ in 2035. Sadly, no one bothers to study Sanskrit or the poems of Kabir, which are mostly biblically based or read the writings of Ambedkar, Phule Maharaj about Baliraja (the self-sacrificing king), about Ghasidas and Satnamis or Guru Nanak, Jain and Buddhist reformers. In South India, great poets like Thiruvalluvar and Jothiramlingam and later 'Periyar' EVR Ramaswamy Naicker of Tamilnadu and Shri Narayana Guru of Kerala, caused massive social upheaval by condemning idolatry and the cruel caste system. God sent all these people to prepare the way, so that in the fullness of time, millions will be redeemed. Tragically, the church was busy chanting liturgy and completely failed to grab the opportunity.

PAUL VISITS THE TEMPLES AND STUDIES HEATHEN SCRIPTURES: Visiting a temple would be highly objectionable and anathema to many devout Christians. But how else can you bind the "strongman" unless you enter his house (1 Cor. 10:19,20; Matt. 12:29)? Many Christians do not study the scriptures of other faiths, thinking that our Scripture is all sufficient. But Paul visited the temples, studied the culture and the writings of the local poets and liberally quoted them to the idolatrous intelligentsia of Athens saying, "*Your own poets say so*" (Acts 17:28). We have no knowledge of the scriptures, beliefs and practices of the 3000 people groups that comprise the one billion people of India. We cannot understand their mindset, worldviews, and therefore, unable to effectively witness to them. We are living in a spiritual, mental and social ghetto of our own making, whereas God wants us to spread abroad like dust and reach the ends of the earth. (Gen. 28:14; Acts 1:8)

RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SONS OF ISHMAEL: Christians do not bother to pray for Muslim brethren, nor read the Koran, a gold mine of information about Jesus and an important bridge to reach the 1.4 billion of them worldwide, of which 140 million are in India. 5000 in North India, 4000 in Central Asian republic, 15,000 Kazakhs, 16,000 in North Africa and an incredible 500,000 Neighbors in Balgadesh have turned to Christ recently. Mombasa city in Kenya has changed from 95% Muslims to 50% Christians in one decade. According to Ahmad Al Qattani, a Libyan Islamic scholar, 667/hour, 16,000/day and 6 million/year, Muslims are turning to Christ. This is greatly exaggerated but indicates the trend. Ineffective missionary methods, non-integrative churches and a disastrous lack of faith among top Christian leaders, created a climate of catastrophic disbelief. In 1982, a ridiculously small proportion, only 2% of all missionaries were working among the Muslims. We have utterly failed to take the long walk to Emmaus with our Neighbors and introduce them to Jesus. God is still waiting for Kedar and Nebaioth, the sons of Ishmael, to come riding on dromedaries (fast camels) to His altar, to glorify His house. (Isa. 60: 6-7)

DALIT AND BACKWARD COMMUNITY CULTURE: Of the 450 million Other Backward Classes (OBC), 140 million Harijans (Untouchables) and 100 million *Adivasi Tribals* (indigenous people) of India, a mere 2.3% are Christians. In North India that figure is less than 0.5%. Many of them have benefited greatly from the educational, social and financial facilities provided by the church, but they were never encouraged by the church to go back to their own *oikos* (community) and bring them into the Christian fold. No wonder the church is only growing at a snail's pace even among the most receptive people on earth.

THE CHURCH HAS BEEN HIJACKED: The kidnappers come in the garb of Western culture, denominationalism, man-made traditions, buildings and property, which have made the church an ineffective tool for the advancement of the kingdom of God. All these things act like ship's anchors that stop it from going anywhere. Moreover, what use is an anchored ship that goes nowhere? It will certainly not catch any fish.

LEARN FROM GANDHI: Although he was barrister of law trained in England, Gandhi wore a *dhoti* (loin cloth) to identify with the culture and created a mass movement to set India free from slavery. When Hindus and Muslims were slaughtering each other in Calcutta, he shouted, "Where are the Christians who understand the language of love?" Unfortunately, the Christians were hibernating. It happened when Sikhs were slaughtered in Delhi. It happened again in Punjab, Gujarat, Kashmir and in many states. Dalits, children and women are violated all the time, as the culture of violence continues unabated, but true to our character, we consistently fail to visit the widows and the orphans and thus lose golden opportunities to witness and to be the salt and light to the world. Gandhi followed Jesus' model of nonviolence. Christians will also have to present Christ in the indigenous culture, in their homes, especially during crisis. Only then, the Christians' homes will become an oasis in the desert. Christ will incarnate in the hearts of the common people, and the vision of every tongue and tribe praising Him, be realized. 2000 years before Gandhi, Jesus walked the dusty roads, from village to village, identified himself with the common people and finally, wearing a loin cloth, died on the cross, so that all humankind could be set free from the slavery of sin.

THE MAJORITY OBJECTIONS: If a Hindu brother says that he also believes in one God but there are different ways to reach Him, will you be able to show him the Scriptures that says "*Jesus is the only way, the truth and life and no one can come to the Father except through Him*" (John 14:6)? Or when he says that God is one but He has different names like Ram, Rahim and Isa, are you able to quote Acts 4:12 and say that apart from Jesus, "*no other name has been given under the heaven whereby one can be saved?*" Do you know that many non-Christian scriptures, affirm Jesus in many direct and indirect ways?

THE NEIGHBORS' OBJECTIONS: The extreme naivety of the West and its liberal policies towards hard-core Muslims has created the ghost of terrorists, who are now coming to haunt them. The fundamentalists try to incorporate the cruel *Sharia* or Islamic law of hand-chopping, stoning and beheading etc. in the Constitution. Failing that they introduce piecemeal legislation like Apostasy and Blasphemy laws. They trigger an incremental Islamization through terrorism and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Conversely, the moderate Muslims are extremely hospitable people. Even though, 276 verses in Koran, affirm Jesus and all their objections can be resolved from the Koran itself, we do not win friends by criticizing, even when the Koran clearly teaches the truth. Many "folk Muslims" cannot read the Koran in Arabic with understanding; therefore, they only know what they have been indoctrinated. Muslims do not come to Christ by being defeated in debates but by love, intercession and divine miracles.

BUILD BRIDGES: *Ramah* (Gen. 10:7) and *Shiva* (2 Sam. 20:25; Acts 19:14), are Biblical names. *The man Noah* or '*Ish Nu*' in Hebrew became *Vishnu* in India. A'brahm became *Bramha* and Sara became *Saraswati* and Aaron became *Aryan*. Smearing ashes and the bath of purification (Num. 19:17) were common practices among the Jews. Saffron colored clothes were worn by priests in Jerusalem. The "*trishul*" (trident) was used to

handle sacrificial animals at the altar as well as to fight wars (1 Sam. 13:21; Exo. 27:3). Fruit, grain and new wine were offered as sacrifices and then shared and eaten together (Num. 18:8-19) just like they share *prasad*. Jews took vows and shaved their heads (Num. 6:18; Acts 18:18) just as others do today. There are well kept graves of Noah and the sons of Adam in Ayodhya, even today. We have better claim on Ayodhya than Hindus or Muslims. Jacob took a stone pillar, poured oil on it and called it Bethel, the house of God (Gen. 28:17-19). Lydia and friends were baptized in river *Ganges* (Acts 16:13-16). There is much common ground between us that can be used to build bridges. Rama was king of Ayodhya and Krishna of Dwarka, while the rest of the country was splintered into thousands of other small kingdoms. It is the Christian British who came and for the first time united the country as one nation under God. It is time to blow the *shofar* (trumpet) of truth in the land of Ramah. (Hos. 5:8)

ONLY FOUR ITEMS WERE BANNED IN THE SCRIPTURES: The first council of the leaders in Jerusalem was not a spiritual convention but specially called to thrash out cultural issues. Circumcision and Sabbaths were the most contentious issues on the agenda. Wisely they restricted themselves to only four items: (1) no idol worship (2) no sexual immorality (3) keep away from eating the meat of strangulated animals and (4) do not drink blood (Acts 15:20, 29). Interestingly, all the great religious reformers of this country like Guru Nanak of Punjab, Ravidas of the North, Kabir of Kashi, Ghasidas of Chhatisgarh, Phule of Maharashtra and many others, focused on these very issues. They took their people out from idolatry, a massive leap forward. Now the church must take the next step and redeem them. (Col. 1:27,28)

CULTURAL HYPOCRISY IN THE CHURCH: When a pastor thunders from the pulpit, in a sacred building, to an organized congregation, that we are a biblical church and preach the pure word of God, then someone needs to point out, that the whole show, all of the above, including himself, are non-biblical. Jesus preached daily in His road shows to highly unorganized, spontaneously gathered, different people and not the same people every Sunday. How can we be purely biblical if we force new believers, wanting to join Christianity from other faiths, to join such a church, eat meat, adopt English names and Western culture? We insist on things that have no approval in the Scriptures - like asking women to remove from their foreheads the “red vermilion” marks, necklaces and bangles, all symbols of their marriage. Sadly, hypocrisy is rampant in the church. Those who impose these things; themselves give millions as dowry in the marriage of their daughters. God does not look at what is on the forehead or the neck, but what is in the heart.

SWADESHI (INDIGENOUS) EKKLESIA IS THE NEED OF THE DAY: Paul says “...to the Jews I became as a Jew, to win them over...to those who are of other faiths I became like them, to win them to Christ. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. 9:19-23). We need, as a matter of priority, to break away from mental slavery to Western cultural accretions in the church. Complete indigenization or the “*Swadeshi Ekklesia*” is the answer. Like her Master, the Ekklesia must go to the people in their own cultural garb and not with imported garbage. (Luke 10:1-9; Acts 20:20)

JESUS IS TRANS-CULTURAL: Even though you can attend a church in cyberspace with the click of a mouse, we thank God that many indigenous movements have started on the ground. Some worship by offering flowers and incense and lighting oil lamps, while

others break coconuts (symbolizing the breaking open of the grave) to celebrate the Lord's Supper, while yet others offer Ganga Snan (a holy bath) for baptism. Hindus are flexible about going to their temples any day according to their convenience. They can go early in the morning or late in the evening or even in between. Their religious discourses take place all through the night, while Christians are rigidly structured to meet on Sunday morning at 10 AM for 2 hours. Anything, which is not Western, is immediately dubbed as syncretistic, yet many of them are serious attempts at contextualization. There are certain negotiables, which should be used for communicating the gospel, while practices, which compromise biblical truths, are nonnegotiable. We should carefully assess motives of a person before being judgmental. In the meanwhile God is waiting for *"the Gentiles to burn incense and make pure offerings in His name, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, in their homes."* (Mal. 1:11; Phil. 1:18)

MEDITATE ON THESE THINGS: Almost all obstacles to accepting Christianity, are social, cultural, and not religious. Every community resists change because it does not want to lose its adherents. This is why we must not limit ourselves to individuals, but focus on entire communities. We should also refrain from preaching Christianity and limit ourselves to preaching Christ. This is exactly what happened in the North-Eastern states. The change over was not an individual decision but a community decision. Most Christians do not study the culture and religion of those they hope to impact, assuming that the Bible is enough. But Paul says, *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things"* (Phil. 4:8). There are many noble things in other faiths and cultures, on which we need to meditate and redeem.

PAUL'S WARNING: Paul warned the Ephesian elders against the shepherds who would *"draw away disciples after themselves."* All the sheep belong to Jesus and He is the Chief Shepherd. There is only one flock in the city and indeed in the region and together we are to shepherd them. Calling them "my" sheep is a mistake and dividing them on denominational lines is a blunder (Acts 20:29-31). Thank God that the denominational walls are crumbling throughout the world and soon there will be one flock and one Shepherd.

The tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them. Even in the New Jerusalem, there will be no temple because God and the Lamb are the temple. (Rev. 21:3, 22)

Jesus did not come to rebuild the ornate temple of Solomon but to raise up the fallen tent of David, so that the Gentiles may seek His face. (Acts 15:16, 17)

God does not live in houses made with human hands but He lives in temples made without hands. (Acts 7:48, 49; Mark 14:58; Dan. 2:34, 35)

Idolatry requires temples made with human hands but the temple of the living God is a broken and a contrite heart.

(1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Psalm 51:17)

Jesus did not say, "Go and build buildings"

Jesus said, "Go and make disciples"

(Matt. 28:19)

THE CHURCH BUILDING

GOD IS A TENT DWELLER: Our God is a “Go God.” The Ark of the Covenant, which represented God, was housed in a portable tent with rings and poles, always ready to go. After demolishing Dagon and punishing the Philistines with the bubonic plague, the Ark moved into the homes of Aminadab and later Obed-Edom, where it stayed for many years. David messed it up by building a temple, which was not in the plan of God (2 Sam.6:4, 10; 7:2). Even in the New Jerusalem, God and the Lamb are the temple. But for the present, we are His mobile tents. (Exo.25:10-22; Rev. 21:3,22; 2 Cor. 6:16)

ABRAHAM DWELT IN TENTS: Our Patriarch Abraham was an extremely rich man, but he was constantly on the move, pitching his tent, building altars and worshipping God until he had claimed the entire area, which God had promised to give his descendents. He was looking forward to the city whose builder and maker is God. (Heb. 11:8-10)

JESUS CAME TO REBUILD THE FALLEN TENT OF DAVID: The Jews celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles around September/October. They brought palm branches and leaves and stayed in booths. During that week, every Jew offered many mandatory sacrifices to God. This was to remind them of their stay in tents in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land (Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43). The Hebrew word “*Cukkah*” (pronounced “*Sukkaw*”) means tent, tabernacle, cottage, shelter, booth, shed and hut - anything of a temporary nature. Jesus came to demolish the stone temple of Solomon and to rebuild the fallen huts of the poor people. This is to be done by us, His pilgrim people. (Acts 15:16,17; Amos 9:11,12)

GOD DOES NOT LIVE IN HOUSES MADE WITH HUMAN HANDS: Jesus announced the demolition of the temple at Jerusalem saying, “*Not a stone will be left unturned*” (Matt. 24:1,2). By 70 AD, the temple was demolished. At the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain, Moses and Elijah appeared. Peter’s great idea of building three tabernacles was rejected by Jesus (Mark 9:1-8). Jesus was accused of destroying Solomon’s stone temple, and the promise of building His temple without hands (Mark 14:58). Stephen spoke against the temple saying, “*The Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands*” (Acts 7:48,49). Immediately, he was stoned to death. The Jews were temple people, but not necessarily godly people. The death of Stephen launched the Jerusalem Ekklesia into Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Soon, hundreds of villages and towns of Palestine and Mediterranean countries were dotted with Ekklesias, but not a single church building was constructed. Constructing sacred buildings represents egocentric empire-building mania, which kills kingdom building.

THE MONUMENTAL MISSIONARY MISTAKE: It is a well-known fact that as long as pioneer missionaries operated from the tents, the church grew exponentially but as soon as they copied the British colonial model and built massive mission bungalows, the movement declined. They built little churches, schools, orphanages and mud houses for the natives. The missionary movement effectively changed from an outgoing centrifugal force to an inward looking centripetal activity. The missionary bungalow became the center of controlling power structure. They gave birth to mission compound, inhabited by cooks, cleaners, baby sitters, gardeners, drivers and sycophants, to serve the powers that be. A few became pastors, evangelists, teachers, nurses and clerks to serve the institutionalized church. Very few caught the vision to reach their own *oikos* (extended family or

community). The dilapidated monuments stand today as symbols of a monumental mistake, as they effectively closed the door on rapid spontaneous expansion of the Ekklesia and set the stage for future property disputes, litigation and power struggles. They also divided the white elite from the poor natives and turned the potential future leaders into rice Christians. Mobility was sacrificed at the altar of creature comfort, consolidation, organization and stability of the church. This is not a condemnation of all missionaries. Many identified with the people and lived among them as equals. Mobility continues to be crucial for the spontaneous rapid expansion of the Ekklesia, as modeled by Jesus.

THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT WITH LOCAL RESOURCES: The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but God humbled himself to meet with His people, in a portable tent (2 Sam 7:6; Exo. 25:22). It was built with local resources, with the freewill offerings of every single family and not by a donor agency. All the materials like the goat's hair, ram's skin, Shittim or acacia wood, were easily available in the wilderness. Even the gold, silver and brass were in abundance as they had plundered the Egyptians on the night they left Egypt. On the other hand, Solomon's ornate temple was built with imported materials and domestic slave labor. (1 Kings 8:27; Exo. 3:22; 2 Chron. 2:12-18)

CHURCH BUILDINGS ARE SHRINES: True Ekklesia is "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus as the chief corner stone*" (Eph. 2:20; 3:5,6). Sacred buildings are not built by apostolic and prophetic founding fathers, but in memory of dead and gone funding fathers. Sacred refers to a place where a saint or a martyr is buried. St Peter's Basilica in Rome was built (330 A.D.) on the site of Necropolis (city of the dead), on the Vatican Hill. A vault depicts Christ as the Sun on a horse drawn chariot. Unfortunately, this "coffin model", which houses the dead church, is all too common, all over the world. In 1991, in the United States alone, church buildings were worth 500 billion dollars. The Ekklesia is "*a spiritual household, built with precious living stones, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*" (1 Pet.2:4,5)

THE EKKLESIA IS PEOPLE AND NEVER A BUILDING: In all the 114 references in the NT, *Ekklesia* refers to Assembly of God's people and never to a building. (1Cor.3:16; Gal.6:10; Eph.2:20-22; Heb.3:5; 1Tim 3:15; 1Pet.2:5; 4:17). In the OT, there was a sanctuary for the people, but in the NT, people are the sanctuary. The English *church*, the Scottish *Kirk* and the German *Kirche*, all come from the Greek word *Kuriakon*, which means "belonging to God". William Tyndale (1494-1536) rightly translated the word as Congregation, which was not liked by the Catholic Church. The word "church" should be abandoned, as it has caused much confusion. Just like the Greek word baptism, we should retain Ekklesia, the Assembly, a Congregation or a Gathering but we should never refer to a building as the Church.

THE APOSTOLIC INVASION: In God's economy, in the countries of the 10/40 Window like China, India and many others, there is now a great move of the Holy Spirit, and large numbers of grass-root level apostles and prophets, especially women, are planting Assemblies by the thousands. God's means for keeping His Body healthy, pure, on track, and proliferating, lies largely with the apostles and prophets. Where they are absent, these attributes are also missing.

EQUIPPING MISSIONARIES FOR THE GUTTER: It is often easier to send missionaries to the uttermost parts of the earth but mobilizing church members to go to the gutter-most parts

of their own city, requires special grace. The early church focused on equipping disciples and building up the city Ekklesia (Eph. 4:12). Discipling can be done anywhere, in houses, factories, offices, teashops, in the kitchen. Almost every Jewish believer was discipling in his home. Not surprisingly, there was exponential growth in the Jerusalem city (Acts 6:7). Many of Paul's "hearers" came from the market place where he was a tentmaker. It is time we seriously started mobilizing and training from our own church membership, a special breed of missionaries for the offices, work and market places and the ghettos, to go out daily, because that is where all the lost people are. This way the church will be in action daily. (Acts 17:17)

SAUL PERSECUTED THE HOUSE EKKLESIA: As soon as Jerusalem was saturated with Assemblies, a great persecution took place and the believers were scattered abroad (Acts 8:1). Saul went from house to house, as he knew the houses where they met (Acts 8:3). Believers who were scattered abroad went and planted new Assemblies, but did not build any buildings for worship anywhere. (Acts 8:4). If you do not obey Acts 1:8, then Acts 8:1 follows.

SALVATION IS OUTSIDE THE CHURCH BUILDINGS: Just as health is outside the hospital and education is outside the schools, salvation is definitely outside the traditional church. The single point charter of the church is to disciple the nations. For this, we do not need grand buildings, celebrity preachers or megabucks. The important issue is, that it is impossible to build a new edifice based on biblical principles without first knocking down the existing extrabiblical structures. The time has come to do just that. The nations must be disciplined, at their convenience, in their homes, in their own cultural context. (Gal. 2:2)

THE OLD COVENANT IS OUT AND THE NEW COVENANT IS IN: When Jesus died, the curtain in the most holy place separating man and God was torn asunder. As Jesus had prophesied, forty years later (A.D.70), the Roman general and later emperor, Titus (A.D. 39-81), came and physically destroyed the temple, the symbol of the old covenant, stone by stone. The old covenant based on an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life came to an end, and a new covenant based on love and grace came into existence (2 Cor. 13:14; 3:16). The elaborate ritualistic "temple model" became obsolete, and a new model, simple enough to reach the Gentiles, became operational.

FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW COVENANT: A NEW PARADIGM

1. The stone temple has gone and now the human heart has become the temple of God. (1Cor. 6:19; Jer. 24:7)
2. The temple priesthood is no longer necessary because every believer has become a royal priest. (1 Pet. 2:9)
3. Circumcision of men has been replaced by water baptism for men and women, thus providing gender equality. (Col. 2:11,12)
4. The once-a-week celebration of the Sabbath in the synagogues has been replaced by daily Gatherings in homes. (Heb. 3:13)
5. The animal sacrifice has been replaced by the living sacrifice of people of other faiths. (Rom. 15:16)
6. The offering of tithes in the temple has been replaced by the sharing of material possessions with the needy. (Acts 4:32-34)

7. Caste, class, race and gender divide, replaced by Jews & Gentiles, rich & poor, men & women, all being one in Christ. (Gal. 3:28)

NO CELEBRATION IN THE TEMPLE: The disciples did not meet in the temple courts for celebration. They were playing hide and seek with the authorities and sometimes ended up in the temple prison. If we like the temple model, then we should also build a prison in the church complex, complete with prison guards (Acts 5:18-25), to incarcerate all the troublemakers in the church. The disciples never thought of building houses of any kind for worship. They met in the most natural of all places, the homes of believers. In these houses, all the believers “*continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayer*” (Act 2:42-46). They went to the temple at prayer time, not so much to pray, but to share their new found faith (Acts 4:1-4). Very soon, they were thrown out and the entire process of discipling was carried out in the homes of believers.

EKKLESIAS PLANTED BY ORDINARY PEOPLE: The planting of new Assemblies was not necessarily done by the original apostles, but by ordinary believers who were scattered as refugees, sharing their simple faith. Interestingly, when the people were scattered, the original apostles remained in Jerusalem for a long time. However, the Holy Spirit was imparting fivefold ministry gifts to the new believers that were emerging in broad Diaspora. (Acts 11:19-21; 8:1; 15:4)

GOD PREFERS HUMAN HEARTS: Millions of buildings have been built in the name of the Lord. This is in spite of the clear statement that “*God does not live in houses made with human hands*” (Acts 7:48,49). Idols need temples to be housed, but we do not need them because we are the holy temples of God. Buildings bring glory to man, but God is happy to live in human hearts. (1 Cor. 1:29; Is. 42:8)

DEMONS ALSO LIKE TO LIVE IN HUMAN HEARTS: If a demon is cast out, it wanders in the wilderness and later returns to the same person with seven more deadly Hell’s angels (Matt. 12:43-45). The lost people of this world need to be delivered from the clutches of the Devil, but before that, the demons in our own hearts must be driven out and replaced with a living faith that is greater than the Devil. (Eze. 14:1-8)

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT ACADEMIA BUT MODELING, RELATIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL: *Akademeia* was a place near Athens, where Plato (427-347 B.C.) taught his disciples abstract philosophy and made them philosophers. Academic now refers to learning higher knowledge rather than practical skills (Col. 2:8). Knowledge can be bought in the market, but being a Christian requires special grace. Jesus taught His disciples practical skills and made them world-class fishers of men. He finished the task and sent them into the world (John 17:4,18). The 17th Chapter of John is His High Priestly prayer of their dedication.

Modeling: Jesus modeled a leadership style, which was radically different from the core values of the religious Pharisees. Jesus was not a top down leader of a multinational company. He modeled a relational leadership for a small group. Relationships work best in small groups (Mark 3:13-15). In large groups, it becomes amorphous. He preached and lived the kingdom and modeled a transparent shared life style, which resulted in a caring and sharing kingdom community of believers.

Relational: God is relational as He lives in Trinity. Jesus provided a transformational leadership to His disciples by calling them His friends. This demolished the caste, color,

class, race and culture divide and gave them equal status. He shared His Father's vision and purpose with them as partners and not as subordinates. He commanded them to love one another, which is the basic tenet of Christianity (John 15:9-17). He did not teach humility by giving a lecture on the philosophy of humility but demonstrated by washing their feet. Unity and fellowship were important to Him, so He prayed to God that His disciples should always be with Him. They experienced the kingdom. (John 17:24)

Experiential: He taught them spiritual warfare not by conducting a seminar, but He gave them hands-on experience of healing diseases, raising the dead and casting out demons (Luke 10:17). They were not His students, but disciples, and He taught them through apprenticeship. Jesus asked us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and strength but then asked us to prove it by loving our neighbor as ourselves. Christianity is not academia but modeling, relational and experiential.

Tsunami A Disaster or Target Shooting: "*Sunami*" in Hindi language means "*of good reputation*". The seven deacons, chosen to lead the Ekklesia in the new phase of aggressive evangelism in the Greek speaking Gentile world were called Sunamis (Acts 6:3). The first Sunami to be martyred was Stephen. The greatest underwater earthquake on Christmas Sunday 2004, sent huge waves across to several countries, causing death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. For many, the gods were angry while for others it was mindless destruction by natural forces. However, God does not move tectonic plates haphazardly, and a careful analysis indicates selective targeting. It is God's megaphone to wake up the deaf world.

THE TARGETS: In India, Tsunami hit Nagapattinum (Naga means serpent) where thousands of Hindus had gathered to worship the Naga. Close by, is Velankani, a Catholic shrine called "Our Lady of Health". Devotees bring mini gold or silver replica of the diseased body parts to make an offering. Thousands who came to thank Velankani for fulfilling their vows, were buried alive under the sand. In Sri Lanka, another site of devastation, the hotbed of violent Buddhism, has been aggressively persecuting the Christians. They want the government to pass an anti-conversion law. Kar Nicobar, with 95% Protestants, nearly half the population was wiped out. Many were Christians only on Sundays but on week days they practiced idolatry, witchcraft and ancestor worship. Banda Aceh in Indonesia, the greatest stronghold of Islam, who hate Jews and Christians, took the full fury of the Tsunami, with tens of thousands of casualties. They banned the celebration of Christmas in the coastal city and asked the Christians to go up to a nearby hill. Providentially all the Christians were saved. Now the Christian aid workers are welcome all over Aceh (Deut. 30:7). Phuket city in Thailand is a mix of Sodom and Gomorrah, was badly hit. Phuket is the world's largest tourist center of pedophiles and gay activity. However, no one should be deceived, because God cannot be mocked (Gal.6:7). For the present, all He has done is to give a gentle push to His footstool, the earth. This is only a foretaste of future catastrophes like social, political, ecological and spiritual Tsunamis.

CATASTROPHES PRECIPITATE TECTONIC SHIFTS IN PARADIGMS: The Sept.11, 2001 attack on WTC and the Pentagon in USA was loudly lauded by the Jehadis (Islamic militants), cried foul by the rest of world but millions of Christians targeted their prayers for the Neighbors as never before. Consequently, a trickle of believers has started flowing towards the Lord. It is good to show God's love in tangible ways but soon the secular world will forget them and get busy with other agendas. The Christians, however, will

continue to rebuild shattered lives of the victims of the Tsunami, which claimed over 200,000 lives in nine nations. The secular world can give them food, water, shelter, clothing, relief and rehabilitation etc., but not love and the knowledge of salvation, which only Christ through His disciples can provide. Some feel that it is inappropriate for the church to take advantage of the people in crisis, but it is well-known that crisis produces tectonic shifts in paradigms. Providing worldly goods and not helping the hurting people into the kingdom of God, would be missing the message and the loss of lives would be wasted. In 1976 a devastating earthquake practically destroyed Guatemala. The Holy Spirit used that catastrophe to bring about an increased responsiveness among the tribals and 20 years later 42% had become Christians with additional 30% sympathizers. It is time to create a Global Prayer Tsunami, to send spiritual shock waves throughout the demonic world and change the little trickle into a mighty stream of believers. Christians should be pouring not only relief materials but gasoline wherever the spiritual bush fires have started. (Isa. 66:1-4, Psalm 51:17; 53:2, 2 Chron. 7:14)

SPATE OF RELIGIOUS BUILDING: The last decade has seen a major epidemic of constructing religious buildings. Muslim mosques, Hindu temples, Buddhist Viharas, Christian churches, centers of witchcraft, animistic worship and occult practices, have mushroomed all over the place. It seems that the Tsunami will result in major growth spurt to religious buildings industry, resulting in increased pervading darkness and religious bigotry. Much of the relief will go into placating gods and goddesses and the practitioners of the occult and the rest will back track in to the market and sold for a price by the black marketeers. Already temporary shrines have been put up in the beaches, to worship angry deities. The faith healers, gurus, leaders of all religions, even Christian charlatans will raise money to build religious buildings and peddle packaged religion. True Christians need to be aware of this and unless they personally visit the affected people and focus on giving them the gospel of truth, the entire saga of suffering will go waste.

NOT BRAHMANS BUT THE CHRISTIANS WILL BE JUDGED FOR IDOLATRY: 2500 years ago, the high caste Brahmins introduced idolatry, divided people into lower castes, despised, dominated and annihilated the dignity of man. The education system started by the British and the missionaries was hijacked, so most of the political plum jobs went to them. However, after 57 years, for the first time Dalits and Christians are holding important jobs. Interestingly, a Brahman Chief Minister arrested the Shankaracharya, the highest Hindu Pontiff of Kanchi. The number of Brahmins in the current Parliament has come down from 29% in 1952 to 11% and the Backward Communities have gone up from 4% to 22%. Brahmins continue to dominate the administration, the media and the judiciary. According to Noachic covenant, anyone violating life, liberty, equality and dignity of a fellow human being, the image of God will be judged. Like others, many Christians are also idolaters, who worship their jobs, money, house, TV, sports, etc. Loving anyone or anything, more than God is idolatry. The Christians and the Jews will be judged for idolatry (Gen. 9:5,6; Exo. 20:4; Eze. chap 14; 1 Cor. 10:19-21). Jesus shed His blood for the *nirvana* (salvation) of all, so that all can become the sons of A-Braham and inherit His *Sanatan Dharma* or the eternal faith. (Gal. 3:29)

OTHER "ISMS" ARE ALSO ON THE WANE: The fall of the Berlin wall signaled the demise of Communism in many countries. Similarly, with the invasion and defeat of Afghanistan and Iraq and starting of democratic election processes in other Islamic countries, is a positive step, even though Islamization of the world continues to be the heart of the

fundamentalist agenda. Although Islam was preached for many years, its official date commenced in AD 632, when Mohammed became the *Khalifa* or the ruler of Mecca and Medina. Many Islamic leaders came to power through violence and bloodshed. The wider implications of the defeat of Saddam Hussein are misunderstood. We must never forget that it was in Ur of Iraq that God blessed idol worshipping Abraham to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:3). Except for the 22 Arab states that contain only one-quarter of the Muslims of the world, having democratic parliamentary elections, in many Islamic nations, like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Turkey, the Balkans and Mali, is a giant leap forward. Many ideologies and 'isms' like Marxism, liberalism, mysticism, syncretism, religious pluralism, Communism, Nazism and fundamentalism etc., all conspired to kill Christianity. There has been a high speed hike in global religiosity and spirituality but all these 'isms' are miles behind the run away growth of the emerging charismatic churches, on the planet earth.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY IS MADE IN HEAVEN: God said, "*I already have good plans for you, for a peaceful future; for My thoughts are higher than your thoughts*" (Jer. 29:11; Isa. 55:8,9). God did not call us to be successful but to be obedient. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Esther, David, Peter, Paul and others did not have any plans but God gave them world changing strategies, when they obeyed and acted in faith. We are merely vessels (2 Cor. 4:7) and the more space we give Him, the more He will fill us up with His plans. Man-made strategies are naïve prognostications and assumptions, which often fail (Prov. 16:1). When we obey and take steps of faith, God intervenes, thwarts the plans of the enemy and heals the nations. (Ps. 33:8-12)

WE ARE HIS WISE MASTER BUILDERS: Constructing buildings, usually attract accusations of corruption. Finally, we have a brick building but not much of an Ekklesia. Buildings are man-made but Ekklesia is the work of the hands of Jesus (Matt 16:18; Mark 14:58). Jesus is building His temple with living stones like us (Eph. 2:19-22). This temple is not yet complete, because many nations are yet to join (Eph. 3:6). Our job is to help Him complete the task of building His temple by plugging the gaps with the Gentiles nations (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 15:16). This grace period will end soon. As wise master builders we must expedite the building of the temple . (2 Pet. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10; 2 Cor. 6:16)

There is some Biblical support for baptism of the dead and even for snake charming but there is scant Scriptural support for a modern day pastor and definitely none for the reverend. (Mark 16:18; Acts 16:3; 28:3-6; 1 Cor. 15:29)

Christianity is a movement and Christians are a Diaspora people looking for the city. (Heb. 13:14)

A resident pastor and an established congregation are contradiction in terms, because both the shepherd and the flock, by their very nature are wanderers. (Matt. 18:10-14; John 10:16)

Jesus our Lord was a wandering Shepherd. (Heb. 13:20; Luke 13:32, 33)

Jesus has appointed fivefold ministry gifted equippers to go out and replicate the Book of Acts, all over the world, resulting in an out of control Ekklesia planting movement. (Eph. 4:11-13; Acts 8:6-8; 16:5)

THE SHEPHERD

CHRISTIANS ARE A SHEPHERDING COMMUNITY: Jesus came from a shepherding community. Abel, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and many others were shepherds who were despised by the Egyptians (Genesis 46:34). However, they were a special people to God. They were the first ones to hear the good news of the birth of Jesus. Jesus chose a cow shed for his birthplace. An early morning visit to a cow shed will show how dirty and smelly the cow dung and urine is. Shepherds are extremely hardy people who clean up the mess, milk the cows and go out daily, summer or winter, to feed the animals.

YOUNG GIRLS ARE THE REAL SHEPHERDS: Interestingly, we have a picture of an old man with a gray beard as a shepherd. This is only partly true. The reality is that in Eastern countries, it is the young girls who take the animals out to graze. The boys go with their father to do the heavy work. Some of the patriarchs like Isaac, Jacob and Moses found their future wives while watering their animals at a well. It is possible that the shepherds who came to see the baby Jesus in the middle of the night in Bethlehem were all young people. In the last days, it is the young men and women, and even servant boys and girls, who will prophesy, show signs and wonders and shepherd the community (Joel 2:28-30). We are chosen, not only to be biological parents but also to be spiritual fathers and mothers to the non-Christian poor children, who are not in schools and are working as forced labor, to redeem them and help them become shepherds. The best place for equipping future shepherds and shepherdesses is the home school.

TWO KINDS OF SHEPHERDS: According to the Lord, there are two types of shepherds. **The hireling** is a mercenary and works for money. When he sees danger coming, he abandons the sheep at the mercy of the wolf and runs away. **The caring shepherd** takes ownership and is ready to lay down his life for the sheep (John 10:11-15). Jesus told Peter three times to feed “My” sheep. There are many shepherds and many sheep, but only one flock and Jesus is the Chief Shepherd.

QUALIFICATION OF ELDERS: Paul never appointed one but several elders in every Ekklesia to avoid concentration of power in the hands of one man. He also did not appoint elders a second time in the same church, which was now in the local domain. The elders provided the most successful leadership, which led to exponential growth of the early Ekklesia. Eighteen character traits are mentioned in the Scriptures for the elders. Eldership is a high calling with godly passion and not a profession (1 Tim. 3:1). It is leading and instructing (1 Tim. 5:17), shepherding (1 Pet. 5:2), praying for the sick (Jam. 4:14), hearing accusation against a believer and admonishing publicly (1 Tim. 5:19,20), teaching sound doctrine and convicting those who contradict and being hospitable at all times (Titus 1:8,9). He is eligible for double honor but should earn his own living and support the weak (Acts 20:17; 34,35). Even their children and wives are expected to be blameless. They should manage their families well, before leading the corporate Ekklesia (Titus 1:5-9, 1 Tim. 3:1-7,11). The elders are the core of the core, stakeholders in the success or failure of the Ekklesia, which depends on their quality and the quantity. Capacity building of the elders is the key to success, who must be continuously mentored, envisioned, encouraged, taught communication skills and team building and how to handle sensitive culture clash etc. This will keep the Ekklesia healthy and fertile.

DO NOT CALL YOURSELF A DOCTOR: Ministers are ordained on the basis of their academic qualification rather than their spiritual and soul winning track record. Jesus objected

when one man called him “Good Teacher” (a teacher is called “doctor” in the Greek language), whereas we strive to get a Ph.D. in order to be called doctors (Mark 10:17,18). *“And do not be called teachers, for One is your teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.”* (Matt. 23:8-10). Ministers with academic credentials speak to the head, while the born again write epistles on human hearts (2 Cor. 3:2,3). The clergy are not the sole interpreters of the Scriptures nor are they arbiters of our salvation. There is no mention of clergy as an office in the NT. Eldership was not an office either. Though this word appears in some translations of the NT, in 1 Timothy 3:1, it does not appear in the original language.

NO POVERTY IN THE CARING AND SHARING EKKLESIA: All the elders were volunteers who contributed their time and other resources. There were no costs involved in building and maintenance as the Ekklesia met in the homes of the believers. All the offerings could therefore be used to help the poor and needy and for the support of missionaries. Absence of poverty, combined with rapid multiplication, is the sign of a healthy Ekklesia. (1 Cor. 16:1-3; Rom. 15:26-28; Acts 16:5)

PASTORS ARE MARTIN LUTHER’S GIFT: In the NT, the word “pastors” comes only once, and that too in fourth place in the list of the fivefold ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11). Significantly, it is not in singular but plural. The apostles never mention pastors in their letters to the Ekklesias. Diotrephes was the first recorded person to suffer from preeminence syndrome, which was greatly resented by Apostle John (3 John 9). This insignificant post in the church came into prominence after Luther’s reformation to distinguish them from the Catholic priests. The word “priest” comes four times in the NT, which is for every believer rather than the celibate Vatican variety. (1 Pet.2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)

JESUS WILL BE WEARING SAFFRON CLOTHES: Saffron clothes are not the monopoly of Hindu priests. The temple priests in Jerusalem wore white gowns made of fine linen, but as they offered sacrifices, they became splattered with red blood. When the robes were washed, they assumed various hues from saffron to ochre. One day Jesus will come, riding on a white horse, wearing clothes dyed with the blood of His enemies. Upon His red robe, His name will be written “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” (ISA. 63:1-3; Rev. 19:11-16).

JESUS HATES A HIERARCHICAL CHURCH: Nicolas, supposedly one of the seven deacons chosen along with Stephen, went to the Ekklesias and wrecked them by dividing them into “*speaking brothers*” and “*listening brothers*.” “*Nicos*” means “*conquering*” and “*laos*” means “*ordinary people*” hence; “*Nicolaitans*” came to mean “*conquering the laity*.” Jesus hates this clerical hierarchy because it drives a wedge between the religious elite and the ordinary believer (Rev. 2:6 1 Pet. 5:2,3). According to 1 Peter 2:9, all believers are “royal priests.” Jesus hates it when the authority of ordinary believers is usurped and they are turned into mere spectators. The history of the church is a record of systematic violence to the speaking rights of a believer. Jesus says, “*The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and exercise control over them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant*”. (Matt. 20:25,26)

THE EKKLESIA MUST GROW IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY: The Ekklesia is the Body of royal priests who proclaim the light of the gospel to those who are still in demonic darkness. If Christians are encouraged to know their true identity and authority by giving them the

opportunity to fully participate in the deliberations of the Ekklesia, then the Ekklesia will be strengthened in faith and will grow in numbers (Acts 16:5). Every member - men, women and even children, will be able to find and shepherd the lost sheep into the fold, and the kingdom will grow exponentially as it did in New Testament times. (Acts 6:7)

TWO THINGS TO KNOW: A shepherd has many functions, but we will discuss just the two main ones:

1. **FINDING LOST SHEEP:** The first duty of a shepherd is to seek and find any lost sheep that are not yet in the sheepfold. Even if ninety-nine sheep are safe, searching for any lost sheep must become the highest priority. Any farmer owning sheep will cancel everything else until he finds the lost sheep. (John 10:16; Luke 19:10)
2. **FEEDING NEW SHEEP:** The second duty of a shepherd is to feed the sheep so that they mature quickly and reproduce more sheep. If sheep do not reproduce, then they are of no use to the shepherd, who sells them off to the butcher (John 21:15-17). This is why Jesus asked Peter three times to feed His sheep. If you really love Jesus then you will feed His sheep so that they can quickly come to reproductive maturity. Only sheep can reproduce sheep. Sheep are not fed once a week in the stall (church building), but have to be taken out daily to graze in the pasture.

HATCHING, MATCHING AND DISPATCHING: Solemnizing marriage is not the role of the church, as exemplified by our Lord at the wedding in Cana. The marriage in Cana took place in a house and not in the synagogue. A pastor solemnizes marriage in his capacity as a Registrar of the government, for which he is given a license. In many places, after the registration of the marriage in a government office, the couple receives Christian fellowship and blessings in the home Ekklesia.

LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR DEAD; YOU GO AND RAISE THE DEAD: In the OT, if a priest accidentally touched a dead body, he had to undergo a bath of purification (Lev. 21:1-4; Num. 19:11-14). Aaron, the High Priest, was not even allowed to attend the funeral of his sons (Lev. 10:1-7; 21:1-4, 10-12). When Jesus was buried, no religious ceremony was carried out. When the first Christian martyr, Stephen, was stoned to death, devout men carried Stephen and buried him (Acts 8:2). The majority of the Christians of the first century were killed, sawn asunder or fed to the lions. There was no burial ceremony, but there is no doubt that they all went to heaven. Jesus unkindly replied to the man who wanted to first bury his father and then follow Him, *“Let the dead bury their own dead, but you preach the kingdom of God.”* (Luke 9:60). When poor Lazarus died there was nobody to bury him, but he went straight to Paradise. On the other hand, the rich man was buried with great religious ceremony, but it was of no use. He was already in hell while the ceremony was going on. Anybody can bury the dead, like the young men who buried the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira. We have been sent into the world to raise the dead, especially the spiritually dead. (Matt. 11:5; Acts 5:5-10)

BISHOPS WERE NO DIGNITARIES: Paul called all the Ephesian elders and told them that the Holy Spirit has made them bishops to shepherd together “one flock”, which belongs to Jesus (Acts 20:28). Ignoring these clear instructions, Ignatius of Antioch (A.D.35-107) instituted the bishop as the sole ruling authority, equated him with God and the presbyters as subordinates, based on Roman centralized power structure and forever destroyed the process of shared decision making by local elders. The modern day clergy continue to

dominate, because of this unscriptural edict of Ignatius. ‘Bishop’ means ‘an organizer’ or ‘an overseer’. As a local elder the bishop’s job was to organize secret meetings for which he was often persecuted. This is why he was much respected. This office became corrupted, and the bishop became a dignitary and a dictator, controlling people and property. In the NT, every elder (*presbyteros*) of a local Ekklesia is a bishop (*episkopos*).

RIGHT REVEREND OR LEFT REVEREND: Later, the priests assumed the illegitimate title of “*Reverend*” meaning “*worthy of reverence*.” This title can only be used for God (Psalm 111:9 KJV) because only God is worthy of reverence. This title has been inherited from the Roman Catholic Church. It is wrong to call anyone “Reverend,” because it is usurping God’s authority and mocking Him, and God cannot be mocked (Gal. 6:7). The fact is, that in the NT there is no difference between the bishop, deacon, elder, and the brethren. In the Ekklesia of Jesus, there are no dignitaries. We are all co-laborers . “*Jesus did not come to be served but to serve*.” (Acts 20:28; Matt. 23:11-13; 20:28)

NO PADRES EITHER: Padre is a Latin word, which means “father”, or “master.” Jesus expressly forbade anyone to call himself a father or master, “*for one is your Father in heaven*.” Jesus said, “*He who is greatest among you shall be your servant*” (Matt. 23:4-12; Luke 16:15). He also said, “*If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all*.” In Christ, the highest designation given is that of a bond servant (Mark 9:35). This does not mean that we should give up being spiritual fathers to seekers of the faith. The Scripture is only against using this as a title to exalt ourselves.

JESUS IS OUR MOBILE MODEL: The shepherd must be constantly on the move. Jesus is our Chief Shepherd and Bishop (1 Pet. 5:4). Every day He went out to heal the sick, to comfort the broken hearted, to set free those who were in bondage and to bring the kingdom of God into the hearts and homes of the people (Luke 4:18,19). Sadly, most of us are busy warming our office chairs.

THE KINGDOM CANNOT COME WITHOUT FIRST BASHING THE BULLY: Springbok deer, found in the Kalahari deserts are extremely vary of the predators. But when they are fighting among themselves, they forget the danger and the predator easily kills them. In Hindu mythology, Arjun was a great bow and arrow hero. Once his teacher told him to shoot a bird on the tree. Arjun trained his arrow and said, yes I can see the bird sitting on a branch. The teacher said focus. Arjun replied, now I see the bird. The teacher again commanded him to focus. Arjun said, now I only see the eyes. The teacher said, now shoot. We must focus our sharp shooting on our common enemy the Devil . He that is within us is far greater than the bully out in the world (1John 4:4). The destiny of nations depends on us but the Kingdom cannot come without focused bashing of the bully. (1 Cor. 4:20; 2 Tim. 3:5)

IMITATE CHRIST, NOT CURSED TRADITIONS: Every Christian needs to imitate the Chief Pastor (Matt. 15:3). Paul says, “*Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ, and keep the traditions just as I have delivered them to you*” (1 Cor.11:1,2; Phil. 4:9). “*Even if we, or an angel from heaven preach another gospel to you, then let him be accursed*” (Gal. 1:8,9). All the traditions and titles need to be approved by Jesus; otherwise, we are in danger of being accursed.

MULTITUDES IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION: “*Jesus saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd*” (Matt. 9:36). Even today,

many people of other expressions are desperately searching for God. Some go on long pilgrimages, accepting many difficulties; some give alms, while others fast and organize religious Gatherings. Still others offer coconuts, alcohol, flowers, chickens, animals and sometimes even humans as a sacrifice. They are all searching for God. God wants us to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3). Jesus wants us to bless all of them with the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14). Jesus, our Chief Shepherd, had compassion on the multitudes. The Devil (the deceiver) is unhindered in his work of deceiving the multitudes and he has consumed them with a passion for idolatry (Acts 17:16). Sad to say, we have done very little to prevent this. (Joel 3:13,14)

THE JEWS AND THE HOLY COW: The Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Before they will be able to enter that temple, they will have to go outside the camp to smear themselves with the ashes of a red heifer and sprinkle the water of purification. Otherwise, they cannot enter the temple (Num. Chap.19). Many Christians smear holy ash, in the shape of a cross on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday, the first day of the 40 day Lent season. Similarly, people of other faiths, smear themselves with ash, take purifying baths. They believe that when they die, they will have to swim across a river infested with crocodiles. The only way to cross it is to hang on to the tail of a cow. We must warn our brothers that the crocodiles love beef and the safest way to go to heaven, is to hang on to the coat tails of the followers of Jesus. (Heb. 9:11-15; Zech. 8:23)

OFFER YOUR HAIR AND TAKE A VOW: Thirupathi in Andhra Pradesh, the richest temple in the world, tonsures about 15,000 people every day, who take some sort of vow. In the bargain, the temple makes Rs. 300 million from the sale of hair, annually. Paul shaved his consecrated head at Cenchrea and made a vow. On the way to Jerusalem, he was shipwrecked and lost everything, except the bag of hair, which he offered at the temple, because a Nazirite vow could not be completed outside Judea (Num. 6:18). We do not know the vow. Perhaps it was thanksgiving or maybe for the third missionary journey, he was about to take (Acts 18:18, 23). Even today, Pentecost is celebrated in many places with display of red and saffron clothes and flowers to represent the Fire of the Holy Spirit. Heads shaved or unshaved, it is time to put our consecrated egg heads together and take a vow to complete the mission and the message of the Pentecost, to evangelize the world.

THE WHOLE CREATION IS GROANING: The groaning world means, the Gentile or the lost world, as distinct from the godly Jewish world (Rom. 8:19-22). Today, 99% of the sheep are lost but the church spends all its resources on less than 1% of the Christians. Our Lord, spent 99% of His ministry time, on the streets and in the homes of the lost people. We also need to go and bring the lost sheep so that there will be one flock and one Shepherd. (Luke 15:7; Acts 18:24-28)

A true church will not be known for its wonderful worship, profound sermons or even nickels and noses but for the harvest of souls.

Fruitful Christians, who are “in Christ” have already been judged, and now stand innocent with Christ Jesus.

Recalcitrant resistance to change from regressive traditions and suppression of democracy in the church/missions negates it from being a hub of salvation for lost.

God will not tolerate anyone destroying the image of God, either by violating life or the dignity of a human being or the killing of an innocent baby through abortion or even for the death of the wicked.

(Exo. 20:4,5; 21:22,23; Gen. 9:5,6; Eze. 3:18)

The church is not designed for Christians but exists for the lost. A church that has no heart for the unsaved needs a heart transplant because the heart of God bleeds for the perishing. (Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9)

The soul of the church has to change before the souls of lost men and women can change.

True sign of maturity in faith is the ability to layout the road map of salvation for the lost. (Titus 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:23-26)

The Bible is God’s storybook. It starts with the story of the original creation, and ends with the redemption of the fallen creation by Jesus.

The wounded creation is travailing for the manifestation of the sons and daughters of God to give vision, purpose, direction and a sense of destiny, through transforming leadership to the lost nations.

(Rom. 8:19)

The key to successful transformation of the community is finding master story tellers called “the persons of peace” who can lucidly tell the story of the Creator and the creation, to the lost. (Mark 16:15; Luke 10:6; Col. 1:15-20)

PERSONS OF PEACE

IDENTIFYING THE “SON OF PEACE” IS KEY TO EKKLESIA PLANTING: The Lord taught His disciples, when you go to preach, look for “*a person of peace*.” Stay there and eat with them, heal the sick and cast out demons and preach the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:1,2; 10:5-9). The Greek words “*huios eirenes*” mean “*son of peace*.” The word “*son*” also means “*descendent*” and can be used for male or female. In the New Testament there are many examples of persons of peace, such as Cornelius (Acts 10:24), Lydia (Acts 16:14), Mary, the mother of Mark (Acts 12:12), Dorcas (Acts 9:36), Priscilla (1Cor. 16:19), Tyrannus (Acts 19:9,10), Jason (Acts 17:5-9), Justus, Crispus (Acts 18:7,8) and many others, whose names are mentioned in the 16th chapter of Romans. Many of them are women.

EAT WITH THE PERSON OF PEACE: Persons of peace are facilitators who facilitate Ekklesia planting. All the people mentioned above were persons of peace who had Ekklesias established in their homes. Christianity spread throughout the world through the efforts of persons of peace, not just through the work of the apostles or the institutional church. Generally, persons of peace are influential, like Cornelius and Lydia. The Lord has blessed them so that when the time comes, they can take care of the boarding and lodging and security needs of the saints and the new converts. This is why the Lord gave instructions to go and stay with them and “*eat whatever is laid before you. A laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.*” (Luke 10:5-8). The influence of such a person helps in gathering his own household as well as his neighbors to hear the word of God (Acts 10:24). In virulent disregard to these clear instructions, the modern evangelistic teams go to a village, set up their loud speaker system, sing and preach. They do not mentor a local leader and leave without planting a church. This unscriptural method can cause many problems, both for the preacher and the preached. Persons of peace are the latter day saints who plant Ekklesias in their homes.

BREAK THIS RULE AND PAY FOR BOARD AND LODGING: The failure by missionaries in finding persons of peace and dealing directly with the poor, resulted in having to open “mission compounds” for those who were thrown out from their communities. Even today, this mistake is being repeated, and new believers have to suffer persecution and ostracism. It also sends wrong signals to the educated and the influential that Christianity is meant only for the poor and low caste people.

THE GENTILES ARE GROANING FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD: In His economy, God has already planted persons of peace in every human habitation, be it a city, a village or a neighborhood (Acts 15:14; 17:26,27; Rom. 11:5). The Bible says that, “*the whole of creation is in travail for the manifestation of the sons of God*” (Rom. 8:19). Finding the person of peace is the key to starting a house Ekklesia in any locality. He is easily identifiable because he is generally a person of good reputation and hospitable. He will invite you into his house and take care of your food, accommodation and other needs (Luke 10:5-9). These should not be refused, because they are arranged by the Lord Himself in order for His Ekklesia to be established (Mark 16:20). Even though at this stage he belongs to another faith and may be even hostile to Christianity, by constantly praying for him, breaking his bondages and blessing him, you will release him for God’s intended purpose.

FINDING THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF PEACE IS THE TOP PRIORITY OF THE EKKLESIA: God has already visited all the lost people on the face of the earth and their locations (Acts 15:14; 17:26). Jesus came to rebuild the fallen tent of David. Now it is for us, the children of “*shalom*” to go and find the Gentile children of “*peace*.” It is our responsibility to prayer walk the area and bless all the families living there. We need to bind the strongman, identify and release the children of God (the persons of peace), and plant multiplying Assemblies in their homes. Jesus says, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*” (Matt. 5:9). The only diploma we need is B.A.B. (Be A Blessing). (Gen. 12:3)

A traditional church only caters to the whims of those who pay church tax. The NT Ekklesia is focused on the needs of the new believers. Just like the needs of a newborn baby take priority over all the other agenda of a household, the new believer is the top priority of the NT Ekklesia. If an unbeliever comes, then everyone in the Ekklesia ensures that he/she is nurtured to full reproductive maturity through full participation.

(1 Cor. 14:24-26)

The traditional church is like a puppet show, where the puppeteer controls all the dummies on strings.

Power does not flow from the pulpit or from the barrel of a gun but the power to move mountains, comes from forgiving and loving each other.

(Mark 11:23-25)

A critical mass of Christianity exists in almost every country now, to bring about a total transformation, in our generation.

The church needs an urgent “deployment audit” of the huge spiritual storehouse of gifts and talents locked up in the pews and the pulpit. If harnessed, it can bring about an exponential growth and multiplication of Christianity.

Theology, the knowledge of God is only a small fraction of the Scriptures and is the preserve of the religious elite.

Being “called” is not enough. We must have authority and skills to fulfill the calling. Jesus called his disciples, gave them authority and taught practical skills, how to raise the dead, expel demons, heal the sick and how to handle those who contradict. He also authorized them to baptize and break bread. (Luke 9:1)

Jesus was a practitioner. He expects us not only to plant churches but to make it a sustainable movement to avoid attrition. (Acts 16:5)

YOU ARE A ROYAL PRIEST NOT JUST A LAYMAN

THE CHURCH NEEDS TO REINVENT HERSELF: The Church is the cutting edge of the kingdom of God, which must constantly make deep cuts in the kingdom of the Devil and expose new unreached frontiers. There are hundreds of nations today, which are gospel ready. The NT model amply showed that this cannot be done by the financial muscle power of the Church but by the limitless power of the Holy Spirit. Sadly, the Church is more interested in making a fast buck rather than getting on the fast track of soul saving. The unholy nexus between the misguided leadership and the wayward congregation has dulled her aura in the world. The Church needs to hold critical dialogue on her mission and mandate and rediscover, if not reinvent, herself. All the divisive structures, which discriminate against the sinner, should be removed to have a united voice against the Devil. She cannot be exclusive but inclusive, which means sinner friendly. All those who love the Bride, must stop chasing the mythical Holy Grail of traditions and function as royal priests to liberate the sinners, who live in bondage to hell. One of the top priorities of the Church is to conduct a “deployment audit” to find out the “utilization factor” of her huge stockpile of gifts and talents for the harvest of souls. A panoramic view of the church landscape reveals a colossal waste of the precious cargo.

THE CHURCH NEEDS RADICAL RESTRUCTURING: The division between clergy and laymen in the churches is unconstitutional. The word “layman” in the Church means zero. However respectable or influential a person you may be in the secular world, you are just a “layoff.” Your only duty is to add to the membership and pay the church tax. For this favor, they will baptize your babies, marry the young and bury the dead. However, even after all the sacraments, there is no assurance of your going to heaven. The clergy are the custodians of the institutionalized faith. They often achieve their position through manipulation by non-transparent methods and stonewall any change towards democratization of the church. They exercise authority through worldly power structures. Jesus died to abolish oppressive power structures and replace it with liberty, equality and fraternity, to bring in horizontal church governance. It required a revolution and a blood bath in France (1789-99), to abolish the evil rule of the clergy and the nobility and restore power to the common people. The church needs radical restructuring, to restore power and authority, from the dominance of the clergy and ecclesiastical nobility to the ordinary believers.

CHANGE YOUR MEMBERSHIP FROM THE CHURCH REGISTER TO THE BOOK OF THE LAMB: If you desire to be an active member of a church, then you will be handed the collection plate. If you show more zeal, you will be made the secretary of the brothers’ or women’s prayer cell; and if you talk too much then you will be made a member of the executive committee, where nobody will have time to listen to you. In any case, no attempt will be made to make use of your God given gifts. During the elections, it does not matter how many identity cards you have, if your name is not in the voter’s list, then you will not be allowed inside a polling booth. It is very very important to make sure that your name is in the Book of the Lamb, while you are here on earth, because *“by no means anyone can enter that defiles or causes any abomination or a lie, whose name is not written in the Book of the Lamb (Rev. 21:27).* Having your name written in the church register is not the same as having it written in the Book of the Lamb. The seventy member Sanhedrin, the

ruling senate of the Jerusalem temple, including the High Priest who entered the Holy of Holies, crucified Jesus and never made it to heaven.

BRINGING FORTH FRUIT THAT REMAINS IS THE BENCHMARK: The Lord has chosen us specifically to “*go and bring forth abundant fruit that remains.*” Any branch that does not bear fruit will be removed and thrown into the fire. We must remember that every believer will be known by his fruit and not by his religious affiliations, activities or even gifts. Ability to turn the world upside down is the ultimate benchmark of the effectiveness of Ekklesia. (John 15:6,8,16; Matt. 7:16-20; Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27; Acts 17:6)

NO MINORITY COMPLEX BECAUSE WE ARE ONLY A REMNANT: Priests are always a minority and royal priests are even more special. (1 Pet. 2:9; Exo. 19:5,6). The Greek word “*eklektos*” means, “separated” or “called out.” We need to know that God has chosen us to possess the land, not because we are holy or great in numbers (Deut. 9:5,6; 7:6), but because He loved us and chose us to be His holy priests, so that we may proclaim His great glory among the people. (1 Pet. 2:9). He has promised, “*Five of you will chase a hundred and a hundred of you will put ten thousand to flight*” (Lev. 26:8). “*Fear not little flock for it has pleased the Father to hand over the kingdom to you.*” “*For many are called but few are chosen,*” and we shall reign on earth. (Luke 12:32; Matt. 22:14; Rev. 5:10)

FUNCTIONS OF THE ROYAL PRIESTS:

- 1. INTERCESSION:** (*Inter-between + cedere-to go*). The Hebrew word “*paga*” means “*pleading on behalf of someone else.*” There is a gaping disconnect between God and the lost people. He is looking for just one person, who will act as a “go between” on behalf of his community. If this does not happen, then the unsaved will be destroyed, but their blood will be upon us. God is always looking for intercessors, because He does not want anyone to perish (Isa. 59:16; Eze. 3:18; 22:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). As our High Priest, Jesus has been interceding for the past 2000 years for every tongue and tribe to see that they stand before the throne of God. As His priests, we need to do the same. (Heb. 7:25)
- 2. OFFERING SACRIFICES:** God said that His house was a house of sacrifice (2 Chron. 7:12). He said that He will accept all the heathen brethren from all nations as a spiritual offering, and He will make them priests (Isa. 66:18-21; 60:1-7). In the NT, Jesus said, “*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*” This means that prayers need to be offered for people of other faiths, so that they also will have an opportunity to enter the kingdom of God. (Mark 11:17). Paul says that as a priest, he offers Gentiles as a spiritual offering. (Rom. 15:16)

We no longer offer animals as a sacrifice, but as NT priests we must continue to present non-Christians, as spiritual offerings, pleasing to God. In the OT, only perfect animals could be offered. We too must properly disciple, baptize and equip them until they become fishers of men. Anything less will not be a perfect offering and your Ekklesia will not qualify as a “*House of Sacrifice*” or a “*House of Prayer*” for all nations. God has planted us as priests in His vineyard with our neighbors. We have enjoyed His sun, shower and salvation but have left our neighbors unconverted and unsaved, which makes us barren and fruitless. It is in our own interest to function as full-fledged priests in the neighborhood and fill the earth with His glory. (Lev. 22:21; 2 Chron. 7:12; Mk 11:17)

3. **THE SPOKESMAN OF GOD:** As priests, we speak on behalf of God. Everything we say are oracles of the living God (1 Pet. 4:11). *“For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.”* (Malachi 2:7)

First of all, a priest of God is expected to have a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. **Secondly**, people should come to him to seek clarification on matters of doctrine and **thirdly**, as a messenger of God, he should go to the people to share with them the whole counsel of God. The knowledge of God is called Theology, which is a very small part of the Scriptures. There is a difference between rhetoric and practice. People practice what they believe, the rest is rhetoric. Jesus taught practical knowledge. He taught about sowing seed, harvesting, catching fish, finding lost sheep, convicting those who contradict and so on. He showed them how to heal the sick and to cast out demons. These are all practical skills. These cannot be taught in a classroom, but need to be demonstrated in the harvest fields. We need to teach them all the necessary practical skills, without which they will perish. *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priests for Me...”* (Hosea 4:6)

4. **THE ROYAL PRIEST:** The term *“royal”* denotes governance. This is not based on vertical power structures, but horizontal, the meek inheriting the earth, as exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-11). Jesus, through His shed blood, has made us priests and kings (Rev. 5:9,10). Jesus is the King of kings and we are servant kings. He has authority over all the kings of the earth. It does not appear that way because His priests do not even know that they are kings and that they should govern on behalf of the King of kings. Daniel, Joseph, Nehemiah, Esther, Elijah, Samuel and all the others were governing priests and prophets. They were the de facto rulers of the nations and ruled through intercession.

As a royal priest, you also have the authority and responsibility to bring in a righteous government on behalf of the King of kings. The government is upon His shoulders and not in some political party. He is our head and we are His hands, feet and shoulders. Therefore, the government is really upon us. We are the legitimate government with Jesus as the head, but Satan is ruling through the political parties by default. He has no authority to rule (Dan. 2:44, 7:18,26,27). There is a national government but no righteous governance. As servant kings we have the power of attorney to rule by proxy, and indeed the responsibility to prepare the city and the nation to welcome Jesus, the King of kings. Jesus proclaimed liberty to all; presumably, this includes those held captive by the traditional church. We need to break every burden and every extra-biblical yoke that the church puts on the people. Then the oppressed will be set free and they shall arise, shine and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed with the healing of the nations. (Isa. 9:6, 58:6, 60:1-3; Deut. 15:6; Luke 4:18; 2 Chron. 7:14)

5. **MULTIPLICATION:** We are a generation of priests. If we do not reproduce, the priesthood will come to an end. God’s vision is that *“from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, His name shall be great among the Gentiles who will burn incense in His name”* (Malachi 1:11). We have to prepare millions of priests who will establish His kingdom everywhere. This means that every household has to have its

own priest so that he can burn incense in his own house. This is not such a difficult task. Already one third of the families of the world are Christians. All we need to do is to commit this understanding to faithful men who will pass it on to others, to function as priests in their family Ekklesias.

In addition, the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2)

Only when we fulfill all these requirements will we be true priests offering praise and worship in spirit and in truth. Worshipping on Sundays without fulfilling our role as priests is spurious worship. Just saying “Lord, Lord” is not enough. One day He will ask us as to why we did not fulfill our role as royal priests. (Matt. 7:21-23)

YOU ARE AN ORDAINED PRIEST: Please remember that however and wherever you are today, you are a royal priest and you need to start functioning as such immediately. You may not feel like a royal priest, but do not let your feelings deceive you. The son of a king is a prince whether he feels like it or not. Whether you feel like it or not, you are a royal priest. You were chosen and ordained by God Himself, the day you accepted Jesus Christ as your King. He made you a priest and a king with His precious blood. *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and **ordained** (KJV) you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”* (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; John 15:16)

Do not be ashamed of the gospel. Submit to God and study the Word, especially the Ekklesia planting instructions given in Luke 10. Declare your priesthood, gather a small group of the lost and start discipling. Remember, where two or three are gathered together in His name, Jesus is present. Now you have already started an Ekklesia and you are in your heavenly Father’s business. (Luke 2:49)

THE HARVEST IS READY: The disciples thought that there were four months until the harvest, but the Lord said the harvest is ready now. Like the disciples, we have this wrong notion that the harvest is not ready. We tend to think that the people of other faiths are not yet ready. However, according to our Lord, the harvest has been ready for the last two thousand years. That is why He commanded, *“Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white to harvest.”* The problem is a shortage of laborers. (John 4:35)

LET MY PEOPLE GO: The religious demons keep the religious Christians captive within the religious buildings. There is a huge potential locked up in the pews, which needs to be set free. Jesus came to proclaim liberty to the captives and set them free (Luke 4:18). Jesus is coming back to put down all the illegitimate power and authority structures, even in the Church (1 Cor. 15:24). Ordinary potato sells for Rs. 2 (20 cents) per kilo but the same potato has great value addition, when it is processed and made into chips etc. and sells for Rs. 100 (\$2) per kilo. Similarly a “pew potato” has no value but when processed (equipped) and released from the traditional church and allowed to blossom, then he/she can go out jumping as a calf or a heifer released from the stall, unleashing the huge potential of creativity, resulting in an unimaginable ascending church growth trajectory. Churches adopting the cell church or house church models have experienced this. If only a handful of Christians had the courage to quit decorating the pews and instead start working as missionaries in their own communities, neighborhoods, office or in the market place, then there would be the distinct possibility of transforming their cities and

the nation. Jesus commissioned us all to proclaim the gospel to the lost of this world. They are still waiting. (Matt. 24:14; John 4:35; Luke 10:2)

THE OPEN DEBATE: The world is understandably cynical about the church, because there is a wide disconnect between the church and the people. We need to initiate open and candid dialogue regarding her role and mission in the world. It should not be like a college debate with a lot of hot air but no action. There should be no harping on nostalgia and sentiments about bygone glorious yesteryears. The dialogue should lead to cold clinical diagnosis of her present malady and opting, not just for cosmetic surgery or putting band-aid on the gnawing cancer, but implementing necessary therapy, however radical that may be. This bold and robust practice should go on, until she resonates with the will of God and proactively dislodges the usurper.

SPYING THE SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE PRECEDES INTERCESSION: If the Ekklesia is serious about repossessing the God given territory, then she must find out the tactics and techniques of the usurper and plan appropriate strategy to counter attack. No army in the world can make a strategy without information obtained from espionage. Effective hostility against the Devil must be preceded by detailed intelligence gathering through reconnaissance and spiritual mapping of his strongholds. Moses and later Joshua sent spies to Canaan to find all the details of the people, places and the layout of the land (Num. Chap. 13). However, perceived threats in the report frightened those with grasshopper mentality. The rebellion attracted the wrath of God. But for rapid fire intercession by Moses and Aaron, running with burning incense on the censer, in the midst of the plague of death, praying for their atonement, the entire rebellious crowd, could have ended up as a pile of carcasses. It was the most risky and dangerous act by Aaron, even as 14,700 people died (Num. 13:17-20; 31-33; 16:42-50).

TIME FOR PRAYER RUNNING AND NOT JUST PRAYER WALKING: Joshua chided the Israelites for being slack in taking possession of the kingdom that God had given to them. He asked them get a **detailed survey report in writing**, so that he could reallocate the territories (Joshua 18: 3-9). The church needs strategists like Joshua who are researchers and have a vision for possessing God given territories, based on facts and not assumptions. We need intercessors like Moses, who in the midst of hostility against him, prostrated himself and prayed while Aaron ran among them. Even though millions are dying today of the plague of sin, Christians do not research their own communities and are, therefore ignorant of the facts, hence few Christians take the risk of running between the living and the dying and interceding for their atonement. We need prayer joggers to intercede continually (1 Thes. 5:17) to delay His coming, so that none may perish. (2 Pet. 3:9)

COMPETENCIES OF AN EKKLESIA PLANTER: Like an elder, the Ekklesia planter should be *“moral and hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”* (Titus 1:8,9). Today, the house Ekklesias are cobbling their way into un-reached places and communities, giving marching orders to the existing dispensations. The Ekklesia planter must know the mystery that the Gentiles must become inheritors of the kingdom. He must also know that the Christ in us is the only hope of glory for the lost. An Ekklesia planter must be multi-competent and not just theologically trained. He must harness all the different Rom. 12

and 1 Cor. 12, ministry gifted people, who are available in abundance throughout the Body of Christ. He must make the diversity of gifts, to function in unity. All these should finally result in spontaneous multiplication of Ekklesias. The key to successful discipling of the nations is to model a Christ-like character and strive to utilize every member of the Ekklesia as a resource person.. Then the Ekklesia will be *“a glorious Ekklesia, not having spot or wrinkle, but she will be holy and blameless.”* (Col. 1: 26-29; Eph. 3:5; 5:27)

TALK JESUS TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS: The early Ekklesia was Christocentric. They met each other informally all the time with no formal meetings. In the Roman Empire, 80% of the people were illiterate. Even the literate did not have the written Scriptures, which were available only in the Synagogues, in the form of cumbersome scrolls. The only theology they talked was, that the Jewish Scriptures testified about Jesus (John 5:39). The focus of their meeting was always the person of Jesus. They knew Jesus and talked Jesus. Jesus had commanded them to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). We need to stop baiting, bashing and humiliating non-Christians but touch their heart-strings through talking Jesus to them. Every religion and culture has Christ hidden in it, which we need to find out, talk Jesus to them from their own culture and scriptures, and redeem the people and the cultures. (Rom. 2:15; Acts 17:23, 28)

In the entire Bible, there is no mention of the believers gathering to worship on Sundays.

The Ekklesia is an assembly of royal priests who gather together to worship God and to edify each other by stirring up love amongst one another.

They can do so any day and every day, anywhere and everywhere.

(1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 10:24, 25)

A mature church is one, which transforms the lives of those outside the church.

If Jesus is really in your church on Sundays then He should be bursting forth into the world for the rest of week. (John 17:15, 18)

Mission is not just for missionaries with a special calling. Just like a church without mission is a spurious church, a Christian who is not a missionary in the secular world is a fake.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

SUNDAY IS NOT SABBATH: Christians remain confused regarding the Sabbath day of the Jews. Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week. Sunday was a working day for the Jews. The Sabbath started at sundown on Friday evening and lasted until Saturday evening. The Sabbath was a “sign” between God and Israel (Exo. 31:17) and has nothing to do with Christians. Additional Sabbath laws were invented by the Scribes, which made Sabbath, a day of burden rather than a day of blessing. The Jews were not allowed even to light a fire to cook food or to do any of their customary work on the Sabbath (Exo. 35:3). Thank Jesus that He fought against it, otherwise we Christians would not be able to eat our favorite Sunday rice and chicken curry or go out for a Sunday picnic. Paul told us not to judge others on the basis of food, drink or Sabbath or be cheated through philosophy or traditions of men. (Col. 2:8,16,17).

JESUS WAS A TRADITION BREAKER: Jesus particularly enjoyed breaking ludicrous man-made Sabbath laws. His hungry disciples merrily plucked grain on the Sabbath and ate, which was unlawful but eating plum pudding in the synagogue, was not. Healing a paralytic in the synagogue was a crime but circumcising on the Sabbath was not (Matt. 12:1; John 7:22,23). Jesus committed high treason by making a bent woman stand in front, in the synagogue, which was an affront to the men. Mixing mud and spittle attracted mudslinging by Jews, mired in traditions (John 9:14). The Jews were synagogue people, but not necessarily godly people. They decided to kill Jesus (Mark 3:1-6). God asked the Jews to celebrate Sabbath at home and never in a synagogue, nor did Jesus ask Christians to build buildings and worship on Sundays. Jesus is building His Ekklesia, to function daily, without the Sabbath rules. He is looking for iconoclasts who will break the stranglehold of man-made Sunday traditions and reestablish daily worship in homes, just like they offered daily sacrifices in the temple. (Acts 2:46-47; Heb.3:13; 2 Chron. 13:11)

JESUS WAS No GENDER BENDER: The Bible is a book of truths and truth can be brutal. Jesus accepted His genealogy, which consisted of Rahab a prostitute; Tamar who indulged in an incestuous sexual relationship with Judah, her father-in-law; Ruth a Gentile and Mary His own mother being suspected of fornication (Matt. 1:18,19). He set an example for us that it is not the roots that is important but what we do with our lives. There was a woman who had been bent over for eighteen years. Jesus made her stand in front of the synagogue and loosed her from her chains of infirmity on a Sabbath day, and then called her a daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:10-17). The Jews had a low image of women and considered them unclean, so making a woman stand in front of men in the synagogue and calling her a daughter of Abraham, gave them hypertension. Women avoided going to the synagogues, because they were herded behind a curtain to avoid eye contact with men. The free entrance and equal participation of women was a giant leap forward. Sadly, the historical church has completely misinterpreted Paul and once again placed chains of infirmity on women.

JESUS FACES THE WRATH OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS: Throughout the church history, the religious people were the biggest headache for God. The more religious they were, the worse the migraine. The Pharisees were angry because Jesus asked a cripple for 38 years, to get out of the sick environment of the Bethesda pool (John 5:5-17). He broke the Sabbath rule of not carrying the bed. Jesus clarified, “*Sabbath was made for man and not the other way around*” (Mark 2:27). He is the Lord of Sabbath and has every right to

change the rules. You also have the right to change the Sunday laws of your church and instead go into the sin sick world and command the spiritually crippled of your community to get up and walk into the kingdom, in the name of Jesus. But do make sure that they leave their excess baggage behind. (Matt. 12:8)

SABBATH AND OTHER RITUALS DE-RECOGNIZED BY THE EARLY EKKLESIA: When large-scale conversion of the Gentiles took place in New Testament times, the Jewish Christians began insisting that the Gentiles must follow the 620 Mosaic laws, including circumcision and observation of the Sabbath, etc. This became a serious problem for the early Ekklesia, and a council was called in Jerusalem in which all the apostles, elders and prominent brethren (fraternity of men and women) were present. The council gave an unequivocal verdict that the new believers need not undergo circumcision, nor observe the Sabbath (Acts 15:1-29). After this clarification by the founding fathers of the Ekklesia, there is no justification for observing the Sabbath or Sunday, which is not mentioned anywhere in the entire Bible as a special day of worship. The single reference to gathering on the first day of the week in Troas was a Saturday night affair. (Acts 20:7)

SYNAGOGUES, BEST PLACES FOR STEALING SHEEP: In the NT times, believers met every day in their houses and *“the Lord added to their numbers daily”* (Acts 2:46,47). On the Sabbath, they went to the synagogues to persuade the Jews, through the Scriptures, that the Messiah they were waiting for had already come (Acts 13:13-26). Many Jews came out from the synagogues and became Christians; but they were bitterly persecuted (Acts 17:1-8). You, too, can go to church on Sundays and persuade people to come out and start house Ekklesias. You might succeed in taking a few people out, but beware, there may be bouncers, who might usher you out unceremoniously. (Eze. 9:3-6)

THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH IS A LIKE A SPECTATOR SPORT: For the first three hundred years, the Ekklesia met daily in the houses of the believers. Initially, the Ekklesia grew exponentially, but then it reached a plateau as Nicolaitans divided the Ekklesia into “speaking brothers” and “listening brothers.” This structural change was to permanently weaken the Ekklesia, as the intellectuals took over and made the common people mere spectators. Fishing is a participatory sport while the church is now like the weekend spectator sport, where a few people play the game, while the others are merely spectators, who watch from the sidelines. Actually, it is worse, as the clergy is the solo game player, who functions as the Master of Ceremonies, orchestrating everything from his throne, the pulpit.

CONSTANTINE CHANGED THE DAILY EKKLESIA INTO SUNDAY CHURCH: The Roman emperors inhumanly persecuted the believers. When persecution failed to stop the advance of the gospel, the Devil changed his tactic and dangled a carrot in the form of Constantine who became a Christian but continued to worship the sun. Instead of calling it the Lord’s day, he introduced Sun-day worship, which included veneration of the sun, by an edict in AD 321. He did many good things like stopping persecution but also introduced certain practices, which permanently destroyed the original form and function of the Ekklesia. He built cathedrals, appointed professional clergy and institutionalized Christianity. These structural changes, led to a phenomenal growth of nominalism. These non-biblical practices are the pillars of the nominal Church.

CHRISTIANS CHOSE THE EXTRA-BIBLICAL SYNAGOGUE MODEL: The Lord Jesus had rejected the professional priesthood, the temple and the Sabbath model. He had introduced the *priesthood of every believer, every believer's home a house of prayer for all nations and every day as the Lord's Day*. The modern church has altogether rejected Jesus' model and chose the synagogue model and even pagan customs. Incidentally, God never asked the Jews to start synagogues. The idea was to gather ten Jews and hire a rabbi and hand over the responsibility of teaching the children to him. This was to take place in the synagogue, which functioned as a Madarssas, or school, during the rest of the week. God had specifically asked the Jews to teach their own children (Deut. 6:3-7). The synagogues later became Jewish ghettos, just as our churches today are Christian ghettos. The rabbis opposed Jesus and finally killed Him, just as the church has done to the house churches throughout the church history.

SUNDAY IS A COLLECTION DAY: There are no specific instructions for worship on any one day, but the Scriptures clearly exhort us to meet daily to encourage each other. "*But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb. 3:13). However, there are instructions for the collection of money for the poor. "*On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside.*" This was one time project for the famine stricken people in Jerusalem. There is no provision for collection in the Sunday worship service. (1 Cor. 16:1,2)

JESUS DELETES THE SABBATH FROM THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: Sabbath had become a day of burden and a day of discrimination against women and the Gentiles. For us, every day is the Lord's Day. Discipling, baptizing, equipping and sending believers out is part of daily worship. Once-a-week worship is based on man-made traditions and not on the word of God (Mark 7:6-9). Nowhere does the Bible tell us to get together just to worship. In the OT, they went to the temple to make sacrifices, and then entered Solomon's Porch and prayed (Psalm 96:8). In the NT, they gathered to break bread, for teaching, fellowship, prayer and to share prophecies and revelations. Worship included exhorting one another, stirring up love and good works and ministering to each other in many other ways. That is why the expression "*one another*" comes more than fifty times in the NT. None of this is practiced in the modern church (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:26, 31; Heb. 10:24,25; Eph. 5:21)

POTS AND PANS ARE EVANGELISTIC TOOLS: Jesus sent a powerful message, by staying and eating with the despised Samaritans (John 4:8, 40). Peter went to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, and committed a grave crime by eating there for which the Jews contended with him (Acts 11:2,3). Peter was so intimidated by the experience that at Antioch, he avoided eating with the heathen, for which Paul rebuked him publicly for hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-13). Pots and pans are very powerful evangelistic tools and holiness to the Lord of hosts. (Zech.14: 20,21)

THOSE WHO LIVE BY THE SWORD SHALL DIE BY THE SWORD: There was a secret society of Dagger men called *Sicarii* in Jerusalem, who were defenders of the Jewish faith. Judas (Iscaiot means a Dagger man) was hoping that Jesus would lead a rebellion against the Roman Empire, but when that did not happen, he sold Jesus. The *Sicarii* had taken a vow unto death to kill Paul for associating with the heathen and defiling the temple with them. Many of them were Messianic Christians as well as devout Jews, who swore by the temple and the Mosaic laws. They followed Paul to many places and forced the new believers to undergo circumcision and observe the Sabbath. (Acts 9:23-25; 23:12-14;

15:1-5). It is no different today. There are dangerous dagger men in the church, who have vowed to protect the traditions and property of the church, even if they have to sell Jesus. They are engaged in bitter fighting, wasting time and money in the courts of law. They are more devoted to the property and the dogma than to obeying the commandments of Jesus.

NO LARGE CELEBRATIONS IN THE TEMPLE: Some scholars think that the new believers gathered every day and burnt their behinds all day, listening to the apostles in the Solomon's porch for eight years, until persecution broke out. This is sanctified imagination of the highly organized Western mind. Any organized meetings inside the temple precincts would have attracted violence. The temple was only a fishing pond with lots of fish to catch. The honeymoon lasted a very short time. The reality is, the situation in the temple and the city, was very hostile to the Christians, who were considered heretics, if not the lunatic fringe, who had abandoned the faith of their fathers. They were persecuted and put behind bars. But for Gamaliel, they would have ended up under a pile of rubble. (Acts 4: 1-4; 5:18, 34-42)

NO LARGE CELEBRATIONS, ONLY “GREET THE CHURCH IN *THY HOUSE*”: This was the famous salutation by Paul to many churches (1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1:2). The famous high-tension Jerusalem council was not a celebration. The all-night gathering at Troas and another one at Miletus with the Ephesian elders to bid tearful farewell to Paul, was hardly a time for celebration (Acts 20:7, 17). Large celebrations are referred to in a derogatory way, such as the Corinthians making a mess of the Lord's Supper, the love feasts of the Nicolaitans, Balaamists and Jezebellites (1 Cor. 11:20-23; Jude: 12; Rev. 2:6,14,15). Small celebrations in the NT took place daily, from house to house, with one-on-one relationship. (Eph. 5:19; Acts 2:46,47). Extra large celebrations attract extra attention from the enemy and should be avoided.

IT WAS NOT GOD'S PLAN TO BUILD THE TEMPLE: It was David's guilty conscience. He lived in a palace built of cedar wood. God preferred to live in the homes of ordinary people like Aminadab and Obed-Edom (2 Sam. 7:1,2, 6:3, 4, 10). By the time Jesus came, the temple had been totally corrupted. The Sanhedrin, an authority structure of seventy elders, consisting of fanatic Pharisees and politicized Sadducees, which dominated over the High Priest who was chosen by the Roman Procurator. This was not scriptural (Acts 23:6-10). God never appointed the Sanhedrin as the board of governors over the High Priest or the synagogues whose “rulers” despised Jesus (Luke 13:14). In the synagogue, they not only read the Torah but also practiced the Haddish, which was a set of man made traditions (Matt. 15: 1-3; Luke 11:38). They finally killed Jesus. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil, which presumably included the temple and the synagogues, which had become the centers of illegitimate power and authority structures (1 John 3:8). Jesus changed all that, and the human heart became the temple of the living God.

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN TO DESTROY ALL RULE AND AUTHORITY: The house Ekklesia lasted for 300 years until Constantine came with the same David-Solomon guilt complex, built a grand cathedral and wrecked the Ekklesia. Jesus is coming again to destroy all rule, authority and power structures, which presumably includes the manipulative, exploitative and authoritarian church structures. The house Ekklesia movement is rightly putting God where He belongs - in the homes and hearts of the people. (1 Cor. 3:16; 15:24; 16:19)

THE RULER OF DARKNESS CORRUPTS THE RULERS OF THE CHURCH: Unfortunately, today, millions of Christians willingly choose to be incarcerated in buildings and observe man-made traditions. The one free day in the week, which is available for us to go out and witness to the lost of this world, is lost in nonproductive activity propelling the traditional church into irrelevance. The pulpit suffers from severe allergy when it comes to proclaiming the “Go Commission”. Satan has effectively blinded the Christians, making the church the gates of Hell, which is obvious from the fact that the church is blissfully unaware of its fundamental expansionist agenda to go and make disciples of all nations. Sadly, we think that we have a great worship service but we do not try to remove this blindness and fulfill our apostolic and prophetic role in the world. The Ruler of darkness is not as great a problem as the prevailing darkness among the rulers of the church; otherwise, the world would have been evangelized several times over by now (Rom. 12: 1,2). The process of truth should help us to conquer this darkness and help us to lead others from the fetters of darkness into light.

“If the gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” (2 Cor. 4:3,4)

SOUL WINNING IS A DAILY BUSINESS: There are many churches where Sunday worship has been held regularly for ages but there is a great drought of newly saved lost souls. Perhaps there is a misconception that making disciples is somebody else’s job. However, the truth is that if you are a believer, then it is very much your job. Jesus rebuked His disciples for the hardness of their hearts and told them to go and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:14,15). Paul advised Timothy to be instant and preach the gospel in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teach (2 Tim. 4:2). The challenge before the church is to equip her membership to be missionaries in their work places. The benchmark should be the effective spiritual management of the lunch break. Fruitfulness should be the indicator. This way the Ekklesia will be functioning daily.

JESUS WORKED AND TRAVELED ON SUNDAYS: God works all day and every day (John 5:17; 9:4; 4:34; 15:1). God rested on the seventh day, not because He was tired and needed a rest. The word “rested,” here means that He finished the work of creation (Gen. 2:2). Our Lord had a hectic day every day. On His first Sabbath in Nazareth, Jesus made a declaration, which annoyed the people in the synagogue so much that they nearly lynched Him (Luke 4:18,19,28,29). Then He walked to Capernaum for a large healing and deliverance crusade. He also went to Peter’s house and healed his mother-in-law. The next day at the crack of dawn, He went to a solitary place to pray, and then went to the lake-side and asked His future disciples to launch out into the deep (Luke 4:16-43; 5:1-6; Mk. 1:35). Even on the day of His resurrection, instead of having a great celebration (no one was waiting with garlands), very early in the morning on Sunday He instructed Mary Magdalene to inform the brethren about His travel plans to go to Galilee (John 20:15-18). Then He walked ten miles with Cleopas and a friend to Emmaus and discipled them (Luke 24:13-18). Jesus came back the same evening to Jerusalem. He encouraged His frightened disciples who had gathered secretly and commissioned them saying, *“As the Father has sent Me, so I send you also.”* (John 20:19-23) Jesus was busy discipling all day on Sunday. If we will do what our Master did, then there is a good chance of the

gospel reaching the unreached in our generation. However, be prepared for the wrath, which is bound to come.

SUNDAY WORSHIP IS NOT IN THE SCRIPTURES: Believers are busy all week making money. They only take a break on Sundays to get busy again on Mondays. Actually, the church is in diaspora during the weekdays to be the light and salt to the world. This way the gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations (Matt. 24:14). In heaven, the angels give glory, honor and thanks to God, day and night (Rev. 4:4-11). Millions of people are going to hell while God's people are taking a rest. The Devil must have given us Sunday as a day of rest, because hell keeps its gates open seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day (Isa. 5:13,14). Jesus could not have given us rest on Sundays because He does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Sadly, most Christians do not rest on Sundays, they all have a ball.

PREPOSTEROUS POST-HARVEST MANAGEMENT: A farmer gathers the harvest in the granary, disposes it off as soon as he can and immediately gets busy preparing the harvest field for the next crop, otherwise the land will be runover by weeds. The modern church gathers the harvest and keeps it in the granary (church building) until it rots and does not prepare the harvest field for the next crop. In 1995, John Kilpatrick of the Pentecostal church in Pensacola, Florida, with a membership of 5,000, closed the Sunday service and opened the church for daily worship. Since then about four million people have visited and prayed, while thousands have been saved with innumerable healings, deliverances, miracles, transformed lives and homes restored. In Burma the Military Junta closed a church with 1000 members. They started meeting in homes and now they have 12,000 members. Fidel Castro of Cuba refused permission for church buildings and ordered them to meet in homes, thus precipitating a house church movement.

PEOPLE HAVE THE SCRIPTURES BUT DO NOT SEARCH THE TRUTH: The rich man in hell wanted Lazarus to go and preach the gospel to his brothers, but Abraham told him that they have the Scriptures. Christians have the Scriptures but do not bother to study them. God said, *"My people are being destroyed for lack of knowledge..."* (Hosea 4:6). Ignorance is no defense in a court of law. Similarly, ignorance about the Great Commission will not work. (Prov. 24:10-12)

JESUS IS NOT A SUNDAY WORSHIPPER BUT A DAILY INTERCESSOR: The poignant question is, what must be done to see our country become a truly Christian country? Our Lord has been interceding regularly for the past 2,000 years (Heb. 7:25) and He is looking for intercessors (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Perhaps the time has come to stop our fruitless religious activities and get down on our knees to repent and intercede on behalf of the people who do not know that *"Jesus is the only way, the truth and the life and that no one can go to the Father except through Him."* If we are serious about the salvation of souls, then we need to *"pray without ceasing"* every day and not just on Sundays. Jesus never asked us to go to church on Sundays. He expects us to follow him daily. (Psalm 2:8; Isa. 59:16; 1 Thes. 5:17; Mk 1:17-20)

JESUS IS OUR DAILY MOBILE SABBATH REST: Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. He said, *"Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day...Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow."* Jesus is our daily mobile model. (Mk 2:27,28; Luke 13:32,33)

GENDER BLENDERS

1. The Great Commission is also for women as they are disciples of Jesus and therefore they have also been commanded to make disciples, baptize and equip them. (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-17)
2. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also for the women, to prophesy, cast out demons and cure diseases. They have also been given power over all the powers of the enemy. (Acts 2:17,18; Luke 9:1,2; 10:19)
3. Women are also a chosen generation, royal priests and God's personal possession. Jesus shed His blood to make all believers, including women, to function as priests of His Ekklesia and as kings to reign on earth. (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:9; John 15:16)
4. There is neither male nor female in Christ. Women can sing psalms, teach doctrines, speak in tongues, interpret and fully participate in the edification of the Ekklesia, including giving baptism, serving the Communion and plant Assemblies. (Gal. 3:27-29; 1 Cor. 14:26)
5. Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to women also. Whenever two or three women congregate in His name, it is an authentic Ekklesia because Jesus is present and they can ask for anything in unity, which glorifies God, and He will do it. (Matt. 16:19; 18:18-20)
6. Fivefold equipping gifts were given by our Lord to His Ekklesia, which includes women. They can be apostles, prophets, teachers, shepherds and evangelists and equip the saints for different ministries for the edification of the Body of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)
7. Women are also created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). They are ambassadors of Christ, appointed to reconcile the whole creation. One day they will all wear beautiful white robes, hold palm branches in their hands, stand before the throne of God and worship Him. (Rev. 7:9,10; 2 Cor. 5:17-20)

The world is going to hell not because of the lack of theology but because Christians selfishly consume 95% of it, leaving only the crumbs for the lost world.

No pastor ever baptized anyone in the New Testament times.

But thousands of ordinary believers, both men and women, baptized each other.

John refused to baptize Jesus but Jesus said, "I must fulfill all righteousness". Jesus was obedient to the will of His Father.

The issue is not the amount of water or who baptizes but the real issue is obedience and identification.

The water baptism of Jesus was only symbolic - the real baptism of Jesus was with his own blood and His Spirit.

BAPTISM: DUNKING OR SPRINKLING?

BATH OF PURIFICATION: There were many pools of water (called “*mikve*” in Hebrew) in Jerusalem, like the pools of Bethesda and Siloam. So far, archeologists have excavated eighty pools. It is estimated that there were around two hundred pools in the city at the time of Jesus. The Jews used to take a “bath of purification” in these pools. During the festivals, people from different villages would come and camp around these pools. Those who had committed any sins used to confess their sins and take a bath of purification. For this, it was necessary that there should be at least two witnesses. It was not necessary that a priest should be present; any two Jews were sufficient.

PENTECOSTAL MEN AND WOMEN HEAD FOR SEPARATE POOLS: The women used to go to separate pools to baptize each other because, according to their culture, it was inappropriate for men to be present. The orthodox “Bleeding Pharisees” closed their eyes if they saw a woman coming from the opposite direction. The really religious, hard-core Pharisees closed their eyes even if their own mother, sister or wife happened to be passing by. This resulted in their crashing into the sidewalls of the narrow, cobbled streets of Jerusalem and consequent bleeding from their noses and foreheads. They also kept the women behind curtains in the synagogue to avoid eye contact. They would have considered the handling of wet women by a man, as adultery. (Matt. 5:28). These “*mikve*” are the pools where the 3,000 took their “bath of purification” or baptism on the day of Pentecost. The 120 people who had received the Holy Spirit were their witnesses. Naturally, women baptized in the Holy Spirit must have baptized each other.

BAPTISM MUST HALLOW HIS GREAT NAME AMONG THE HEATHEN: Baptists would like us to believe that “*baptizo*” means dunking and nothing else, but the Greek word has a wide latitude of meaning. Immersing, ablutions, sprinkling, washing, pouring out etc., all come within the purview of this word. Moses baptized Israel by sprinkling the blood of the animals and the Holy Spirit baptized by being poured out from above (Heb. 9:10, 13, 19, 21; Titus 3:5,6; Acts 2:3). Baptism (purification) was a controversial subject even at the time of Jesus (John 3:25). Jews baptized even their pots and pans (Mark 7: 4,8). The purpose of baptism is not just our own salvation but God giving us a new heart and a new spirit so that His great name is hallowed in us before the eyes of the heathen. It is to glorify God through witnessing to the lost. It is not the mode of baptism or the amount of water or who baptized, but whether the kingdom will expand as a result of our baptism that is important. This way the flesh and spirit will cover the dry bones of the church and make her come alive. (Eze. 37:4-8)

BAPTISM IS A POLITICAL WORD: But for the political protection of Prince Fredrick of Germany, Martin Luther would have been a dead duck. The Prince in the 16th century forbade the change over from infant baptism to adult baptism. When the Bible was translated, the Greek word “*baptisma*” was retained, because by that time, child baptism by sprinkling water had become a law and baptism of adults by immersion, a crime. Anybody talking about immersion baptism in those days would have been buried or burnt alive by the church. Many were baptized in the rivers and pools but there is no description of anyone being put in the cadaver like horizontal position under water to signify burial, as many of our churches practice: It would be unrealistic and amount to legalism to insist on baptism by dunking in desert areas with severe water scarcity and in the icy Tundras.

ANY BELIEVER CAN BAPTIZE: Jesus commanded His disciples to *“Go and preach the good news to all nations. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”* (Mark 16:15-17). Similarly, in the Great commission, He commanded all disciples to baptize all nations. There is no specific authority given to the church leaders to baptize. Philip was an ordinary waiter at the dining tables who baptized Samaritans by the hundreds, including the treasurer of Ethiopia. Ananias was an ordinary disciple who baptized Saul into Paul. (Acts 8:12; 9:17,18)

THERE ARE MANY REFERENCES ABOUT WATER BAPTISM IN THE NT:

1. *“Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand and all the people of the region went out to him and were baptized in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.”* (Matt. 3:1-6)
2. John baptized Jesus in the river Jordan. Jesus said, *“... it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness ... and being baptized Jesus came up immediately from the water.”* (Matt. 3:15; Mk 1:9)
3. Jesus began to preach, *“Repent ...”* *“The Pharisees had heard that Jesus had baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples).”* (John 4:1,2)
4. Before ascending into heaven, Jesus commissioned his disciples, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”* (Matt. 28:19)
5. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, *“Repent and let every one of you be baptized ...”* (Acts 2:37,38)
6. After hearing the Good News from Philip, the eunuch said, *“See, here is water, what hinders me from being baptized? Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may”... Both went down into the water, and he baptized him. When they came out of the water...”* (Acts 8:35-39)

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM: Baptism is like *Hara-kiri*, which is a Japanese form of committing suicide by cutting open one's own belly, to avoid execution for a crime. Baptism is no different, as we die to the world to avoid punishment for our sins.

“As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were buried into His death. Therefore, we were buried with Him through burial into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:3,4). *“...We were buried with Him through baptism... we shall be in the likeness of His resurrection”* (Rom. 6:4,5)

WE HAVE A NEW IDENTITY WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED:

1. We confess our sins and repent, and our sins are washed by the blood of Jesus and forgiven. (Acts 2:37,38; 1 John 1:7-9)
2. We die to the world and are buried with Him.
3. We resurrect spiritually. (Rom. 6:6-14)

4. We confess the Lordship of Jesus in our lives. (Rom. 10:9,10)
5. Saints lay hands on us to fill us with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 19:6)
6. We become a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17)
7. We are no longer strangers and foreigners but become members of the household of God. (Eph. 2:19)
8. Now we sit in the heavenly places with Christ. (Eph. 2:6)
9. We are here on earth as His ambassadors. (2 Cor. 5:20)
10. We receive the ministry of reconciliation for lost humanity as well as the
travailing creation. (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Rom. 8:19)

Thus, baptism means death, burial and resurrection with Jesus Christ. By baptism, we publicly seal our relationship with the Lord Jesus.
(Rom. 6:3,4)

DUNKING DELAYED IS OBEDIENCE DENIED: Anti-Pope Novatian (251-258) or a rival Pope, erroneously decreed that sins committed after baptism might attract more serious punishment. For this reason, Emperor Constantine took baptism on his deathbed, that too by an Arian Bishop who did not believe that Jesus is made of the same substance as God. Some fear that the new believer will revert back to his old faith, if he is baptized too soon. But there is no guarantee that he will not revert even if he is made to wait. In fact, there is greater danger of losing him altogether. Baptism is not the end, but only an event in the process of discipling. Baptism should take place as soon as possible after a person has made a profession of faith. The umbilical cord of a newborn baby is immediately cut off, otherwise it will kill him, similarly the worldly connections of a newborn believer should be cut off as soon as he identifies himself with Christ. Scripturally, as soon as a person repents, he or she should be baptized immediately. There is no instance in the NT where baptism was delayed except for Saul, the theologian, who took three days to be converted into Paul the apostle (Acts 9:3-20). Peter instructed all the 3,000 new believers to be baptized immediately (Acts 2:41). Philip baptized the Ethiopian treasurer within hours in a roadside pool (Acts 8:34-39). Paul baptized the jailor's family in the middle of the night (Acts 16:33). Baptism delayed is baptism denied. Baptism is a free gift of grace and not to be earned through long period of discipleship.

"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation". (Heb. 3:15; 2 Cor. 6:2)

BAPTISM, SPEAKING IN TONGUES AND "CARPET TIME:" The first time that the apostles spoke, everyone understood it in their own native language (Acts 2:4-8, 11). The second time they were filled with the Spirit, they spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31). Sometimes, even before baptism, the Gentiles were filled with Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44). Paul spoke in tongues in private, but forbade people to do so in the assembly, without an interpreter (1 Cor. 14:18,19; 27,28). Tongues is one of the many gifts, which is available but it is not necessary for everyone to speak in tongues to be saved (1 Cor. 12:30). It is better to ask for a higher gift like prophesy, which is more useful for the edification of the Ekklesia (1 Cor. 14:1). Nowadays it is fashionable to spend "carpet time" after being "*slain in the Spirit*" by a celebrity preacher. Sometimes he just waves, at others, he gives a gentle push and people fall backwards. "Slaying in the Spirit" is not in the Scriptures. Some think that Paul was slain in the spirit on the road to Damascus but he never went

into a catatonic trance but had clear conversation with the Lord (Acts 9:3-6). This was not in a meeting but in the middle of the road. It was also not by a celebrity preacher but the Lord was dealing directly with him. The acid test of the NT Ekklesia is not the believers but unbelievers falling down and being disciplined by all. (1Cor. 14:24,25)

LAYING ON OF HANDS AND BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: Baptism has no direct connection with speaking in tongues. Jesus did not speak in tongues after receiving the Holy Spirit. Paul, received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by a local disciple named Ananias, but he did not speak in tongues, nor did he start gyrating in ecstasy with his hands raised up, but immediately preached Christ boldly and confounded the Jews of Damascus (Acts 9:17-22). Sadly, today, people start and stop speaking in tongues at the drop of a hat, when ordered to do so by the leader, during worship time. This is not scriptural. Baptism is symbol of our “*identification*” with Jesus and His Ekklesia. Laying on of hands means passing on the “keys of the kingdom” to act on behalf of His Ekklesia. It has a definite expansionist agenda. Laying on of hands on the novice is forbidden just as the gifts received through it should not be neglected (1 Tim. 3:6; 4:14). The apostles laid their hands on “the seven” who were serving with them for some time. They got busy expanding the kingdom and so did Paul and Barnabas after the Antiochian Ekklesia did the same. They said “nay” to the world and “aye” to the Lord. We are identifying with His kingdom and agreeing to obey and do His will. (John 3:3; 1 John 5:6-8)

BAPTISM MUST LEAD TO FULL TIME COMMITMENT: After baptism, a believer should be fully committed to serve, just as the NT believers did. After His baptism, Jesus did not go back to Nazareth to continue as a carpenter, but He announced His mission (Luke 4:18,19). At the time of baptism, Paul was given the Great Commission to disciple the nations by removing blindness from the Gentiles and making them inheritors of the kingdom (Acts 26:18). Baptism should not be given to make people members of the congregation, but only to those who are willing to be obedient to Jesus and willing to be co-workers with Him. (2 Cor. 6:1). This does not mean that you do not have to earn a living. All the early Ekklesia members were bivocational, that is, they earned their own living as well as working for the Lord. However, when in conflict, “*seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*” The priority must always be working for the kingdom. (Matt. 6:33; 2 Thess. 3:8-12)

INFANT MORTALITY LEADS TO BABY SPRINKLING: In those days, infant mortality was very high due to lack of medical facilities. Though there is no instruction in the Scriptures, the priests used to sprinkle holy water on the dying children. Pope Innocent I, in A.D. 416, signed an edict that made infant baptism a law, to increase church membership. In reality, there should have been a law against infant baptism.

ONLY BELIEVER’S BAPTISM: Young children should not be baptized, because the Holy Bible teaches us that “*whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.*” Baptism should be given to believers only (Mark 16:16). Infants can not repent and therefore can not be baptized. Parents and godfathers can not repent on their behalf. “*Because all have sinned*” (Rom. 6:23), everyone has to confess his own sins, and then the blood of Jesus cleanses him from all sin. (1 John 1:7-9)

HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM DOES NOT INCLUDE BAPTISM OF BABIES: In the NT, whole household were baptized, but only those who had repented and believed. Elders blessed the children just as Jesus had done (Matt. 19:13-15). Some people mistakenly think that babies must

have been baptized with the household. If the whole family ate spicy curry, it does not mean that the babies also ate. If sprinkling of water was appropriate, then the baby Jesus would have been the best candidate for it. An ancient document, *"The Didache"*, (65-80 A.D.) which is *"The Teachings of the Apostles,"* gives several choices like baptizing believers in running water, other water, pouring cold or hot water three times, according to circumstances. Brother Yun, the "heavenly man" secretly baptized his cell mates with a few drops of water in a Chinese prison. During Burmese incarceration, he put their heads under a tap and baptized them.

CONFIRMATION IS NOT BAPTISM: Confirmation is another man-made tradition for which there is no reference in the Bible. Jesus went to the temple when He was twelve years old. This Jewish custom was known as *"Bar Mitzvah"* but this was not baptism. According to Jewish custom little children were dedicated, but it was not baptism. Jesus was also dedicated and blessed at the age of eight days in the temple, but He was baptized only as an adult, when He was ready for ministry.

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED: Jesus took baptism at the age of thirty, even though He did not require it. He did so in order to be an example and to fulfill all righteousness. This was following a Levite custom of entering into priestly service in the temple, at the age of thirty (Num. 4:47). However, we are free to take baptism whenever we are ready to make a conscious decision to follow Jesus. (Matt. 3:14,15)

MILLIONS OF GENTILE BELIEVERS WILL STAND BEFORE THE THRONE: Baptism just to obtain a certificate for church membership, a job, marriage or admission into a Christian institution, makes a mockery of this blood covenant. For the baptism, confession and repentance from sins is very important. Baptism, however, does not change ethnicity, because one-day believers of every tribe, tongue and nation will stand before the throne of God. The Samaritan woman became a believer but remained a Samaritan. A tribal continues to belong to that tribe, but instead of worshipping the creation, he now worships the Creator. A Muslim (means "the one who surrenders") surrenders to the LORD OF LORDS (Isaiah 60:6-7) while others give up idol worship but burn incense to Jesus. (Rev. 5:9,10, Mal. 1:11). They will all stand before the Throne of God as believers. Baptism is only an event. Full maturity in Christ, which includes making a believer into a fisher of men, is a process.

GOD THE FATHER HAS CHILDREN BUT NO GRANDCHILDREN: No one can go to heaven by virtue of the fact that his parents were Christians. Everyone has to confess his own sins and accept Jesus as the Lord of his life. There is no other way. It is essential that the ordinances given in the scriptures be followed in letter and spirit. Had Naaman the leper not immersed himself seven times in the river Jordan but instead just sprinkled himself, he would not have been cured of leprosy. Had the Israelites thought that, since their houses contained the blood of the lamb they had killed, they need not put blood on their doorposts, they too would have perished. Had the Israelites walked round the walls of Jericho six days and rested on the seventh day, the walls of Jericho would not have fallen. In the same way, if the blind man had not walked two miles to Siloam to wash the mud from his eyes, then his eyesight would not have been restored. Therefore, if the Lord is saying, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16), then to disobey the Lord's simple command will surely attract condemnation. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, offered *"strange fire"* and did not follow the exact instructions given by God, and

they instantly died (Lev. 10:1-3). Therefore, as soon as people accept the lordship of Jesus Christ, they should be instantly baptized.

THERE WILL BE A BIG CROWD OF UNBAPTIZED BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN: Jesus taught *“unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3-5). Yet Jesus has the right to take people to heaven with or without baptism. A thief who repented on the cross went to paradise with Jesus without baptism. Poor Lazarus was basking in Abraham’s bosom without any baptism. A survey of Madras city by Herbert Hoefter shows that 10% of the 8 million people in the city are unbaptized and unchurched believers. Most of them are not baptized because many pastors insist on removing the marriage symbols of the women. Those who refuse to baptize and serve the Lord’s Supper to secret believers for cultural reasons, may find themselves left behind, while a huge crowd of unbaptized people may be gathered before the throne. Jesus has assured us that anyone who has given only a cup of cold water in His name to a disciple, will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41)

BAPTISM - PUBLIC OR PRIVATE: There are certain Communist and Muslim countries where baptism cannot be taken openly. In our country, in states like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhatisgarh and Gujarat, baptism cannot be given without getting permission from the government. Even if there is no law against it, there is always great opposition by fundamentalists. Mass baptisms eventually invite unnecessary persecution, therefore it is better to secretly baptize in small numbers. Nowhere the NT calls baptism a public testimony. Baptism is receiving a person in the Body of Christ, openly or even secretly. However, as long as the period of grace lasts, whenever possible, all must be baptized according to the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 3:15; Mark 7:6-9)

BAPTIZING IS THE PRIVILEGE OF ALL BELIEVERS: There is no instruction in the Scriptures for baptism by a professional priest. This is to avoid it from becoming a mere ritual. As royal priests, all believers have the right to baptize. Because of lack of this knowledge, millions have been denied baptism. Ideally, the person who has led the new believer to Christ should baptize him. Then he will be responsible for equipping the new believer to become a fisher of men. It is not our academic qualifications, but the blood of the Lamb that makes every believer a priest and a king (Rev. 5:9,10; 1 Pet. 2:9). The Lord Jesus has *“chosen us and **ordained** (KJV) us, to bring forth fruit that remains...”* (John 15:16). Any ordinary believer like Ananias, who laid his hands on Paul, can dedicate or consecrate us for specific ministries. Like Paul, we are also chosen vessels of the Lord to bear His name among the Gentiles, kings and the Jews. We are also chosen to suffer many things for His name’s sake (Acts 9: 10-18). There can be no “abundant permanent fruit” unless all believers, men and women, can baptize and serve the Lord’s Supper. This is a blood ordained fundamental right and duty of every believer. (Mark 16:15,16; Matt. 28:19)

BE OBEDIENT AND BAPTIZE: John refused to baptize Jesus but Jesus told him that He must fulfill all righteousness. Jesus was obedient to His Father. The issue is not just dunking in the water but obedience. The future does not belong to those who are seeking careers with degrees, jobs, wealth or positions, but to those who are seeking a closer and closer relationship with Jesus, which includes obedience. God is not looking for job seekers, but entrepreneurs who are ready to change the world. The future belongs to those who see risks as opportunities and blast their way to victory. The Lord has commanded all believers, male and female, young and old, to go and make disciples of all nations and

baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Disobeying the Lord's clear command will amount to rebellion and attract judgment. Praise God that there is a move of God, and many ordinary people, including women and teenagers, have taken up the challenge and are bringing people into the kingdom and baptizing them by the thousands.

Church means buildings, clergy, laity, pew, pulpit, ordination, reverend, icons and other egos, logos and titles etc.

They are all symbols of disobedience and should be removed from our vocabulary as they dichotomize God's people into evil caste system.

Pulpiteers are the ordained high caste Pujaris (priests), while the laity are the low caste Dalits (pew potatoes).

Ordination is the prerogative of Jesus, who said to all God's people "You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you and ordained/appointed. you" (John 15:16)

The purpose of ordination/appointed/ chosen is not to join the unholy orders of the church hierarchy but a defining moment for going out and bringing forth abundant fruit.

"Let us go and make disciples" should be the buzzwords of every chosen person.

God did not say that the temple is to be a place of worship.

God said that My house is a house of sacrifice. Sharing a meal and the gospel with the lost is our priestly duty and spiritual sacrifice.

(2 Chron 7:12; Rom. 15:16)

The Passover meal was eaten in every Jewish house and not in the temple/synagogue. Jesus ate the Last Supper with His friends in a house. Jews and Gentiles eating together was a giant leap forward in the early church. Even today eating together is the most powerful weapon for breaking down caste, color, culture, class and race barriers.

Reducing the meal to mere symbolism, robs the poor of getting at least one decent meal.

Breaking of bread signifies the breaking of His Body, the Ekklesia, leading to multiplication.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

THE PASSOVER: Jews celebrate Passover in their homes every year in memory of their freedom from bondage to the Egyptians. This is the night the Israelites took the long walk back to the Promised Land with Moses. That night, every household killed a lamb, its blood was put on their doorposts, and they ate all its flesh without breaking any bones. The spirit of death passed over the houses of the Jews that had the blood mark, while the firstborn of all the Egyptians, both man and beast, died (Ex. 12). The descendants of the Jews celebrate this Passover even today. The Hindus also put a red *Swastika*, a form of the Greek cross, on their doorposts. “*Swast*” in Sanskrit means “good health.”

THE PASSOVER MEAL CHANGES INTO THE LORD'S SUPPER: For the Passover meal, Jesus gave His disciples roast lamb, bitter herbs and Roti (unleavened flat bread) to eat, and after the meal He gave them wine to drink. “... *The Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and after giving thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take eat, this is My body, which is broken for you, do this in remembrance of Me... In the same manner He also took the cup after supper saying, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood. This do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'*” The Lord's Supper was served in a house, not in the temple or the synagogue. (1 Cor. 11:23-25; Matt. 26:18)

COVENANT IS CUT, NOT MADE: The Hebrew word for covenant is “*beryth*”, which means, “to cut or split.” In the OT, an animal was cut or vertically split into two halves to seal a covenant. Abraham did the same and then God followed through, in the form of a burning torch (Gen. 15:9-18). Since the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as the blameless lamb, the breaking of bread points to the breaking of His body, and eating symbolizes His body becoming an integral part of our bodies (John 6:48-58). In the same way, drinking from one cup is the new covenant in His blood, which now circulates in our bodies. It is an irrevocable covenant sealed with the blood and flesh of Jesus.

BREAKING BREAD IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF WORSHIP: Just as when Aaron was sprinkled with blood at the time of his consecration, this sealing with blood is a very important part of our consecration as priests (Lev. 8:22-24; Rev.5:10). Broken bread represents the “rent veil” of separation, which is His flesh, and the blood prepares us to enter into the Holy of Holies to be in the presence of the Lord (Heb. 10:19-21). We cannot enter this place physically, but only in spirit; hence, “worship in spirit and truth.” No professional priest or special day is required, not even musical instruments, special buildings, an altar or a sacred place (V 21). OT priests used to offer the blood of an animal. Jesus offered His own blood as a sacrifice. As priests, we also must offer something as part of worship. (Psalm 96:8)

WORSHIP IN TRUTH AND SPIRIT REQUIRES MAKING AN OFFERING:

1. Offer praise by declaring His glory among the Gentiles. (Heb. 13:13-15; Psalm 96:3,10)
2. Offer our own bodies as a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1,2)
3. Offer gifts for the saints as a sweet smelling aroma. (Phil. 4:17-19)
4. Offer the sacrifice of “good works.” (Heb. 13:16; 10:24,25)
5. Present lost souls as an acceptable offering. (Rom. 15:16)

6. Make an unbeliever confess that God is truly among you and offer his broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17; 1 Cor 14:23-25)
7. The Father is glorified when disciples are made in every place, who diffuse the fragrance of Christ's knowledge among the perishing. (John 15:8, 16; 2 Cor. 2:14-16)

NONE SHALL APPEAR EMPTY HANDED BEFORE ME: Making disciples is an integral part of worship because that is our sweet smelling offering to the Father. Otherwise, it is like sounding brass and clanging symbols. Offering the sacrifice of our lips is no problem. Offering Gentiles as a sacrifice is hard work. Coming to worship empty handed is strictly prohibited. (Exo. 23:15; Heb. 13:15; Rom. 15:16)

SHE GOT IT: Significantly, Jesus did not discuss the theology of worship with the devotees of the temple and the dogma-bound religious leaders, but with a despised Samaritan woman (John 4:20-24). She immediately praised Him, "I perceive You are prophet" (vs. 19), offered herself as a living sacrifice, walked back to the village to witness (vs. 28,29) and brought the whole Gentile village to His feet, a sweet smelling aroma. Jesus accepted this offering and exclaimed, "*Lift up your eyes and see*" (vs. 34,35). The Samaritans then accepted the Lordship of Jesus (vs. 42) and offered hospitality to Jesus who stayed with them for two days and discipled them (vs. 43). Finally, the Ekklesia of Samaria was planted when Philip, and later Peter and John, came (vs. 39-42; Acts 8:5). Thus, this sinful woman fulfilled all the requirements of true worship without singing a single chorus, a musical instrument or speaking in tongues. The 120 disciples prayed and worshipped for ten days with one accord, precipitated the Pentecost and saturated Jerusalem and beyond with Ekklesias. Paul and Silas worshipped in jail, discipled the jailor and planted an Ekklesia in his house. Almost every single activity, including worship, in the Book of Acts, resulted in addition of new souls to the Ekklesia. What churches are offering today is spurious worship, because there is no addition of new souls.

MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF SACRIFICE: God did not call the temple in Jerusalem a "house of worship," but He called it a "*house of sacrifice*" (2 Chron. 7:12). David said, "*Come and worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; bring an offering and then come into His courts*" (Psalm 96:8,9). Entry into Solomon's court was through the bronze altar, where an animal sacrifice had to be made before entry. The average Jew had to offer sacrifices at least three times a year. No one was allowed to come empty-handed (Deut. 16:16). Everyone had to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. The Hebrew word "*halel*" means, "*praise*", which also means "*sacrifice*" (Psalm 100:4). God was worshipped through the offering of sacrifices, prayer and the declaration of His glory among the nations and His wonders among the people. It did not take place just inside the four walls of the temple building but outside in Solomon's courtyard and even in the pavements. Thousands of animals were offered as sacrifice when the temple was consecrated. We should also offer thousands of lost souls as spiritual sacrifice as part of our worship, as sweet smelling aroma pleasing to God. (2 Chron. 7:1-14)

NOT THE SERMON BUT OFFERING SACRIFICES IS CENTRAL TO WORSHIP: All believers are priests, so everyone has to offer these sacrifices (Num. 7:1-53; Rom. 15:16; Isa 66:20). Offering people of other faiths as spiritual offering results in the growth of the Ekklesia, whereas the breaking of bread means the breaking of His body, the Ekklesia, which results in multiplication. The focal point of the gathering of the assembly for corporate

worship is not the sermon, but the edification of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:12-16). All these we must do “*in remembrance of Me.*” Whether Paul came or not, the believers would have still gathered at Troas to break bread on Saturday evening i.e. the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). For 1500 years, breaking of bread was celebrated by the Ekklesia as central part of worship. The Catholics called it the *mass* or dismissal (*dismissio*), which was celebrated at the end of the Eucharist service. Luther in 16th century, put the Communion Table behind and raised the pulpit up front. This was done to give centrality to sermons, which was unscriptural. Searching the Scriptures together daily, reasoning and persuading from house to house, is scriptural but not the sermons. (Acts 17:2, 11; 19:8,9; 20:20)

DOES YOUR CHURCH HAVE AN OVEN? The Lord’s Supper in the NT times was very different from the way we celebrate it now. The believers usually met in homes, brought their food and ate together, which they called the Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:20,21). “*Every day, breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart*” (Acts 2:46). Even in the Synagogue, after the reading of the Torah and other rituals, the Sabbath meal was served. It included bread and wine and the “shallet,” a well-buttered pudding-dish with a rich pie-taste. As the Jews were not allowed to do any servile work, including cooking, on the Sabbath, the dish was prepared earlier and kept warm overnight in the congregation’s oven. With religious formalities over, the next hours were spent in informal discussion, discourses and other activities, where the real spiritual growth of the people took place. Although the NT Ekklesia was unique in doctrine and practices, the early house Assemblies did continue with some of these traditions. The Lord’s Supper was also called an “agape meal” or “love feast” (Jude: 12,13; 2 Pet. 2:13-16; 1 Cor 11:21,22). An ordinary meal, when shared together, was known as the Lord’s Supper. Wherever two or three are gathered in His name, they can have the Lord’s Supper. It is not necessary to have a professional priest.

BREAD CRUMBS AND A SIP OF WINE ARE NOT THE LORD’S SUPPER: Today the Lord’s Supper has become a ritual, where the members, with glum faces, come before the holy altar and take small crumbs of bread and sips of wine from holy cups, in a holy place, from a holy person, kneeling on holy knees; but afterwards they do nothing for the advancement of the kingdom of God. The whole environment appears to be a funeral service. In the NT, the people sat together and shared a simple meal and ate with joy and gladness. This act resulted in the Lord adding to their numbers daily. It is not only the bread and the wine that is holy, but we are also the holy temples of God. (Acts 2:46,47).

DO THIS AS OFT: One of the astonishing statements about the early church is that there were no longer any needy among them (Acts 4:32-34). One of the reasons obviously was that because they had fellowship meal almost everyday. This resulted in the poor people getting at least one decent meal every day. The well off, brought money, food and perhaps clothes and other things that they had surplus at home. Ritualizing it as mere symbolism with a wafer and a sip of wine once in a while, robs the poor of their daily needs. Making it a religious event, further deepens the clergy/laymen cleavage. Eating together covenants people of God, both the rich and the poor, the Jews and the Gentiles. The communal meal is powerful time of discipling by proclaiming the death of Jesus and the assurance that He is alive and coming back soon. We are to do this until He comes (Acts 2:42; 20:7, Luke 24:30, 35; John 15:8). One of the Corinthian sins, was not sharing the meal with their poor brethren (1 Cor. 11:20-22). By ritualizing the common meal, and not

inviting our poor and lost brothers and sisters into our homes, we are denying them the opportunity to covenant with Jesus. All royal priests have been clearly commanded to “*do this as often until He comes*” (1 Cor. 11:25,26). Celebrating sporadically, under the leadership of a professional priest, with the exclusion of the lost, in a church building, is not the Lord’s idea of a supper.

MANY CHURCHES UNFIT FOR THE LORD’S SUPPER: If anybody partakes of the bread and the wine unworthily, he will be guilty of the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:27). There were divisions and factions in the church of Corinth (1 Cor. 11:18,19). The rich used to eat and drink ahead of others, and even got drunk and disorderly, whereas many poor people remained without any food (1 Cor. 11:21,22). This division between the rich and poor continues in our churches. The one important condition is that whoever eats the supper must be willing to proclaim His death and resurrection. All the people who are present should be invited for the meal and a clear announcement should be made regarding this provision and if they are willing to do so, then they should be served the Lord’s Supper, even if they are not baptized. The discipling will follow and the Lord will add to His numbers. This is why the Monday morning test is important. If we partake of the meal on Sunday and just go back to regular secular life on Monday, then we are taking it unworthily. Paul went back to his secular life in the tent-making shop in the market place and spoke to the people around him, reasoned with them and persuaded them about The Way. We must also proclaim His death and resurrection daily in our secular business premises. (1 Cor. 11:26, 28, 32)

TRANS-SUBSTANTIATION: Catholics believe that after the prayer of the priest, the wine turns into blood and the bread is trans-substantiated into flesh. Many churches believe in trans-substantiation, which has no solid scriptural basis. Jesus died once and for all, as a full and final sacrifice. He does not have to die every time we eat the Supper. (Heb. 9:28; 10:12)

NOT THE WINE BUT THE CUP IS THE SIGN OF THE NEW COVENANT: After the meal, the wine was shared from a single cup. Drinking from little cups may be good for hygienic reasons but a single cup signifies the unity of the blood covenant. Not the wine, but the cup, is the sign of the new covenant. Jesus blessed the cup and only indirectly blessed its content (1Cor.10:16,17; 11:25,26). It is not necessary to have wine. Any substitute, serves to symbolize His blood (Matt. 26:26-28). The Jews grew grapes in their farms; hence, wine was readily available. The cup was passed several times during the meal. Jesus passed it at least twice during the last Supper (Luke 22:17-20). Many churches have sanctified it to such an extent that they do not serve the Communion for months, whereas, it should be served often. Paul broke bread at least twice in the same meeting. (Acts 20:11)

THE EKKLESIA IS THE LOAF OF BREAD THAT MUST BREAK: The body of Jesus was never broken on the cross. By the time the soldiers came to break His bones, He was already dead (John 19:31-36). The real significance of the breaking of the loaf of bread into small pieces is that the body of Christ, which is the Ekklesia, is to be broken into smaller Assemblies, giving birth and life to many new Assemblies. This way the body will reach villages, cities, nations and the ends of the earth. In the West, bread is cut, whereas in the East, flat bread is broken and used for scooping up food. Serving wafers defeats the deep meaning behind the breaking of bread. Understanding the implications of breaking the bread is crucial, because in it lies the entire strategy of multiplication for reaching the

unreached of this world. A loaf of bread, which is not broken and consumed, becomes stale and useless. Similarly, an Ekklesia, the Body of Christ, which is not multiplying constantly becomes worthless for God.

PROCLAIM DEATH AND RESURRECTION AND PROVE WORTHY: The Lord Jesus has commanded us to “*go and preach this Gospel of the kingdom to the whole world as a witness to all the nations*” (Matt. 24:14). Simply put, gospel is “go and spell or tell”. We must proclaim among all the nations that the King of kings and the Lord of lords is coming to judge all people (Rev. 22:12). He has commanded us, to not only preach or heal, but also to make disciples of all nations. This is a humongous task, which is not the prerogative of any one individual, Ekklesia or organization, but the responsibility of every believer who makes a blood and flesh covenant with Jesus. Witnessing is an integral part of the holy sacrament. If we take part in a ritual and do not proclaim Jesus to our friends, neighbors and coworkers, then we are guilty of dishonoring a blood covenant. (1 Cor. 11:26)

AS A ROYAL PRIEST, YOU ARE ORDAINED TO SERVE THE LORD’S SUPPER: The Lord served the last Supper in a home and not in the temple or a synagogue (Luke 22:7-13). Through this, Jesus was sending an important signal that this should take place in the homes of ordinary people, just like the Passover, meal is celebrated in every Jewish home without the help of a professional priest. It is the fundamental right of every true believer to serve the Lord’s Supper in his own home. Every believer is a royal priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), “ordained” by the Lord himself for celebrating the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. (John 15:16, 1 Pet. 2:5). The Lord’s command to “*do this as often*” (1 Cor. 11:25,26), is only possible when every believer practices it. Surely, it is God’s desire that this covenant meal be shared in every home so that lost neighbors will also have an opportunity to covenant with Him. Eating at the Lord’s Table should lead to the adding of new believers to the Ekklesia daily. This is why, whenever we gather, this sacrament is a central part of worship. “*The disciples broke bread from house to house, and praising God, ate their meals with gladness and simplicity. And the Lord added to the Ekklesia daily those who were being saved.*” (Acts 2:46,47)

DINING TABLE, THE BEST PLACE FOR DISCIPLING THE NATIONS: The Jewish dining table is called “*benshem.*” It is a kind of family altar because the Sabbath and other special meals like the Passover are celebrated around the “*benshem.*” Because the Jews were a farming community who grew grapes and kept animals, the Jewish table normally had bread, wine, cheese, olive oil, salt and baked fish. Hence breaking bread from house to house was no great problem as all the Jewish tables had round-the-clock dining facilities. All the seekers gathered from the temple were taken straight to the dining tables, where the whole city of Jerusalem was disciplined. No wonder the Lord added to their numbers daily. The dining table is still the best place for discipling the nations. We should not waste time and effort in making rice and curry but serve whatever is easily available so that more time is spent on discipling and less on hospitality. (Acts 2:46,47; Luke 10:7)

KEEP THE DINING TABLE READY FOR THE LORD IS COMING FOR SUPPER: This NT method of serving the Lord’s Supper was very different from the very ornate but funeral environment of the modern day Eucharist. Instead of eating with gladness and joy and adding to the Ekklesia daily, the morose looking people, suffer through the ritual. Jesus is knocking and if you open the door, then He will come in and eat a full meal with you because He may come as a hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick person or as a prisoner.

He has further promised that those who take up their cross and follow Him will sit and eat with Him at His table. Finally, blessed are those, who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb. What a feast it will be! (Rev. 3:20; 19:9)

WAKE UP CALL: The Devil does not enter the churches as a dangerous serpent any more but as little buggies called, 'Tsetse flies'. Their bite results in fatal lethargy and sleeping sickness. You can see the effect in any house of God on Sundays. In contrast, our Lord was consumed with zeal, passion, ardor and fervor for the house of His Father. He took a whip and cleansed the house of the Canaanites or greedy merchants (Zech. 14:21), who had usurped the Gentile section of the temple for commercial activity. The Gentiles now had no place to worship. If you are also bitten by the bug then enjoy your well deserved rest on Sundays, but beware of the fatal consequences. However, if you are consumed with a passion for the house of the Lord, then it is incumbent upon you to take a whip and remove all that is commercial and extrabiblical in your church, so that the Gentiles will have free access to the Father. (Ps. 69:9; Jn. 2:17; Mk. 11: 17)

The world is poor not because of lack of resources but because the 20% of rich countries consume 80% of the resources.

The greatest sin of the modern Christianity is that it preaches to the preached, comforts the comforted, blesses the blessed, converts the converted, baptizes the baptized and sinfully neglects the neglected and selfishly spends 98% of the budget on herself.

There is no provision for using the church as a cash cow but Christians are to directly bridge the disconnect between the poor and the rich by sharing their resources with the poor and with those in the apostolic ministry.

The solution to poverty, hunger and world evangelism is not the rich giving charity to the poor but every Christian opening his own home, sharing his bread and the gospel with the needy. (Isa. 58:7; Acts 4:32-34)

The Jews gave dutifully but the Christians give cheerfully.

THE TITHE

GOD DID NOT START THE TITHING TRADITION: Giving an offering to God is not new. Cain and Abel gave offerings, and so did Noah. A royal priest named Melchizedek of Salem said “Praise the Lord” and Abraham immediately gave him a tithe of the loot, which he obtained from victory over the local kings (Genesis 14:18-20; 28:20-22). Abraham gave this once in a life time tithe. Later on, God tested Abraham by asking Him to give the most precious thing in his life, Isaac, the son of his old age. Abraham passed this extremely difficult test and became a friend of God forever. (2 Chron. 20:7)

THE JEWS WERE NO TAX DODGERS: Declaring your income for tax purposes is not new to the Jews. 3000 years ago, they were commanded to declare their income and account for every penny. They had to make sure that they had not stolen or misused it. Only then, with a clear conscience, could they confidently ask God to look down from heaven and bless them and their land so that it flowed with milk and honey (Deut. 26:12-15). Jews normally gave 20% of their income every year and another 10% every third year. They offered burnt offerings, sacrifices, heave offerings and all the choice offerings, which they had vowed to the Lord. They also offered grain, wine, oil, the firstborn of their flocks and free-will offerings, etc. (Deut. 12:11, 17). They offered a special sacrifice to redeem their own firstborn. The Jews were good givers because they believed that their material blessing depended on their faithful giving. But tithing was for the Jews, who gave dutifully and has nothing to do with the Christians, who give cheerfully. Along with all the other Jewish sacrifices, tithing for the Levites (clergy) was also nailed to the cross forever.

POVERTY IS A SIGN OF A CURSE: Hunger, thirst and nakedness were a curse imposed on those who did not serve the Lord with joy and gladness of heart (Deut. 28:47,48). Jews were to open their hands freely for the needy, and that way there should be no poor among them (Deut. 15:4-11). It is common to threaten from the pulpit, the new covenant Christians with dire consequences for robbing God, in support of modern day Levites. However not giving to the poor is unscriptural (Mal. 3:5; 8-10). *The Didache*, also called the “Teaching of the twelve Apostles”, written in circa 65-80 A.D. says “*Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know whom to give... Do not be a stretcher forth of hand to receive but to give...Gathering for others’ sake is valid but he who asks for self is a false prophet.*”

JESUS ABROGATES TITHING: In the OT, tithing was enforced. In the NT, the Greek word “*didomi*” implies giving our most precious possession of our own free will, not by force of religious law (Acts 20:35). A house Ekklesia does not need any money to run. People should distribute their money and other resources directly to the needy. The Lord Jesus never asked anyone to give tithe to the church. He condemned the Pharisees: “*For you pay tithe of mint, anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith.*” He told His disciples that “*unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.*” Thus, we must give more than the tenth (Matt. 23:23; 5:20). Opening our house for the lost and the least, is the best way to offer everything we own for the use of God. (Luke 19:5-10)

JESUS WANTS IT ALL: Tithe means the tenth but in the first year the Jews gave 20% of their increase to the Levites. In the second year, after offering another 20%, at the temple, they

shared it with others. In the third year, they ate it within their own gates, with the Levites, the poor, the strangers, the fatherless and the widows (Deut.26:10-13). Giving 10% to the church is not biblical tithing. He expects us to invest in Him all we can, because ultimately it belongs to Him. (Matt. 4:18-22). In the NT, everyone pooled together and shared out according to need and not according to greed. Jesus praised the poor widow for offering the two coins, all that she possessed (Mark 12:42-44). The Lord asked a rich young man, to sell and give away all his possessions, not to the temple, but to the poor and to follow him. No one can serve both God and money. Sadly, many rich people will be paupers in the next life. Love of money always muddles the message. (Matt. 6:24; 28:12-15)

GET A HUNDREDFOLD RETURN ON INVESTMENT: Jesus said that whoever has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, children or lands for His name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and inherit everlasting life and the right to judge in the regeneration. (Matt. 19:27-30). The conditions are tough, but it is still the best investment you can make.

USE YOUR MUSCLE POWER TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION: *"Then you shall say in your heart, my power and the might of my hands have gained me this wealth. For you shall remember God, for it is He who gives power to earn wealth that He may establish His covenant, which He swore to your fathers."* (Deut. 8:17,18). He is more interested in what you keep and why you keep, than in what you give. God is All Sufficient and He does not need our money. God gives us wealth to fulfill His covenant that *"through Abraham and his descendents, all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gen. 12:1-3). All true believers are now the descendents of Abraham (Gal. 3:7-9), therefore all our income must bless the unblessed families of the earth. If we are going to share immortality with them, then there is no reason why we should not share our mortal resources to make them immortal. We should not be deluded into thinking that whatever we earn with our hard labor is ours to use as we like, but we should clearly understand that it still belongs to God, who gave us the strength to earn it, in the first place. We should earn all we can, to redeem all those, who are not yet the children of Abraham (Eph. 3:5,6). This is a privilege for those who are in Christ, the seed of Abraham. (Gal. 3:29). *He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.* (2 Cor. 9:7-15)

BREAK THE CURSE OF POVERTY BY GIVING: A person might well say, "We lack so many things in our family, how can we give?" Scripturally, poverty is a sign of curse (Deut. 28:47,48). Jesus did not own a house or property. He carried all His worldly possessions in a shoulder bag (Luke 9:58). Even so, Jesus never lacked anything except when he was on the cross. There He suffered hunger, thirst, nakedness and lack of everything because He had become the curse of the world. But it was only after Jesus gave everything, that the blessing of Abraham became operational for the Gentiles (Gal. 3:13,14). Sometimes we bring a curse upon ourselves by disregarding the needs of others. We spend all our money on ourselves and constantly say that our income is not sufficient. That same income becomes more than sufficient when we thank God and use it according to His will, that none should lack anything. The best way to break the curse of poverty is to give from the little that we have until it hurts. The woman of Zarephath broke her curse of poverty by giving her last morsel to Elijah. After that, her bin of flour and the jar of oil never ran dry. (1 Kings 17:14-16).

NOT THE GODLY BUT THE POOR AND THE STRANGERS ARE IN GOD'S FOCUS: God identifies with the poor. *"Josiah defended the poor and needy and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know Me?"* (Jer. 22:16). There are numerous references in the Scriptures where God openly favors the poor and admonishes the rich. Jesus became poor so that we might become rich. The persecuted Jerusalem Christians became pilgrims in distant lands. Peter addressed the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bythnia (1 Pet. 1:1). Christians are meant to be a Diaspora people. Jesus has commanded us to be aliens and strangers in foreign lands and to reach the ends of the earth. God expects us to love the widows, the orphans and the ethnic refugees (Lev. 19:33,34; Deut. 10:17,18). He is not asking us just to be charitable but to treat them as equals, which is inclusive. This is in radical contrast to the way the world treats them, culturally different and despises them. In the biblical context, it is the poor, the down and out, the weak, the meek, the freak, the exploited, the powerless, the untouchables, the second class citizens and plain nobodies, who are in focus, not the godly. *"Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones for in heaven their angels always see the face of God. It is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones should perish"* (Luke 6:20; James 2:1-9; 1 Cor 1:26-31; Matt. 9:13, 18:10,14)

FOOLS EARN FOR THE WISE: *"God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight, but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God"* (Ecclesiastes 2:26). In God's economic system, a sinner works hard to earn money so that godly people may benefit. This is God's justice. It is a wise thing to give away what you cannot keep, to gain that, which you cannot lose.

THE CARING AND SHARING EKKLESIA BREAKS THE CURSE OF POVERTY: The NT teaches us to give our offerings for two things only: firstly to take care of the poor, and secondly for those who have a traveling ministry and labor in the harvest fields (James 1:27; Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 16:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:3,4). There is no provision for paying a regular salary to the local leaders. The NT believers who owned "lands and houses" (mentioned in the plural), sold their extra property and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet, and therefore no believer lacked anything (Acts 4:34,35). This is a sign of a caring and sharing Ekklesia, and it resulted in breaking the curse of poverty. They did not sell all their possessions but only sold their extra houses and lands. Mary, the mother of Mark, kept her large house but opened it for a house Ekklesia (Acts 12:5, 12). Ananias and Sapphira tried to cheat and died instantly. All who believed were together and had all things in common (Acts 2:44-46). Selling extra property turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because when the persecution came, those who had not sold and shared, lost everything. Barnabas was a land owning Levite, which was wrong, so he sold it and laid it at the apostles' feet and became an apostle himself (Acts 4:34-37). Give to the needy all that you do not really need and start counting your blessings.

NO MONEY FOR EXTRA-BIBLICAL WASTEFUL EXPENDITURE: The fact that the money was laid at the "Apostles' feet" sends an important signal to the Ekklesia, that the money is to be spent for apostolic purposes and part of the overall purpose of "supporting one another" so that none will lack anything (Rom. 10:14,15). It gives freedom to believers to save and give for specific purposes (1 Cor. 16:2,3). There is no provision for spending money on land, property, court cases or for image building of celebrity preachers. There is also no justification for spending resources, where no deliberate attempt is made at gathering the

harvest. Jesus said that he who gathers is with Him and he who scatters is against Him. Jesus is interested in “fruit that remains” and not in scattering the seed haphazardly. (1 Cor. 6:1-9; Matt. 12:30)

WORK TO GIVE SOMETHING TO THE POOR: It appears that the Lord took the fishermen, out from their jobs for full time ministry (Matt. 4:19; Jer. 16:16). But, the reality is that Peter continued to own boats and went fishing from time to time. He caught fish to pay the tax. Their call to ministry started with the sale of two boatloads of fish and the income from the 153 fish, caught after the resurrection, saw them through to the Pentecost (Luke 5:3-7; John 21:3,11). Honest, hard work is encouraged in the NT. Paul said that he who does not work should not eat (2 Thes. 3:8-12). Paul was a full time missionary, but he worked to provide for himself and for his missionary work. He took a dim view of stealing, *“steal no longer; but rather let him labor with his hands that he may have something to give to the poor.”* Everyone is expected to share their earnings with the poor (Eph. 4:28). The bench mark is not what you give to the church but *“what you have done for the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.”* (Matt. 25:40)

SPEND ALL YOU CAN FOR HIM AND THE NEEDY BELIEVER: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind...and love your neighbor as yourself”* (Luke 10:27). Interestingly, Christians give minimum money and expect maximum blessings. Surely, if we love God, we will also spend on Him, just as we do for our loved ones. Equally, if we love our neighbors then we should be spending something to reach them also. This is the only way, we can prove that we really love God and our neighbors. Paul never gave any money to nonbelievers. This is an important lesson for those who give overt or covert financial inducement to people of other faiths, to convert to Christianity. There is no justification for this in the Scriptures.

BEWARE OF THE WORSHIP OF MONEY: Most Christians are idolators and their revered object of worship is “wealth”. For many leaders, fund raising is a compulsion. It has been developed into a fine art with the help of laptops and power point projectors. Raising money for the poor and the itinerant missionaries or training programs is legitimate. Paul did so. Raising funds, for worship centers or any monstrosity that is unused for six days a week, should be banned. People are so delighted to get a job in the government or a foreign country, particularly in Arab or Western countries with fabulous salaries that they think they have already made it to heaven. The NT calls this a delusion (James 4:13). Many are scared of witnessing for fear of losing their jobs. But there will be no cowards and compromisers in heaven (Rev. 21:8). No one can serve God and Wealth. (Luke 16:13). Any job that is given to us, is from God for His own glory and meeting our needs but not our greeds.

THE HARVEST IS READY BUT THERE IS A FAMINE OF SUPPORTERS: Many young people are unable to go out as missionaries, due to lack of sponsors. Although God has blessed many Christians, they are not yet a source of blessing to people of other faiths (Gen. 12:1-3). Laborers cannot go to reap the harvest unless they are sent by someone (Rom. 10:13-16; 2 Tim. 2:4). We have only two options, either we go or we send. The Scriptures teach us to supply from our material abundance to those who lack, especially the apostolic teams; so that from their spiritual abundance, they may supply our needs. Thus we will complement each other. (2 Cor. 8:14,15)

CARPET BOMBING OR CLUSTER EFFECT: In Jerusalem, the Assemblies spread like wildfire from house to house, carpeting the whole city. This was an urban model where communication was available. All the Jews who joined the faith, themselves became resource persons. No money was required for this. Contrary to this, when the gospel reached to the regions beyond, Paul planted Assemblies, which exploded like cluster bombs, with spiritual shrapnel reaching into the surrounding towns and villages. Money was then required for the itinerant missionaries. Giving tithe to the church is not in the NT but meeting the urgent needs of the apostolics is scriptural. (Titus 3:13,14)

SUNDAY COLLECTION IS ONLY FOR THE SAINTS AND NOT FOR THE CHURCH: How beautiful are the feet of those who carry the gospel to the lost people who live in distant villages and shanty towns of the city! (Rom. 10:15) It is our duty and privilege to keep those feet moving. Those who labor among the lost sheep are worthy of double wages (1 Tim. 5:17,18). They are not our servants, nor are they beggars. Their sender is the Lord Himself (Matt. 28:18,19). Therefore, we should receive them in our homes with gladness and hold them in great esteem (Phil. 2:29,30). We can meet their needs in many ways like providing food, clothes, bicycle, Bibles, literature, school fees, medical and travel bills, house rent etc. (3 John:6-8). Paul instructed the Galatian and Corinthian Assemblies to lay aside on Sundays something for the poor saints of Jerusalem. He was not setting a tradition but only a one time effort for a specific purpose (1 Cor. 16:1,2). There is no biblical basis for giving every Sunday. However, it is wise to keep funds handy for a deserving cause (Eph. 4:28). *“He who sows bountifully, shall also reap bountifully.”* (2 Cor. 9:6).

THE BEST WAY: A financially strong church is a contradiction in terms, just like a poor Christian is a contradiction, because the Lord is my Father and all that is His, belongs to me and therefore, the law of abundance operates in my life. He said *“Come unto Me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest”* (Matt. 11:28). He has promised, *“My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:19). All our need covers every area of our life including body, emotions, soul, material and financial need. We are accountable for our God-given gifts, time, talents and other resources. We give only a couple of hours on Sundays, which has no transformational value to the lost of this world. Instead of building houses for Him, we should let Him build His house in our homes. The best way is to make available all the resources in our house, so that Jesus can build *“a house of prayer for all nations”* (Mark 11:17). The early Ekklesia did so by *“sharing the whole counsel of God from house to house”* (Acts 20:20, 27; 2:46). *“To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17).

The greatest tribute you can pay to Jesus is not by just acquiring vast knowledge about Him but by emulating Him.

Bible was not given to us just to read and increase our knowledge but to transform us until we resonate with the will of God.

The best way to complete the task of the Great Commission is to obey the Great Commandment. (Matt. 28:19; Luke 10:27)

On the awesome day of the Pentecost, when the Ekklesia was born to fulfill the mission of evangelizing the whole world, Peter spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the baptism of 3000 people.

By choosing unlettered Peter, Jesus sent a strong signal about the spiritual qualifications for leadership in the Ekklesia, who would have the capacity to complete the task of reaching the ends of the earth. This was later corrupted by powerless intellectualism.

It is sad, bad, tragic, pathetic and dangerous to see the world's sole superpower, the church, paralyzed, comatose, unprepared, uncaring and incapable providing relief to the people from the impending apocalyptic catastrophe, through Godly governance.

God has always reigned through the prophets. But, He was rejected by Israel who wanted their own king just like we want our clergy to rule and roost over us. God consoled Prophet Samuel, "they have not rejected you but Me" (1 Sam. 6:7)

Christians were the only people in the whole world who had no temples, no priests and no sacrifices.

In God's kingdom, there will be no secular/sacred dichotomy because God will reign directly through His Saints and establish faith based governments throughout the world. (Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 27; Rev. 5:10)

THE CHURCH GOVERNMENT

You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a special possession; to show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9)

THE BRIDE IS NOT A REGISTERED SOCIETY: Jesus said, “*I will build My Ekklesia*” (Matt. 16:18). The Ekklesia is the Bride of Christ and therefore a living organism that cannot be a registered as a lifeless organization. It consists of members whose names are written in the Book of the Lamb (Heb. 12:22-24). When David was appointed king, he chose his cabinet of ministers and was ready to rule, but then there was famine for three years. Apparently, his predecessor King Saul had murdered the innocent Gibeonites. Even though David had not sinned, until a full recompense was made for the sins of his predecessor, David could not run the government (2 Sam. 20:23-26; 21:1-14). It is important for us to realize that the church needs to do a lot of repentance for the sins of our predecessors, before any church government can function effectively. (Neh. 1:4-7; Dan. 9:3-14)

NO BOARD OF GOVERNORS: There were no committees in the early Ekklesia, nor did they have presidents, chairmen, secretaries or a CEO set over the assembly. The thief came so that we might have committees and have them abundantly, because that is the surest way to destroy the Ekklesia (John 10:10). If Moses had committees, the Jews would still be arguing in the wilderness. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, advised him to appoint leaders over ten, fifty, one hundred and a thousand people. It was a good system, but it was a man-made system (Exo. 18:13-22). Jesus gave His Ekklesia gifted mentors like apostles, prophets, teachers, shepherds and evangelists (Eph. 4:11). He also gave the gift of administration, but those with that gift are meant to be helpers and not officials (1 Cor. 12:28). However, we have supplanted all of these with a multitude of committees and officials, who lord it over the gifted elders. We need to urgently get back to the original system to regain the lost glory (Hag 2:9). This is only possible in the context of small NT Ekklesia.

THE KITCHEN EKKLESIA: Today, 80% of all house Ekklesias are being planted in the 10/40 Window by ordinary housewives. In the early Ekklesia, there were no youth groups, men and women’s fellowships, Sunday schools for children, etc. They also did not need worship or building committees. Believers met as family, and worship and teaching took place along with the women cooking food and children playing. Even while Jesus was teaching, Martha was cooking and interrupted Jesus. This is the beauty of the house Ekklesia, which gives freedom to people to participate as and when convenient (Luke 10:38-42). All this is very difficult to imagine in our highly organized and program-based churches. Jesus commanded us to be His witnesses, which can be done even while cooking food in the kitchen. A formal meeting is the last place where one can witness to anybody. In any case, those who need witnessing are not present in these meetings. (Acts 1:8)

NO PRIVILEGED PRIESTHOOD WITHIN THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS: Many Jewish traditions of the OT, which serve no useful purpose in saving souls, have crept back into the modern church. Ornate buildings, imposing ceremonies, white gowns, the holiness of the altar, religious music, all have made a comeback. This is in spite of the fact that the

curtain was torn and now believers have direct access to God. Once the Levitical priesthood ended, treating leaders as dignitaries and calling them fathers, padres, reverends, etc. is unscriptural (Heb. 10:31). There is no provision for a special priesthood within the priesthood of all believers, and certainly no room for dignitaries. We are all co-laborers. (2 Cor. 6:1; 10:17,18)

BIG CHURCHES ATTRACT BIG DEMONS: Religion is a set of rituals created by men. They are not from God. Many of them are demonic. Jesus was angry with the Pharisees for holding on to the traditions of men over the commandments of God (Mark 7:6-9). *“The Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons”* (1 Tim. 4:1,2). Many leaders consult occultists, believe in horoscopes and witchcraft, and even make blood covenants with Satanists. King Saul consulted the witch of Endor and the next day he and his three sons were killed, and a little later, seven other sons were given to the Gibeonites to be hanged. Many leaders are involved in adultery, pornography, homosexuality and child abuse. The statistics show that carnal sins are no less in the church today than the secular world. *“Lucifer has transformed himself into an angel of light and has a vast army of ministers who masquerade as ministers of righteousness but whose end will be according to their works.”* (2 Cor. 11:14,15). God takes all these sins very seriously, as He did in the case of King Saul. Hence, the removal of these sins is urgent, as a part of good governance. Any procrastination in taking action means cowardice and cowards will not make it to heaven. (Matt. 16:21-23; Gal. 6:12-15; 2 Cor. 11:14,15; Rev. 21:8)

MEGA CHURCHES PERPETUATE MEGA HERESIES: The traditionalists fear that small Assemblies will go off track and teach heresies, and this is a valid concern (Titus 1:10,11). However, history tells us otherwise. All the major heresies have come from large organized churches, and the largest church, the Catholic Church, today is a prime example. For instance, no church that is practicing infant baptism will allow open discussion on the subject, whereas the small house Ekklesia, with its open format, will immediately search the Scriptures and discover the truth. Tragically, the large institutionalized churches continue in the bondage of extra-biblical heresies. Big or small, the greatest need of the church is openness and transparency to expose her fallen nature and then take appropriate steps for course correction.

ONLY THE SONS OF THE SOIL CAN HIRE AND FIRE: There is no provision in the Scriptures for a “remote control” government. Every local church has its own leaders who may be mentored from outside, but are certainly not controlled by a distant church or an organization. There is also no biblical precedent for an outsider to administer a local Ekklesia. At all times the decision making should be in the hands of the local people. Elders with different designations like bishop (overseer), deacons and brethren administered the local Ekklesia. None of them was a dignitary but each labored along with the other saints. If anything, the saints ranked higher than the bishops (Phil. 1:1), who were merely caretakers of the flock (Acts 20:28). None of them was a hired worker (1 Pet. 5:2). The criteria for their hiring and firing and their functions are well defined in the Scriptures (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-15; 1 Pet. 5:1-5). Initially, the Ekklesia can function without any elders who can be appointed later. (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5)

ONLY JESUS CAN ORDAIN: The present day practice of “ordination” should be removed from the church vocabulary as it smacks of superior ecclesiastical order and command

authority. It gives malignant power to lord it over others. This creates a clergy/ laity divide, which is foreign to the NT. Better words are “endorsing” “appointing,” “selecting,” “choosing” or “identifying.” Actually it is covenanting with Jesus to “bring forth fruit that remains” (John 15:16). It has nothing to do with academic qualification or becoming a reverend. It is the prerogative of Jesus, the head of the Ekklesia, who appoints and controls every part of the body directly and not through an intermediary (1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 18, 27). In the natural, there are billions of cells in the body and each one is directly connected to the head. Only cancer cells do not obey, and they ultimately kill the whole body. Every believer is directly connected to Jesus, the head of the Ekklesia. He or she receives instructions from Him and is directly accountable to Him. A church dignitary who ordains, is usurping the authority of Jesus who clearly says that *“You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you and ‘ordained’ (KJV) (appointed) you that you may go and bring forth fruit that remains”* (John 15:16). The Greek word “*tithemi*” means “being placed in a humble horizontal position” for service. This is in complete contrast to the ordination by dignitaries, which elevates the elite clergy and demeans the laymen.

PAUL’S CONSECRATION: It is true that Paul and Titus also appointed elders in the Ekklesias (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), but this was not in an ecclesiastical or hierarchical sense. Paul uses the Greek word “*cheirotoneo*”, which means, “raising or stretching of hands” in agreement for identifying someone into a post. Later, Paul and Barnabas themselves were identified by the Holy Spirit to become missionaries, and the Ekklesia of Antioch laid their hands on them and consecrated them (Acts 13:1-3). Later, Peter and others stretched forth the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas for ministry among the Gentiles and the poor (Gal. 2:9,10). Dedication, identification, selection, appointment, etc., are variations on the same theme. Being separated for ministry to the lost has nothing to do with being conferred into the holy orders of the church. Thus, ordination based on academic qualification is unscriptural. Ordination and appointment in the NT are almost always related to the apostolic ministry of “being sent”, just like Paul and Barnabas were consecrated and sent by the Ekklesia of Antioch. It has nothing to do with the stationary post of a pastor (John 15:16; Acts 13:3). Jesus, the owner of heaven and earth, is the chooser, appointer and sender. (Matt. 28:18,19; Acts 1:8; John 17:18; 20:21)

CHURCH DISCIPLINE: The church cannot legislate (i.e. it cannot make any new laws), but it can only administer the laws given in the Scriptures. Sadly, history tells us otherwise. The church today is full of unscriptural laws and rules that need to be jettisoned. The principle behind all discipline is to restore the erring person back into fellowship. *“If your brother sins against you, rebuke him and if he repents, forgive him. Moreover, if he sins against you seven times in a day, and returns to you saying ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him”* (Luke 17:3,4). Remind the offender that if he has something against anyone, then he should first be reconciled to him. (Matt 5:23,24). However, if he is a gross offender and refuses to repent, then the Ekklesia as a whole, and not an individual, should take the extreme step of delivering his body to the Devil for destruction and pray for the redemption of his spirit. Avoiding an unpleasant situation or claiming to leave it in the hands of God, is a dereliction of duty. Associating with such a person is misplaced sympathy. (1 Cor. 5:5-13)

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IS MURDER MOST FOUL: The worst form persecution in the modern church is character assassination, which is equivalent to lies and murder (1 John 3:15; 4:20). Never make an accusation against an elder without two witnesses (1 Tim.

5:19). All people have been created in the image of the living God, and therefore no dominion has been given to any man over another person. We cannot boss another person nor can we manipulate others. God gave us dominion only over the animal and natural world, including demons (Lev. 25:17; Gen. 1:26-28; Eph. 4:25-32; Luke 9:1; 10:17). Jesus came under the authority of God (John 20:21) and the centurion was a man under authority. In the same way, we are under the authority of God and must submit to each other (Matt. 8:9; James 4:7-11; Eph. 5:21). The Ekklesia as a whole is authorized to take action. In the OT, the whole community stoned the guilty, but the accuser had to throw the first stone. (1 Cor. 5:4,5; Josh. 7:24-26; Deut. 17:7; John 8:7)

YOU ARE A KING: There are lawful and unlawful governments in the world. Even in lawful governments, truth can be manipulated and justice can be bought or fought, by clever and expensive lawyers. The poor cannot afford it either way. The purpose of church government is not only for internal administration, but also to reign on earth (Rom. 5:17). Jesus shed His blood and has made us kings and priests to reign on earth, while we are still living and not after we are dead and gone (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). We are the royal priests who serve the Royalty, the King of kings (1 Pet. 2:9). Jesus is a Royal Priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was the priest and king of Salem. Abraham paid tribute to him. Melchizedek did not belong to a priestly class of Levites nor did Jesus. We are not hereditary priests, but every blood bought believer is both a priest and a king. We have to usher in the righteous kingdom of God, which is of love, joy, peace, prosperity and justice for all. The Ekklesia is an assembly of kings, who must serve the nation as viceroys of the King of kings. (Is. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44; 7:27)

WE MUST REIGN IN THIS LIFE: Isaiah says “... *for unto us a Son is given and the **government** shall be upon His shoulders... and of the increase of His government there shall be no end...*” Jesus is the head of the Ekklesia and He is sitting in heaven. We are His body here on earth. We are His hands, legs and shoulders. The government is really upon us; therefore, we must govern the nations. He has bestowed on each one of us a kingdom (Luke 22:29). The Lord has even pre-appointed the territories of our kingdom (Acts 17:24-26). Since we are territorial, we must first expel the territorial spirits which illegally inhabit our kingdoms. If we make good use of our God-given talents, He will say, “*Well done my servant. Because you have been faithful in very little, have authority over ten cities*” (Luke 19:17). Failure to recognize our kingly role has resulted in the Devil usurping entire governments, secular or otherwise. Jesus cannot be King of kings, unless we function as kings. If we do not function as kings and establish Godly governance, then we are dummies and the Devil will happily take over and establish his evil kingdom. We are servant kings and must serve the nation as viceroys of the King. (Luke 22:24-29)

WE ARE THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD WITH DELEGATED AUTHORITY: We have been praying for the last two thousand years, “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,*” but we have done very little to bring His kingdom here on earth. It is time we took our kingly role seriously. We are already kings, so unless especially called to do so, we do not have to take part in any political election, because we can reign through intercession, prophetic proclamation and apostolic church planting. The Lord has promised, “*If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then from heaven I will hear their prayer and forgive their sins and heal their nation*” (2 Chron. 7:14). We can change any

nation by intercession and by standing in the gap (1 Tim. 2:1-4; Eze. 22:30). As servant kings, it is our responsibility to take care of all those under our charge (Col. 1:26,27). As kings with delegated authority from the Lord Himself, we are to reconcile the entire creation (2 Cor. 5:17-20). *"The whole creation is travailing for the manifestation of the sons of God"* (Rom. 8:19). We must seriously take up our kingship for the restoration of our heavenly Father's creation. We should be leaders in all the environmental, Greenpeace and tree-planting movements and the protection of animals from cruelty, etc. The ultimate goal of the Ekklesia is not to rule by commanding but by serving others. We must put an end to all demonic rule, authority and power, releasing people out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once we have finished the task then Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God. (1 Cor. 15:24,25)

THE CHOICE MAY PROVE COSTLY: Sadly, most Christians are caught up in the traditions, rules and regulations of their denominations. The bondage is so oppressive that they are unable to step out of the box for fear of vilification, reprisal, ostracism from the community and the possibility of the church refusing to marry and bury them. But in making the right decision as to whether to continue with such a church, it is good to remember the injunction of Jesus, *"You leave aside the commandments of God and hold the traditions of men."* He further said, *"He who loves Me will keep My commandments."* (Mark 7:6,7; John 14:21-24). When confronted with the problem of whether to obey the temple authorities or to obey God, Peter and the other disciples clearly opted for the commandments of God. (Acts 4:18-20). It is good to remember that all the Christian Jews in the Jerusalem church had to suffer severe persecution at the hands of other Jews.

ISRAEL MADE THE WRONG CHOICE AND PERISHED: Ten out of twelve spies sent by Moses made the wrong choice, opted for short term benefits and perished with their families in the wilderness. Only Caleb and Joshua bravely stood up for the truth and crossed the Jordan and possessed the land. The Jews felt secure in the temple, the Sabbath and their rituals but despised the Gentiles. However, God rejected the temple, the Sabbath, the rituals and finally the Jews, because the time had come for the Gentiles to inherit the kingdom. We also feel secure within the four walls of the church, but this is a false sense of security. The right decision may result in your humiliation and persecution, but we ought to persevere remembering, *"...he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin."* (1 Pet. 4:1)

THE CHURCH MUST CHOOSE EITHER BRICKBATS OR BOUQUETS: Jesus and His disciples systematically broke the laws of the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-13), the synagogue (Luke 13:14-17) and the temple (Matt. 24:1-3). God told the young prophet, Jeremiah, to go boldly and demolish all the ungodly structures. The young Ekklesia in Jerusalem boldly disowned Jewish laws offensive to the Gentiles (Acts 15:1-21). In the same way, today's prophets, priests and kings must debunk man-made traditions and structures, which are obstacles to the edification of the kingdom. We need to uproot, demolish and tear down the existing bureaucratic, hierarchical, power and property-oriented, male-dominated structures and build people-oriented, NT "models of hope" all over again. But be realistic and expect brickbats and not bouquets for initiating these reforms. (Jer. 1:5-10)

THE KLEROS AND THE LAOS HAVE A JOB TO DO: The traditional church functions like a wheel with the cell churches attached as spokes and controlled by the hub. Jesus never

said I am the wheel that moves the church industry and you are the spokes. He said "*I am the wine and you are the branches*" (John 15:5). The Spider wine throws out roots every so often, which sprout and nourish new branches. Unlike the wheel, the wine keeps growing and multiplying, even when cut and transplanted elsewhere. Jesus shed His blood and appointed us as priests and kings (Rev. 1:6). As kings and priests, we must have territories to throw down spiritual roots and expand the kingdom. Although the modern church is consumed with leaders who want to control the church, the word "*leader*" is foreign to the NT. The clergy, which comes from the Greek word *Kleros*, means a possession. Nowhere does it mean a leader (Col. 1:12; Eph. 1:11; Gal. 3:29). If anything Peter asks the elders not to lord over the *Kleros* (1 Pet. 5:3). Both *Kleros* (the heritage) and the *laos* (the ordinary people) (1 Pet. 2:9), are God's possessions and called to serve as equals in God's kingdom. God has put us in *kairos* or pre-appointed time and has defined the boundaries where we must establish His kingdom. He has visited the territories to take out a people for Himself. He is now waiting for *Kleros* and *laos* to complete the job. (Acts 17:26; 15:14)

It should be difficult for sinners to go to hell because the entire church pastors the whole city and not just one congregation.

One-man-show is repugnant to the Scriptures because it violates the biblical concept of "Priesthood of all Believers" and an infringement of basic democratic right of Godly men and women to speak in the church. Gifts and calling are not gender specific but are equally available to men, women and even children. (Acts 2:17, 18)

Fivefold ministry-gifted equippers, maximize gifts and talents of the saints, which are necessary for growth, maturity and rapid multiplication of the churches. (Eph. 4:11,12)

As long as there is gift-gap in the church, the Christians cannot come to maturity and fruitfulness. (Gal. 3:28, 29)

THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRIES

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and some teachers... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry... for the edifying of the body of Christ... Until we attain unity... and have full knowledge of Jesus Christ... and become mature in faith... so that the whole body functions properly” (Eph. 4:11-13).

ASCENSION GIFTS: Many call these ascension gifts because they were given after the ascension of Jesus. These gifts are not titles for flaunting but actually functions and tasks to be accomplished. The main purpose of giving these gifts are:

1. To provide plurality of leadership, to avoid domination by one person.
2. To equip the saints for various ministries of the Ekklesia
3. To build up the Body, both numerically as well as in faith.
4. To provide clear understanding of the incarnation of Jesus.
5. To bring the Bride to reproductive maturity so she multiplies.

CAPACITY BUILDING : Jesus never handed over the leadership to Peter or to any one disciple, even though the Zebedee brothers tried to get to the top of the pile, through their mother. (Mark 10:35-45). The NT Ekklesia never had senior or junior pastor/leader. Not every Ekklesia had elders but they certainly had multiple leadership (Acts 14:23, 15:4-6; 20:7; 1 Tim. 5:17; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1). Young fellows like Timothy and Titus went through capacity building through years of apprenticeship before they had the maturity to appoint elders (Titus 1:5). Ekklesias were planted first and then the elders were appointed later and never the other way around. Paul's strategy was to evangelize strategic cities, plant churches and then leave them in the hands of the faithful believers (Acts 14:23). Paul's early letters, Galatians, Thessalonians, Corinthians and Romans are strong on the gospel. His middle letters Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians are strong on mission/vision. His last letters, Timothy and Titus are about Ekklesia leadership. The above is the chronological order in which the Epistles were written, which was changed by someone in the 2nd century.

POST HARVEST MANAGEMENT AND THE ATTRITION TRAP: Many churches are strong on evangelism but poor on church planting, which is a disaster. Now there is a great move of the Holy Spirit and large numbers of Ekklesias are being planted but acceleration with poor post-harvest management, leads to an alarming attrition rate. According one survey of the 50,000 house churches planted in India, in the last 5 years, many missions saw an attrition rate of 40-60%. Paul galvanized an excellent follow up team of Timothy, Silas, Titus and others, as regional trouble shooters (Acts 15:36), who mentored local leaders, thus minimizing the attrition trap. Capacity building of multiple levels of godly leadership, local, regional and national, through proper mentoring, results in rapid expansion of mature Ekklesias. (2 Tim. 2:2)

EKKLESIA NAMED AFTER THE REGIONS: All the NT Ekklesias were named after the city or the region. Paul planted “regional” Ekklesias, which rapidly multiplied and became a vast network of house Ekklesias (1 Thess. 1:8; Acts 19:9). All the seven Ekklesias of Revelation and those of Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia and Philippi were known by their cities

or regions. The 16th chapter of Romans describes the network of house Ekklesia that constituted the Ekklesia of Rome. (Rom. 1:7)

EKKLESIA MUST PASTOR THE WHOLE CITY: United prayer makes it difficult for the sinners in the city to go to hell because the church has learned to pastor the whole city rather than just one congregation, as is happening in South America. The South Korean church prayed as a nation. It was founded in 1884. Within 100 years (1984) they had 30,000 churches and by 2000 over 60,000. Of the 11 megachurches in the world, 10 are in the city of Seoul. The largest theological colleges there. They have the second largest missionary force of 10,646 now working in other lands. Lack of unity in the church results in the city becoming the dwelling place of demons. (Eph. 4:16; Rev. 18:2)

NO MONOLOGUE BUT PLURALITY OF LEADERSHIP: Church is not for solo players but includes consciously and intentionally developing shared leadership, team players, pooling skills, gifts, knowledge and sharing it with others, both inside and outside the church. To prevent whole scale heresies in the church, the Lord himself made the provision for apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to unitedly feed the flock. Plurality of leadership is healthier and stronger than individuals as it provides mutual accountability, diversity of gifts to function and sharing of responsibility. It avoids development of personality cults or concentration and use of power and funds in unhealthy ways. The NT Assemblies were small, and profited through the ministry of itinerant fivefold ministry-gifted equippers (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Multiple leadership is necessary to ensure that the Ekklesias are constantly strengthened in faith and grow in numbers daily (Acts 16:5).

EKKLESIA IS A MULTI-SPECIALTY CLINIC: Jesus never went alone for His ministry nor did Peter and Paul. Equipping the Ekklesia is like building a house, which needs carpenters, laborers, masons, electricians, plumbers and others with different skills. Similarly, one teacher alone cannot teach all the subjects in a school, but teachers with different skills are needed for balanced education of the students. We need all five fingers to make the hand functional. Similarly, one leader alone, however eminent, will cause a lopsided development of the Ekklesia. The fivefold ministry gifts are very much like the cardiovascular circulatory system, which carry the much needed oxygen, nutrition and antibodies to the organs and remove impurities and protect the body from infection, disease and death. Paul with a passion for Ekklesia planting was called an apostle while the daughters of Philip who were tuned in to God and brought holiness to the Bride, were called prophetesses. Philip who was fired up to share the gospel, was called an evangelist while Barnabas was a shepherd with a compassionate heart. Priscilla was a teacher and taught Apollos. Together, they supplemented and complemented each other and brought balance, maturity, health, reproduction and edification of the Ekklesias. (Rom. 12:5-8; Eph. 4: 11-13; 1 Cor. 12:11-31)

AN APOSTLE is a messenger or a bearer of good news. He is like the thumb of a hand. Hand surgeons refer to the thumb as half the hand, because it is not possible to even pick up a glass of water without it. Similarly, the role of an apostle is crucial in an Ekklesia planting movement. It is the apostles and prophets who lay the foundation of the Ekklesia of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). This is the highest gift. Apostles can also have other gifts like teaching, etc., but planting churches among non-Christians is their primary gift. One important area that distinguishes apostles from others

is that they work diligently and are willing to pay any price and make any sacrifice for the growth of the Kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 4:9-13)

AN APOSTLE IS A MOVER AND SHAKER: A true apostle moves on as soon as the local church is established with mature leaders. He has no intention of staying in one place and usurping others' authority. Paul, the apostle, was always on the move and wherever he went, he planted an Ekklesia and appointed local elders. His vision was to somehow reach Spain, which he thought was the end of the earth (Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:24). A true apostle is always heading for places where the gospel has not yet been preached. Pathetically, the destination of many modern day apostles is the United States.

MILLIONS OF EKKLESIAS YET TO BE PLANTED: Interestingly, in spite of the clear command of Jesus to reach "*the ends of the earth*", none of the NT Apostles even remotely mentioned it as part of their exhortation. None of the Ekklesias mentioned in the NT, ever made a world evangelization plan to reach the ends of the earth. However the Ekklesias they planted were so mature and the dialogical method they followed was so effective that multiplication took place spontaneously (1 Thes.1:8; Acts 19:9,10). Today, there are hundreds of plans for world evangelization, none of which is likely to succeed, yet thousands of house Ekklesia are starting spontaneously, every day all over the world. "*The wind bloweth where it listeth*" and it would be foolishness to try to control it (John 3:8). The way things are moving, it appears, that very soon every human habitation will have its own worshipping community. We need millions of Ekklesias for the six billion people on earth. Even the Christian countries need home Ekklesias for proper maturing of Christians. The prayer of every Christian for the church should be, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Lord, multiply home Ekklesias, multiply apostles and prophets and other leaders in the power of the Holy Spirit. Multiply them daily, multiply them by the millions and fill the earth with Thy glory".

ALL EKKLESIA PLANTERS ARE APOSTLES: Thousands of people, young and old, women, youth and even children are seeing Jesus in dreams and visions. Many are joining Jesus for the last cataclysmic war, to banish the demonic kingdom of the Devil and to usher in the righteous kingdom of God. Many are leaving homes and hearth and their dear ones in response to the apostolic call. They are preaching the good news, and planting Assemblies in regions and among people unheard of before. Some still think that they are mere pastors or evangelists, but their ministries are obviously apostolic like Paul, as they are planting Assemblies, handing them over and moving on.

A PROPHET is like the pointing finger of the hand. The prophets are tuned to God and they can see and hear what God wants done. Like the architects, the apostles and the prophets have the complete picture of the Ekklesia while the others do not have the whole picture of the jigsaw. We need less of the ruler of the synagogue type of pastors or scholarly teachers or even high octane evangelists but more of the old fashioned prophets who speak, whatever they hear directly from the Throne Room. The prophets are not high up in the popularity chart, but you can disregard them at your own peril (Amos 7:12-17; 8:11). "*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" (Rev. 19:10). The essence of any prophecy is that it glorifies Jesus and not the prophet.

EVERYONE CAN PROPHECY AT LEAST THREE THINGS: Just like a general physician can treat many diseases but he is not a specialist, similarly all of us can prophesy but that does not

mean that we have the office of a prophet. That is a special gift. The prophets have the first priority to speak in the Ekklesia (1 Cor. 14:26-31, 5, 39).

Whoever Prophesies, Speaks:

1. Edification: It is spiritual (quality) and numerical (quantity) growth of the Ekklesia. (Acts 16:5; Rom. 15:2; Eph. 4:12)

2. Exhortation: It is encouraging, persuading, counselling, inviting and challenging the Ekklesia to accomplish the tasks given to her.

3. Comfort: It is mentoring the hurting people. (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

Prophets are essential to Ekklesia planting because, along with the apostles, they are responsible for laying the foundation with Jesus as the chief corner stone. (Eph. 2:20). Finally, it is most important to have prophets in the Ekklesia because *“God will not do anything in your area without first revealing it to His servants, the local prophets”* (Amos 3:7). In ancient times, God spoke through the prophets who appeared from time to time. But we are now in the last days, and God is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, so every believer and even nonbeliever, can prophesy. This includes men, women and children. Every word we speak is a prophecy and is like the oracle of God. Whatever we say is either a blessing or a curse. Therefore, it is extremely important for us to think before we say anything and to control our mouths (Heb. 1:1; Acts 2:17,18; 1 Pet. 4:11; James 3:6, 9, 10). All our words are prophetic utterances, and constantly subject to scrutiny by other prophets. (1 Cor. 14:29-32)

AN EVANGELIST is like the little finger of the hand. It is small, but it has its own importance and no one wants to get rid of his little finger. The only evangelist mentioned in the NT is Philip. He was not “The Apostle Philip”, but a simple man who served at the tables. He went to Samaria and chased out the screaming demons and healed the sick. This humble man then went and met the treasurer of Ethiopia, disciples him and baptized him in a roadside pool, all in a matter of couple of hours. Later on, he settled in Caesarea. He was an exemplary father who mentored his four daughters to become prophetesses. Preaching is not just words but being a good father and plenty of action. (Acts 6:5; 8:5-7, 26-40; 21:8)

PREACHING MUST LEAD TO BAPTISM AND HEALING OF THE CREATION: John the Baptist set the trend for the new kingdom by standing in a river and preaching and baptizing thousands. Jesus was accused of baptizing more than John. Every time Peter preached, it resulted in baptisms. Philip preached in Samaria and thousands were baptized. It was power preaching with healing and deliverance, followed by baptism. The Lord has commanded us to go and preach the gospel to the whole of creation, not just to human beings, and certainly not to the Christians on Sundays (Mark 16:15,16). Jesus is the Word, through whom the Father created the universe and He is interested in the salvation of the whole creation and not just human beings. This is why Jesus has asked us to preach the gospel to the whole creation. In Col. 1:15-20, the Scripture repeatedly refers to *“all things”*. We are ‘a blessing people’. We bless everything and everybody. We bless the Lord of creation, we also bless all His works everywhere and even our enemies (Gen. 12:2,3; Psalm 103:22; Matt. 5:44). Preaching (*kerygma*) is for the Gentiles, while teaching (*didache*) is for the believers. In both cases, the message has to be Christocentric. Jesus assured us that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Preaching should result in

repentance and baptism. This is to be followed by equipping of the saints to be sent out. However, God's vision is larger than that. According to Him, preaching should result in the healing of the creation. (Mark 16:15-20; 2 Cor. 5: 17-19)

BAPTISM MUST LEAD TO MAKING FISHERS OF MEN: Simply distributing tracts and pamphlets, showing films and singing choruses and holding evangelistic meetings in the villages, is an incomplete work. The process must result in people becoming not only believers, but finally fishers of men. Catching fish means taking the fish out of water and placing them in a bag or a basket (Mark 1:17). All this is hard work and requires a well-planned strategy.

PREACHING IS TO BE DONE WHERE CHRIST IS NOT KNOWN: It is obvious that the job of an evangelist is to "*preach the gospel where Christ is not yet named*" (Rom. 15:20). An evangelist does not preach from the pulpit of a church to the converted but in places where preaching has not been done before. Paul says that it was his aim to preach the gospel with signs and wonders, and with the power of the Spirit in places where Christ was not named (Rom. 15:19-21). This is the best way to be fruitful and to glorify God. (John 15:8)

PREACHING MUST RESULT IN A GATHERING OF THE HARVEST: The modern day practice is to spend vast amounts of money on big crusades and conventions, with little permanent "fruit that remains." Generally economics takes priority over religion but commercialized crusades are the unholy amalgam of both. Even after claiming astronomical numbers of signs and wonders, due to poor post harvest management, no follow up is done and therefore, very few new souls are added. Any increase in the attendance of the church is only temporary. On the downside, there are often disputes and dissensions among the leaders over money and prominent seats on the dais (Luke 20:46). The whole atmosphere becomes vitiated with leaders fighting each other, instead of fighting against the Devil. While Jesus cannot even find a back seat in the arena, the celebrity evangelist is like the matador in the Spanish bull-ring. (Rom. 16:17,18). As for those, who receive physical healing, nothing is done to disciple them into the kingdom. Jesus said, "*He who gathers is with Me and he who scatters is against Me*" (Matt.12:30). These jamborees are not of much use to Jesus because their goal is not to gather the harvest. He is quite happy with mini but fruitful Gatherings. Remember the phony fig tree with lots of green leaves but no fruit. (Mk 11:12-21)

MEGA CRUSADES PRODUCE MICROSCOPIC FRUIT: Crusades, conventions and revival meetings are not mentioned in the Scriptures. Revival is the work of the Holy Spirit but revivalism through crusades are man-made. The sole aim of these mammoth meetings is to gain individual converts, through "decision cards", without flocking them. Most of the people who sign these cards are already Christians, so the skim off from other faiths is minuscule. Equally, the sole aim of those attending these meetings is to receive something and never to give any thing. Jesus takes a dim view of those who scatter and do not gather the flock (Matt. 12:30). In the early Ekklesia, no such mega shows took place, but only highly effective spontaneous mini Gatherings. Often there was great hostility; hence, most of the work of discipling the nations was done quietly and secretly in the homes. Our village folks go to these faith-healers' meetings with great hope and expectation but often return unhealed and bitter. The small-time evangelists, then have to

face the wrath of the villagers, and sometimes have to shut shop. The actual skim off in terms of long term “fruit that remains” from the mega shows, is Lilliputian.

THE CHURCH MUST PLAN FOR THE LAST GENTILE: Fed up with the Palestinian conflict, over 10,000 young Jews have fled to the foothills of Himalayas to become Buddhist and Hindu Gentiles. However, the blindness among the Jews is only a temporary phenomenon. As soon as the gospel has been preached to the Gentiles, the Jews will be gathered. Recently, there has been a great spurt of Ekklesia planting among the Jews. This is an ominous sign for us as it indicates imminent return of Christ. The church must hurry up to reach the last Gentile on earth (Rom. 11:25; Matt. 24:14). The Lord’s vision is, “*all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim. 2:4).

THREE BIBLICAL MODELS OF CHURCH PLANTING: The 17th chapter of Acts has three models. First, the Thessalonian Ekklesia was planted in three Sabbaths, by reasoning, explaining, demonstrating and persuading. This dialogue method precipitated persecution but it yielded “*a great multitude of devout Greeks and not a few leading women*” (Acts 17:1-10). Additionally, the Ekklesia sounded forth “*the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place*” (1 Thess 1:8). The second is the Berean model, which is a softer interactive Bible study group. This group, did not yield multitudes, but “*many believers and not a few Greeks and prominent women*” (Acts 17:10,11). Lastly the Athens’ model, which was a lecture model, yielded the poorest result (Acts 17:22-34). It was founded on the intellectual sand and not The Rock (Matt. 7:24-27). The circumstances in these models are not exactly comparable, but they do show the effectiveness of dialogical method.

EVANGELISTS DO NOT PLANT ASSEMBLIES: Even though Philip is the only evangelist mentioned in the NT, today the world is full of evangelists. It is used as a generic term for all those who are engaged in hit and run, one-shot happenings. They come, get the people all excited, hit them emotionally, and run away without teaching them how to grow in their own gifts and become fruitful Christians. Every believer has different gifting and should be encouraged to grow in his own calling. A budding apostle or a prophet should not be called an evangelist or a preacher, as it will confuse him. Evangelists do not plant Ekklesias. Philip was only an evangelist and did not have the apostolic gift of a fruit gatherer or an Ekklesia planter. He preached and vanished. Our modern day evangelists do the same but do not leave without video shooting to impress others. When Apostles Peter and John, heard that the Samaritans had received the Word, they came from Jerusalem and gathered the harvest, otherwise it would have been lost. This is why, the fivefold ministry-gifted people are necessary, to supplement and complement each other. (Acts 8:14-25)

THE SHEPHERD is like the ring finger of the hand. In olden times, it was thought that the vein from this finger went straight to the heart. That is why the wedding ring is put on this finger. In the same way, the relationship of a true shepherd to his sheep is that of love. The commitment of a gifted shepherd to his sheep cannot be compared to that of a hireling. The generic term “pastor” does not mean that a person has a pastoral gift. It is possible that he may have some other gift, which he is not using. He may have head knowledge but no manifestation of spiritual gifts. Gifts can be identified by their fruit.

SHEPHERDING IS A GIFT, NOT A PROFESSION: In the NT times there was plurality of leadership in the Ekklesia so the burdens were shared by all. In the contemporary church

the entire burden falls on one man. No wonder there is mass exodus of young pastors from the church due to burn out. This is because many of them are in it as a profession or a career and not as a vocation or a calling. The pastor is a much admired or maligned person, depending on his circumstances. However, there is no doubt that there is great confusion in the church about his role. Some want him to visit them regularly while others want good sermons; yet others want him to be a jack-of-all-trades. However, according to the Scriptures, if he is not bringing in the lost sheep and feeding them with high protein spiritual fodder to bring them to spiritual reproductive maturity, then he is a liability as a shepherd. The shepherd is one of the fivefold ministries team that equips the saints for different ministries. In this way, the Ekklesia is edified, or grows, both in faith and in numbers (Eph. 4:12; Acts 16:5). In every Ekklesia there are men, women and many young people who have shepherding gifts. They visit the sick, comfort the hurting, encourage the faltering, admonish the wayward, feed the pure Word of God to the hungry and reach out to the lost of this world. Nonprofessional shepherds are real assets to the Ekklesia.

THE TRUE SHEPHERD FEEDS THE SHEEP TO PRODUCE MORE SHEEP: The most important function of the shepherd is to equip the believers and send them out as fishers of men. Even though the Lord released His disciples and said, *“As the Father has sent Me so I send you,”* most leaders completely fail to set their members free. One virtually never hears a leader say to the members of his church, *“As the Father has sent me so I send you. Go and do greater things than me.”* Here lies the great divide between a true shepherd and a hireling. (John 20:21; 14:12; Heb. 6:1,2; Col. 1:26-29)

THE GIFTED TEACHER: Many believe that the Greek construction of Eph. 4:11 is such that the pastor and teacher gifts are combined and in fact there are only four ministry gifts. However, we know that a good teacher is not necessarily a good pastor - care giver and vice versa. A teacher is like the big middle finger of the hand. His contribution to the perfecting of the Ekklesia is crucial. He searches the Scriptures and teaches its deep and hidden meanings to us. The Scripture is like an ocean, and without gifted teachers, the Ekklesia will not be able to understand the depth of its teachings. Ultimately, every believer is expected to grow and become a mature teacher. Anyone who depends entirely on someone else to feed him the Word of God all the time is like a milk-drinking baby. (Act 17:11,12; Heb. 5:12-14)

A TRUE TEACHER IS LIKE A PERENNIAL WATER SOURCE: Fruiting and flowering trees depend on their roots to bring in the nutrition they need. A teacher of the Scriptures is like the hidden source of water near the roots of a tree, and continually supplies the resources necessary for the believers to grow, mature and bring forth abundant fruit. He is the one who keeps the believers evergreen and fruitful. Keep in touch with a good teacher so that you too can become a fruitful tree. (Psalm 1:3)

SEARCH AND DESTROY OR BE DESTROYED: Searching the Scriptures is not just a Sunday activity but actually an every day affair. We are exhorted to *“hear His voice everyday, while it is today so that our hearts may not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (Heb. 3:7,8, 13). If we are not constantly nurtured in the doctrines of Jesus, then it is easy to fall into the doctrines of demons. (1 Tim. 4:1)

A TRUE TEACHER WILL MULTIPLY HIMSELF RAPIDLY: A gifted teacher of the Word will help the Ekklesia to grow and multiply. A bad teacher will not set the people free. (Eph.

4:11,12). A true teacher will multiply himself many times over so that his spiritual children can go and do the same. A good sermon does not necessarily mean good teaching because no transformation takes place in the community. These gifts are available to all believers, who ask for them in prayer and fasting and devote all their time, energy and even suffer persecution to become gifted teachers “*so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” (1 Cor. 12:28, 31; 2 Tim. 3:10-17)

SMALL EKKLESIA CAN EASILY IDENTIFY THE GIFTINGS: The great advantage of the house Gatherings is that it is very flexible and one does not feel boxed in. Budding shepherds, teachers and evangelists and others can be easily identified. The mystery of discipling the Gentiles is revealed primarily to the apostles and prophets, who may have other giftings as well (Eph. 2:20; 3:4-6). This is one reason that Ekklesias should be small, so that the gifts can be easily discerned, nurtured and shared. The churches desperately need these free gifts given by the Lord Himself, to come to maturity and unity in faith.

A LOCAL CARETAKER DOES NOT REQUIRE FINANCIAL SUPPORT: All the fivefold ministries, including the shepherding are itinerant. The local caretakers of the flock raised support for the itinerant ministers. Usually, all the ministry workers were bivocational. They earned their own living and also worked for the Ekklesia as volunteers. Many churches, appoint a pastor to be jack-of-all-trades for a paltry sum of money. 90% of the tasks allotted to him can be handled by others. The shepherd should be relieved from all mundane duties and made primarily responsible for finding the lost sheep and caring for them, rather than wasting time on the old goats. Pastors drawing megabuck salaries are pathological specimen.

GIFTS ARE FREE - FRUITS ARE EARNED: The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. They are free and we cannot do anything special to earn them (1 Cor. 1:6; Rom. 11:29). However, the gifts are temporary. The gifts of knowledge, miracles, healings, prophecy, tongues and all the other gifts will cease and vanish because they will no longer be needed in the new dispensation (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Fruit is earned by hard labor, just like having a fruitful tree starts with planting a seed, watering and manuring and protecting it until it becomes fruit bearing. Similarly, we have been given free gifts to go and bring forth abundant mature fruit. We will not be judged on the basis of our gifts but of our fruit. (John 15:8, 16; Matt. 7:16, 20)

RECOGNIZE YOUR SPECIAL GIFTS AND CALLING: Not the individuals but churches plant churches. The goal of preaching is not just winning individual souls but establishing a local community of believers, who act as leaven and leverage the expansion of the kingdom. We can ask for the highest apostolic and prophetic gifts, or any of the other multiplicity of gifts and God will gladly give because He needs us to declare His glory among the nations. Then the Father will restore the years of your life, which have been destroyed by the consuming locusts and caterpillars, through your being a passive member of the church (Joel 2:25). *This way “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”* (Hab. 2:14)

The Lord gave to His Ekklesia the apostles “the sent ones”

Our God is a “go” God.

The Ark of the Covenant represented God. It was a portable box housed in a portable tent It had rings and poles, always ready to move. (Exo. 25:15)

God commanded Abraham “Arise and walk the length and the breadth of the nation for I have given it to you” (Gen. 13:17)

Joshua admonished the lazy Israelites for dilly dallying and not taking possession of the land. (Joshua 18:3-9)

Jesus said, “I have been sent to go” (Luke 4:43; 13:32, 33; Mark 1:38)

Jesus was a “go” guru and he gave His disciples a “go” mantra.

Go to the ends of the earth. Heal the sick, deliver the demonized, raise the dead and make disciples.

THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

FOUR KINDS OF APOSTLES: The word “apostle” means, “sent one,” a “messenger” or “an ambassador”. There are at least five kinds of apostles. **(1)** The Lord Jesus is the “**Divine Apostle**” (Heb. 3:1). He revealed the Father to the humankind. **(2)** His twelve disciples were the “**Distinguished Apostles**” who laid the foundation of the church along with the prophets (Eph. 2:20). Paul is also counted among them as he had direct encounter with Jesus (1 Cor. 15:5-7). **(3)** Then there are the “**General Apostles**” like Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14); James, the brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19); Epaphroditus (‘your apostle’ in Greek; Phil. 2:25) and Junia, who was an outstanding woman apostle (Rom. 16:7). At the ascension, Jesus was seen by many other apostles among the 500 “brethren”. **(4)** The ubiquitous “**False Apostles**” of Lucifer, who wear the cloak of righteousness and are found in every church (2 Cor. 11:13-15). **(5)** We are the **Ascension Apostles** of Ephesian 4:11. There are more apostles today than ever before not just with the message but with miraculous power and with specific mission of opening up new territories. The word apostle/messenger is mentioned over 300 times in the Bible. Apostleship did not die out with the twelve disciples but robustly thriving and vigorously multiplying.

JESUS WALKED EVERY DAY: Jesus walked several kilometers every day (Luke 4:43; Mark 1:38). He said, “...*behold I cast out demons, and perform healings... Moreover, I must journey today, tomorrow and the following day ...*” Even on the day of His resurrection, He walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus and discipled two people (Luke 13:31-33; 24:13-35). Like our forefather Abraham, we are expected to walk the length and breadth of the nation, because the Lord has given it us (Gen. 13:17). God told Joshua that wherever his feet would tread, He has given that land to him (Joshua 1:3). Jesus loves the dirty cracked feet of those who carry the Gospel to remote places. (Rom. 10:15). God is once again restoring the apostolic face of His church.

APOSTLESHIP, THE HIGHEST GIFT: Apostles are very privileged, because “*the mystery of salvation of the Gentiles has been revealed by the Holy Spirit only to the apostles and prophets.*” (Eph. 2:20-22; 3:5,6; 4:11,12; I Cor. 12:27-31)

THE ORIGINAL APOSTOLIC MANDATE: was given in the Garden of Eden, when God blessed Adam and Eve to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over every living thing. God made the human race to be apostolic people and we should be constantly looking for ways to fruitfully multiply His kingdom. (Gen. 1:28)

AN APOSTLE IS A PURPOSE-DRIVEN, GOAL-ORIENTED PERSON: He has a clearly articulated vision going far beyond his own locality, which may include the city, regions, the entire nation, and even to the ends of the earth. His vision and mission are to establish new Ekklesias in the regions beyond (2 Cor 10:16). An apostle is known for his zeal and passion and perseveres until local elders are appointed to carry on the work (Acts 14:22,23). He corrects the weaknesses, like a spiritual father, admonishes, exhorts, encourages, “*speaks the truth in love*” to bring the stray sheep back home. (1 Cor. 11:17-22; Eph. 4:15)

ONLY AN APOSTLE CAN REPRODUCE APOSTLES: The Holy Spirit anoints and freely distributes gifts. Evangelists, teachers and shepherds usually reproduce their own kinds, but the

prophets and apostles can equip saints with various giftings because they have more than one gift. To accomplish his big vision he adopts young believers as his spiritual children and nurtures them. Paul says, *"You may have a thousand teachers, but I am your spiritual father"* (1 Tim. 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17; Titus 1:4; Phil. 1:10). The apostle Paul prayed for his disciples, *"night and day with tears that their eyes of understanding be enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of their calling"* (1 Thess. 3:10; Eph. 1:16-18). Timothy, Titus, and others (Phil. 2:25) were being mentored by Paul, yet he himself needed to partner with Silas, a prophet (Acts 15:32, 40). None of the ministries are independent but interdependent. The Scripture teaches us that two are better than one, and a rope made of three strands is stronger and cannot be broken easily (Eccl. 4:9-12). All the gifts, mentioned in Ephesian chapter 4, are needed for the equipping the saints.

APOSTLES ARE WILLING TO UNDERGO INCREDIBLE SUFFERING: In wall paintings, the apostles are shown with smiling faces and a halo round them, but the reality is quite different. They are physically weak, often hungry, thirsty and ill clad. They have rough hands due to hard labor (Acts 18:3) and in all kinds of perils and dangers. They suffer reproaches, persecution, dishonor and often in prison (Acts 16:23). The apostolic ministry is for those who are prepared to take up their cross daily. (1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 10:10; 1:8-11; 11:23-28; 11:30; Gal. 4:13)

APOSTLES ARE NOT SEASONAL FROGS: This ministry is not for tadpole Christians, who want to live in the warmth and the security of the pond, not realizing that the big fish will come and eat them. It is not for those who travel long distances to attend conferences, but will not go to the neighborhoods or the city slums. Those who go to preach occasionally but have no long-term strategy, are like frogs that croak for a season, and then hibernate until the next conference. Apostleship is hard steady grind, and requires consistency to see churches planted in unheard of and unthinkable places. Jesus went and stayed among the untouchable Samaritans, broke all the Jewish traditions and laid the foundation of the Samaritan Ekklesia. (Mk 1:38; Acts 1:8)

WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE, THEN JOIN THE RANKS: Knowledge without spiritual activism is dead religion. The Scriptures challenge us to ask for the highest gifts (1 Cor. 13:13; 14:1). However, before asking for this particular gift, one must seriously consider the cost. Paul says *"For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death, for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men... we have been made the filth of the world, the scum of all things until now"* (1 Cor. 4:9-13). The true seal and certification of an apostle is that he is willing to be *"all things to all men that he might by all means save some"* (1 Cor. 9:2,22). If you are willing to pay the price, become an apostle and carry the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

The beautiful feet of the Bride are not manicured but cracked and dirty. They belong to those who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. (Rom. 10:15)

In some misguided churches, women are not allowed to speak but throughout the centuries, thousands of women missionaries went out to the ends of the earth and disciplined millions of people and planted thousands of churches.

Now there is a mighty force of first generation Christian housewives in the 10/40 Window countries who are doing the same.

The NT enshrines equal right to women to participate with men in the church and no one has the right to abrogate, abridge, stifle or infringe upon that right

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The male chauvinist churches need urgent gender audit as Jesus will not allow gender benders in His church because He was a gender blender.

WOMEN AND THE EKKLESIA

WHY DID JESUS NOT CHOOSE A WOMAN DISCIPLE? Many believe this to be a cultural issue. But Jesus was never daunted by Jewish culture. He talked to a Samaritan woman and later stayed in the village. Jesus allowed a prostitute to kiss His feet in the house of Pharisee. Right inside the synagogue He made a bent woman to stand in front. All these were against Jewish culture. By not choosing a woman disciple, Jesus was simply modeling **“same-sex discipling”**. Paul followed it through, when he gave clear instructions to women elders to equip younger women (Titus 2:3-5). We can avoid a lot of innuendoes and sex scandals in the Ekklesia, if we adhere to this model.

WOMEN, THE ORIGINAL EKKLESIA PLANTERS: The first thing Jesus did after His resurrection was to tell a woman to *“Go and tell the brethren.”* Ever since then, women have been at the forefront of telling the good news to the brethren all over the world. Many women left their homes and were praying with the disciples for ten days with one accord (Acts 1:14). The women were set on fire by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Since then they have played a very important role in the growth of the Ekklesia. The women were the first ones to open their houses for the Assemblies to meet. In fact, all the house Assemblies in the NT have the name of the housewife mentioned. Examples include Mary, the mother of Mark (Acts 12:5, 12), Lydia (Acts 16:14,15, 40), Apphia (Philem. 2), Nympha (Col. 4:15) and Priscilla (Rom. 16:3). The 16th chapter of Romans has the names of nine women who facilitated the meetings in their homes.

MEN TURN THE LIVING ORGANISM INTO A DEAD ORGANIZATION: When house churches shifted to sacred buildings, men took over, and wrecked the Ekklesia by changing her into an institution. This is why Jesus never compared His Ekklesia to a man, but to a Bride. Our national constitution enshrines equal right to women for nation building, which is based on the NT, equality all men and women before God.

WOMEN CONTRIBUTE THEIR NURTURING GIFTS: The contribution made by women in planting and nurturing the Assemblies throughout the history of the church has been very significant. Women have special qualities like mothering, which is very essential for the Assemblies to grow in an environment of love and care. Martha was concerned about hospitality; Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and carefully listened to His teachings. The Samaritan woman went from house to house and brought the people to Jesus. When persecution broke out they went to prison (Acts 8:3), and they were also devoured by lions and wild animals along with the men. They opened their homes for the believers to pray all night. (Acts 12:12,13)

COVER YOUR HEAD OR ELSE SHAVE AND SHUT UP: The instruction given to the women of the Ekklesia in Corinth was specific to them as there were some special circumstances prevailing there. Corinth was a port city serving the merchant ships of the Aegean Sea to the east and the Adriatic Sea to the west, and abounded in sailors, slaves, sex, alcohol, idolatry and filth. Ships were loading and unloading at all hours of day and night at Cenchrea, the harbor of Corinth. People were buying and selling, masters were yelling at their slaves and sometimes whipping them, and the temples were ringing their bells. There was a cacophony of many languages. There was a huge temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty whom the Romans called Venus. This temple was famous for erotic female statues and for all kinds of sex-related worship. There were

thousands of priestesses who were ritual prostitutes. They proudly displayed their shaved heads. Many of these women were converted and started coming to the Gatherings, and it became necessary for them to grow their hair and cover their heads as a mark of their transformation. The women were to cover their heads only while praying and prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5,6). This situation was not prevalent in any other Ekklesia; hence Paul clearly said that he was not setting any such tradition for other Assemblies. *“If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the Ekklesias of God.”* (1 Cor 11:16) However, in violation of this clear teaching, the 5th century church, made it compulsory for bishops and priests to be *tonsured*, thus creating further divide between the clergy and the God’s people.

BABBLING BANNED IN THE EKKLESIA: Again, there was a special situation in Corinth. The very powerful high priestess of the famous temple of Delphi used to sit on a special tripod, in an underground chamber, in order to be possessed by the spirits and go into a trance. She would then speak in an incoherent and unintelligible language, which was considered by the devotees as the oracles of the goddess. She advised ordinary citizens about their fate and also warned Oedipus about the dangers of murdering his father and marrying his own mother. Modern scientists like John Hale, from Louisville University, would have us believe that there was a geological fault from which noxious gases leaked, which intoxicated the woman, making her to babble in a drugged state. There was also a spring of water from which the high priestess drank with the devotees as part of a ritual bonding. Paul used this simile when he says that *“we have all been made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Cor. 12:13). Whatever the explanation, Paul used the Greek word *“lalein,”* which means babbling or making incoherent sounds. Paul simply told the women of Corinth not to babble in the assembly, but did not stop them from speaking. Again, this did not apply to other Ekklesias. (1 Cor. 14:33-40)

PROPHETS AND MEN ALSO NOT ALLOWED TO BABBLE: Paul used the same word *“lalein”* and another similar word *“sigato”* for men also. He told them that they should not speak in unknown tongues in the Ekklesia unless there was an interpreter. This was just to distinguish that whoever was speaking, whether a man or a woman, was speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit and not an evil spirit. He gave this injunction to the prophets also, and their prophecies had to be cross-examined by other prophets (vv 29, 32). Men were asked in at least two different places to refrain from *“babbling”*, but surprisingly no one stops men from speaking in the Ekklesia. Though it is mentioned only once in this chapter, immediate action is taken by the church to stop women from speaking. (1 Cor. 14:28,30,34)

PEACE NOT SILENCE: Astonishingly, in this decadent environment in Corinth and Cenchrea, a most successful Ekklesia took root. This was a minor miracle in itself. Many heathens joined the church from a demonized background. They were used to frenzied pagan worship, and therefore Paul was particularly anxious to make sure that there was no confusion (vs. 33). Actually, he is not asking men and women to be mute spectators (vs. 39), but he is merely pleading for the proceedings to be peaceful and orderly so that the Ekklesia is edified. Everyone, had full freedom to express themselves (vv 31, 40)

NO WASHING OF DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC: Did Paul expressly stop women from teaching doctrines in the Ekklesia? *“I suffer not a ‘woman’ to teach nor to usurp authority over the ‘man’ but to be in silence”* (1 Tim. 2:12). Paul used the Greek word *“gune”* for a

woman, which in this context means “wife.” Similarly, he is using the Greek word “*aner*” for man, which in this context means “husband.” Paul is telling married women not to teach their husbands in public. Again, the Greek word “*hesuchia*” for silence also means avoiding argument, quiet, peaceable etc. What Paul actually said, “*I do not permit a ‘wife’ to teach or to have authority over her ‘husband’ but to be peaceful.*” Paul does not want wives to teach their husbands in public, thereby belittling them and usurping their authority as priests and rulers of the family. He told wives and husbands to keep peace in the Ekklesia and to discuss contentious issues at home, rather than showing their differences in public. (1 Cor. 14:34,35; Eph. 5:22-32)

SUBMIT TO HUSBANDS ONLY: Paul and Peter asked wives to be submissive to their husbands, just as husbands were asked to love and honor their wives; otherwise, their prayers will be hindered (1 Tim. 2:11; 1 Pet. 3:1, 7). Submitting does not mean subordination but willing submission and respect for each other’s role. This does not exclude full participation of women in the Ekklesia. It is not for other men, including Pastors, to make somebody else’s wife submissive to their diktat. Paul clearly mentions that he has no specific instruction from the Lord for unmarried women, which means they have full freedom to participate in the Ekklesia (1 Cor. 7:25). While there is a clear line of authority, Christ is the covering of the husband and the husband is the covering of his wife. Eve acted without the covering of her husband and got into difficulty. In the NT times, women led in prayer, prophesying (1 Cor. 11:3-5, 16). It is not the length of hair or the size of the head scarf, that is the issue but submissiveness, both for men and for women. Fortunately, in many cultures, married women normally cover their heads. Regrettably, our leaders impose their authority on other men’s wives and do not allow their full participation.

THE NT IS FULL OF WOMEN TEACHERS, PROPHETESSES AND DISCIPLES: Christianity loudly proclaims justice, honor and dignity to women but its high priests have made it a bastion of male supremacy. We must stop parroting the boast of gender justice, openly challenge the outdated practices and workout deliverables of true biblical Christianity. In the early church, women taught because they were primarily family gatherings. Paul put some restrictions on married women to teach their husbands in the formal assembly but they were freely permitted to teach informally. They taught good things (Titus 2:3,4). Priscilla, and her husband, took Apollos, a mighty expositor of the Scriptures, and explained to him the “Way of God” more accurately (Acts 18:24-26). Obviously Priscilla did most of the teaching; otherwise her name would not have been mentioned seven times in the NT, five times before her husband Aquila. Tabitha served the poor and was called a disciple (Acts 9:36). Philip’s four virgin daughters were prophetesses. (Act 21:8,9)

PHOEBE TEACHES DOCTRINES: In A.D.1400, a monk rearranged Paul’s letters and put chapters and verses, not in the chronological order in which they were written, but according to the complexity of the doctrines. Although the letter to the Galatians was written first, and then Thessalonians and Corinthians, he decided to put the letter to the Romans first as it had the maximum amount of doctrine, and Philemon last. Paul needed a smart person who could handle the Christians of Rome, the capital city of the world, to go and teach the doctrines in the letter to the Romans. He chose Phoebe (means “delightful”), a business woman from Cenchrea, the harbor city of Corinth. She had learnt her doctrines under Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus and many others who were traveling to Corinth, which was five miles away. They had been guests in her house.

Although the modern church would like us to believe that she was only a dumb deaconess, Paul had given instructions to the Ekklesia of Rome to give full honor and respect to Phoebe. This does not mean that they were waiting with garlands, but they asked her to come and teach them all the doctrines. (Rom. 16:1,2)

BRETHREN INCLUDES SISTERS: The Greek word “*adelphotes*” for brethren, does not mean just brothers, but “fraternity” or “community.” When Peter addressed the one hundred and twenty in the upper room, where women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, were present, he called them “*men and brethren*” (Acts 1:14-16). “*Adelphos*” means “the womb.” This shows the very close relationship the Ekklesia fraternity must have had with each other. In the Jerusalem convention, called together to sort out Jewish traditions like the Sabbath and circumcision, the fraternity, which included women, were present. Peter got up and addressed them as “*men and brethren*” and a little later James said the same. 130 references in the NT refer to brethren, meaning brothers and sisters, who led the NT Ekklesia, not the pastor, who is a Johnny come lately (born circa 1600 A.D.). (Acts 15:6,7, 13)

JUNIA AN OUTSTANDING WOMAN APOSTLE, UNDERGOES A SEX-CHANGE OPERATION: Jesus gave fivefold ministry gifts to His Ekklesia. These are not gender specific and include apostleship for women (Eph. 4:11). Paul praises a woman, Junias, of the Roman Ekklesia, as an “*outstanding apostle*” and probably one of the founders of the Ekklesia in Rome along with Andronicus (perhaps her husband) (Rom. 16:7). A papyrus dating back to 200 AD calls her Julia. John Chrisostom, the Bishop of Constantinople (AD 347-407), wrote “O how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle.” Junia continued to be a female apostle in the Scriptures until the 13th century when she underwent “sex change surgery” at the hands of translators suffering from “misogyny” (hatred of women). They deliberately mistranslated her name from Junia the woman, to Junias the man, as they did not find the apostleship of a woman palatable. They did the same to Nympha or Nymph (a sea goddess or a maiden) into Nymphas, which belongs to indeterminate sex (Col. 4: 15). We find that this attitude and practice have been all too common. She had suffered persecution, imprisonment and finally martyrdom at the hands of Nero. Let us not forget what early Christians, under the iron fist of pagan Rome, had to suffer to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. For Junia, being an apostle was not a matter of privilege, but prison and death. We know that the Roman Ekklesia was already well established before Peter and Paul traveled there, and Junia had become a Christian before Paul did (Rom. 1:7-13; 16:7). It makes sense that men, who object to the full participation of women in the Ekklesia, cannot be part of the Bride.

WOMAN FACILITATED THE HOUSE EKKLESIA MEETINGS: What do we know about the apostles? According to the NT, apostles are ordained by God (Lk. 11:49; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). They are workers of miracles (II Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:43), witnesses who proclaim the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:33), founders and leaders of Assemblies (Acts 4:37; 15:4; I Cor. 12:28), preachers (1 Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11), teachers (II Pet. 3:2; Jude:17; Acts 2:42), disciplers (Eph. 4:12,13), and finance managers of the Ekklesia (Acts 4:34-37). While not every apostle was necessarily involved in all these, there is no reason to think that a recognized apostle like Junia was barred from any of them.

NOT APPOINTING WOMEN AS ELDERS IN THE CHURCH IS PLAIN HOGWASH: In the OT, Miriam, Deborah, and Hulda are mentioned as prophetesses. In the NT, Anna and Philip’s four

daughters are recognized as prophetesses. Priscilla was certainly another female apostle, who traveled with Paul along with her husband. She is mentioned several times by Paul in his Epistles. The names of several women are mentioned throughout the epistles. Unless women played a dominant role, Jews would never mention their names. The Greek word “*presbuteros*” is translated “elder” for men but for some strange reason, “*presbuteras*” the feminine form has been translated as “older women”. It can just as easily be translated as “female elder”, an “elderess” or even a “wife of an elder” (1 Tim. 5:2). Obviously this was done deliberately to avoid appointing women as elders in the church. Just like today, in the early church, the majority consisted of women and they exerted considerable influence. The main qualifications required of an elder was that he or she should be of good character, hospitable, able to manage their house well and should be able to make disciples (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:4). Women amply qualified for this post, therefore, it was natural to have women elders. This is Scriptural because “*women are also a chosen generation, a holy nation and royal priests.*” The women have full rights to function as priests, which includes worshipping, discipling, baptizing, teaching and sharing the Lord’s Supper, etc. They also prayed for the sick and delivered the demonized (2 John: 1; 1 Pet. 2:9). All these activities led to strengthening of faith and rapid multiplication of the Assemblies.

IN THE EKKLESIA, EVERYONE CAN TEACH: In the house Assemblies, everyone participated. Everyone included women and children. “...*Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a **teaching**, has a tongue, has a revelation, and has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up*” (1 Cor 14:26). Paul further states that everyone could prophesy, which presumably includes women (vs. 31). He clarifies that “*one who prophesies speaks to the people for their edification, encouragement, and consolation*” (1 Cor. 14:3). The women were taking part in all these functions in the Ekklesia.

CAN WOMEN BAPTIZE? Baptism is normally the preserve of the clergy, although there is no biblical basis for it. There is nothing in the Bible, which militates against women baptizing. In fact, the Great Commission expressively commissions every single believer to go and make disciples and baptize them (Matt. 28:19). If women can be blood-bought priests and kings (Rev. 5:10), one of the basic functions of the priesthood is to baptize new believers. Historically, it is well known that on the Day of Pentecost, Jewish women, following their tradition, congregated separately around the pools and baptized each other. This is why the Lord baptized many women with the “holy fire.” Men, especially priests, and even the apostles, had no role at the poolside. The death of Lord Jesus tore the curtain apart so that all can have direct access to the Father. Unfortunately, the church is always trying to draw the curtain again on the women. This is an important issue because in our culture, especially, village women have problems in being baptized by men. Thousands are ready to be baptized immediately by sisters of faith, but if they were to be baptized by men, permission would be needed from their husbands, and that is not always forthcoming. It is only logical that if women can pray and heal the sick and deliver the demonized, then they can certainly dunk them in water.

PIMPS, PROSTITUTES AND EUNUCHS ARE HEADING FOR THE EKKLESIA: Entry of pimps and prostitutes in the Ekklesia of Corinth was too shocking a change for the sober, orthodox Jews. It destroyed everything that a religious Jew held sacred. They had to sit and worship as equals and even eat food that was not *kosher*. The baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch was a remarkable event. God had promised that His house shall be called a house

of prayer for all nations. This includes eunuchs and “*He will give a better name and place to them than that of sons and daughters*” (Isa. 56:3-7). In Madhya Pradesh, many eunuchs have recently won state elections. If long-haired pimps and head-shaven prostitutes could join the Ekklesia of Corinth (1 Cor. 11:5-16), then we must expect a mighty harvest of gays, homosexuals, perverts, lesbians, prostitutes, and others who are making themselves eunuchs for Christ (Matt. 19:12). It does not matter how far out you have drifted, the Lord can find you and forgive you. He died to do so. “*There is no Jew or Gentile...neither is there male or female, for we are one in Christ.*” (Gal. 3:28). The Ekklesia of Jesus is a counter culture, which is shockingly different from the highly sanitized version of the church, being dished out today. It is a place, where the scum of the earth can find love and eternal life. (1 Cor. 1: 26-31; 4:13)

ARE YOUR SERVANTS PROPHESYING? God promised that in the last days, He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. While you are dreaming dreams and seeing visions, your sons, daughters and your servants should be prophesying and bringing people into ‘The Faith’. Dreaming dreams is not enough, it must be converted into reality through action. Sadly, most Christian parents are interested in extracting work from their servants and their children getting more marks in the school, than prophesying. (Acts 2:17,18,21; 8:5-8; 21:8)

SLOWLY BUT SURELY WOMEN ARE TRANSFORMING THE WORLD: Thousands of house Assemblies are appearing throughout the world. China, Indonesia, Korea, Africa, South America and the Philippines are far ahead. For example, the largest church in the world, led by Paul (David) Yonggi Cho in South Korea, has over 100,000 cell churches. 80% of these cells were started by ordinary women. Today the center of gravity of Christianity has already shifted from the West to the East, because over 70% of the believers are now in the 10/40 countries. Participation of the women in general and ordinary housewives in particular, is the main reason for this remarkable shift.

WOMEN ARE THE KEY IN CLOSED COMMUNITIES: *Zenana* or *harem* is a secluded area for Hindu and Muslim women in the Indian subcontinent. In Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh and as far as Iran, house Gatherings are being established mostly by women. In some Muslim countries even owning a Bible is forbidden and worshipping together is a crime. Only believing women can enter behind the curtain, reach those unfortunate sisters, and bring them to Christ. Praise God that secret Assemblies are being established behind the curtains.

THE EKKLESIA NEEDS FRUIT GATHERING WOMEN: Much of world does not know that today, a great army of women is going out with tears and bringing in the sheaves of a harvest of souls (Psalm 126:5,6). Many are illiterate and cannot communicate that they are turning the world up side down. They are not in the TV or even in the Christian magazines. They have very few resources, but are bathed in prayer and resonate with the will of God. If Lydia, Priscilla, Apphia, Mary and many others opened their houses to the Ekklesia, and the despised Samaritan woman could bring her whole village to the feet of Jesus, then why not us, who have many privileges? Tragically, many privileged women are sitting in the pews as dumb dolls in a clothes shop, all decked up, but nowhere to go. God has commanded “*women of ease and their complacent daughters to put on sackcloth and pray until the Spirit of God is poured out and the lawless city becomes a place of justice,*

righteousness, peace, and blessing” (Isa. 32:9-18). Our underprivileged sisters are not fighting for their rights in the church or in the society, but visiting house to house and gathering eternal fruit. (Matt. 19:30)

THE SUFFERING GENDER: Nearly four million women and children are sold and forced into prostitution worldwide. Another two million young girls undergo mutilating circumcision in Africa and the Middle East. Millions of female babies end up in a bucket after abortions. 5,000 brides suffer dowry deaths by burning, every year in India. Womenfolk generally suffer from health, financial, domestic and spiritual problems. They are exploited by all, even by well off families and friends. Vast majority are illiterate and their knowledge about God is very shallow and distorted. They need less preaching and more compassion. If we are serious about evangelizing the world, then disenfranchising half of the evangelistic force of women is outright stupidity. Women in general are relational and function best in small groups. This is why they are such a run away success in discipling the nations of the 10/40 Window.

THE ROYAL LAW: Love the Lord with all you heart, soul and strength must be proved in the crucible of loving your neighbor as yourself. The Lord Jesus did not preach or admonish, but showed His love and compassion to every oppressed woman who came to Him, whether the demon-possessed Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha whose brother had died, the woman suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years, the Samaritan woman, the Syro-Phoenician woman or even the woman caught in adultery. All these hurting women required love and encouragement, and all of them walked into the kingdom instantly.

THE EKKLESIA NEEDS WOMEN SKILLED IN MOURNING: In the paddy fields, most of the workers are women, either planting the seed or reaping the harvest. Most of these women are illiterate, untouchable low castes, poor and hurting (John 4:35). God is looking for *“women skilled in mourning to teach mourning for the forsaken land to their daughters and lamentation to their neighbors...Unless this happens death will enter our homes through the windows and kill our children”* (Jer. 9:17-21). The TV and computer cables are entering our homes through the windows and killing our teenagers. The churches are full of women who are unskilled in mourning for others, resulting in the their own families being destroyed. Women who are ever learning and never doing anything are called weak, foolish and mean (2 Tim. 3:6-7). The church urgently needs women who will tenderly introduce Jesus to the hurting women of this world.

JEWS WERE MALE CHAUVINISTS: The Jews only counted the men, when Jesus fed the five thousand (Matt. 14:21). After Pentecost, another five thousand *“men”* were added (Acts 4:4). This probably means that five thousand families were baptized. As Jewish families tended to be very large, presumably several thousand people were baptized on this occasion. Grudgingly, however, they had to acknowledge the presence of women in the multitudes. Many of them were leading and prominent women. (Acts 4:32; 5:28; 5:14; 17:4,12)

THE FEMALE POPE: In A.D. 855-858, Pope John went into labor during a public function, produced a baby boy, and instantly became Ms. Pope Joan. Thereafter, a special chair, with a hole in the middle was made, to palpate the crotch of the newly elected person, before announcing him a Pope. The veracity of this is in some doubt but the legend refuses to die. However, historically, it is true that some Popes begat Popes through their

concubines. So much for celibacy and infallibility of the Popes. If there can be a Papa in the church, there is no valid reason why, once in a while, we cannot have a Mama, especially as Julia the apostle, was a founder member of the Church of Rome, long before Peter and Paul got there. (Rom. 16:7)

JESUS SENDS WOMEN TO GO AND TELL THE BRETHREN: Jesus said to Mary Magdalene near the tomb, “*Go and tell My brethren...*” (John 20:17). Millions of women since then have gone out in obedience to the will of the Father to tell the brethren about the resurrected Jesus. Just like men, He has purchased women also, with His own precious blood and commissioned them to go and fulfill The Great Commission.

THE MAN FROM MACEDONIA TURNS OUT TO BE A WOMAN: Throughout the centuries, in spite of the explosion of scholarship, Paul has been much misquoted. While in Troas, Paul had seen a man from Macedonia in a vision, calling for help. This man turned out to be a woman called Lydia. She was baptized in the river *Gangites*, like our holy river *Ganges*. Troas is the famous site where the Trojan War was fought for a glamorous woman called Helen of Troy. A thousand ships were launched but they lost, so they used a huge wooden horse to smuggle soldiers into the city. Much later Paul and his party launched out from here and planted the first Ekklesia of Europe in the house of a woman, Lydia. She was the leader of the Ekklesia (Acts 16:9-15). Tragically, the hills of Philippi were taken over by religious monks with polluted minds. They built monasteries and for a thousand years banned the entry of females. Later the male dominated European church, subjugated women and influenced the rest of the world to do the same. What a travesty of Paul’s teachings and practices!

DECORATING THE BRIDE: “*Submit to each other*” does not mean just women submitting to men but vice-versa also (Eph. 5:19). While a clique of controlling coterie of men impose their diktat on women in the church and quote mistranslated Scriptures to maintain their hegemony, we thank God that thousands of great little ladies like Lydia and the Samaritan woman, are launching out everyday, to seek and to save their long lost sisters of this world. While the world is obsessed with the half naked glamorous women of Hollywood, grotesquely dressed in designer clothes, these humble women are lovingly decorating the Bride of Christ in pure white linen, wiping their tears and restoring a loving relationship with Jesus. PTL

The world is sitting on a volcano, while the church is fiddling. A true church should be executing a full-scale rescue operation.

Professional music and worship trivialize the awesome God. They are unscriptural because they usurp the believer’s right to speak, admonish and

build up each other, in Psalms and spiritual songs and making melody in their hearts. (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col 3:16)

Professional music is entertainment, spontaneous music is worship. There will be no professional musicians nor worship leaders in heaven. It will all be spontaneous.

A tidal wave of Christianity will come when every believer can speak in Psalms and spiritual songs and make melody in his heart, resulting in every home becoming a house of spontaneous worship. (Acts 16:5)

FUNCTIONS OF THE EKKLESIA

GREGORY MAKES A MESS OF WORSHIP: Interestingly, in the NT, there is no mention of believers gathering just to worship. They came together often and shared their testimonies, studied the word, prayed and had great fellowship together centered on a simple shared meal. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory I, a disciplined man, did not like the spontaneity and the openness of the house Gatherings. Like many leaders, he wanted to control the church so he created an “Order of Worship,” which included chants, then a reading of the selected Scriptures, followed by a message, announcements, a collection and finally, the benediction. Modified forms of Gregorian Order of Worship, which has no biblical basis, is followed in all churches with rare exceptions. This kind of worship makes you feel “orderly” but achieves nothing; whereas worship in the house churches may be unpredictable and seemingly chaotic but it is organized chaos and very fruitful.

JESUS ORDERS ACTION PACKED WORSHIP: Jesus never ordered this kind of formalized worship. He ordered an action packed form of worship. He said to go and bash up the bastions of the fiends, bind the villain, heal the maniacs, remodel them and then dunk them - a much more interesting form of worship. This is how He used to worship the Father every day and He said, “My Father is glorified when you make many disciples.” (Matt. 16:18,19; 12:29; 28:19; John 15:8)

FISHING IN THE TEMPLE: The Lord Jesus never went to the temple to worship. Whenever Jesus went to the temple, there was confrontation with the temple authorities. Therefore, there was no reason for His disciples to go to the temple for a celebration after the death and resurrection of their Master. Later, His disciples went specifically to witness to the people, and they brought many of them home and discipled them at their dining tables (Acts 2:46,47). The disciples went to the temple “*at the time of prayer*” (Acts 3:1), because the devotees used to throng there at least three times during the day. Being expert fishermen, they knew exactly when and where to catch fish, and “*at the time of prayer,*” the temple was the best place (Acts 3:1). In a very short time they caught many “fish” and saturated the city with their teaching. This resulted in a violent reaction from the temple authorities who arrested and thrashed them. (Acts 5:17,18, 28, 40)

SHEEP STEALING IS BIBLICAL: Pentecostals are often accused of sheep stealing, but this is not new. Jesus took Andrew, Peter and John, the disciples of John the Baptist, and made them His disciples (John 1:35-42). Paul stole sheep from the synagogues of every city and started new churches. Poaching a few sheep from the traditional churches and starting new Ekklesias is a great way to saturate the city with the gospel. However, sheep should not be pilfered to be put into bondage of another church. They are to be pinched strictly to start new churches. Sadly, many rich bags, flush with money, steal both the sheep and shepherd.

FELLOWSHIP: The Greek word *Koinonia* means more than just a Sunday morning handshake in the church foyer or the parking lot. It means companionship, partnership, sharing, contributing financially, empathizing in the sufferings of fellow Christians. Most importantly, it also means freely participating and actively communicating with each other during the worship. It is key to the form and function of the NT Ekklesia. This is a key word in the NT Ekklesia and embodies “*of one heart and one soul*” resulting in caring and sharing of both their spiritual and material blessings with each other (Acts

4:32, 34). The Gentiles used to be amazed at the loving relationships among the believers, even in the face of severe persecution (Acts 2:42; 5:41, 42). This is the fulfillment of the new covenant, which Jesus had commanded His disciples, *“Love one another as I have loved you so that the world will believe in Me because you have love for one another”* (John 13:34, 35). Biblical Koinonia is the key for breaking down the wall of clergy/laymen divide and other barriers.

SPONTANEOUS WORSHIP: Our forefather Abraham pitched his tent, made an altar, offered a sacrifice and worshipped, wherever he happened to be. In the NT Ekklesia, there was spontaneous worship and not with a written “order of service”, which kills the Spirit in an orderly fashion (John 4:23,24; Psalm 96:7,8). They knew that God is glorified by bearing much fruit (John 15:8) and not by making noise like sounding brass or clanging cymbals. There is no justification in coming to the Ekklesia empty-handed, without winning any souls and shouting, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!” You can worship spontaneously any time, anywhere, by offering Gentiles as the fruit of your labor. There is no rejoicing in heaven because of our form of worship, but God’s holy angels go ecstatic and start rock and roll when a lost soul is saved. (Exo. 23:15; Matt. 7:21-23; Phil 1:21; Luke 15:10)

PROFESSIONAL MUSIC IS OLD HAT: David’s 4000 professional musicians produced deafening sound in the temple with harps, clanging cymbals, lyres and trumpets etc. (1 Chron. 23:5; 25:6), but in the NT, there is deafening silence about musical instruments. In the NT, all singing was spontaneous, *“speaking, preaching, teaching, admonishing each other with psalms and hymns and gracefully making melody in their hearts”* (Heb. 2:12; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19), but His modern day followers are obsessed with unscriptural professional music. All high-octane singing was done without any musical instruments e.g. when Paul and Silas were jailed in Philippi (Acts 16:25) or when at the time of His greatest crisis, Jesus triumphantly and defiantly sang with His disciples, the Jewish customary Psalm 118 after Passover feast, on His way to the cross, *“This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in Him”* (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26, Psalm 118:24)

MAKE MELODY IN YOUR HEART: In many countries, people are defiantly anti-West, which translates into anti-Christian. Our music and songs confirm that Christianity is a Western religion. In the NT, it is not just singing songs of praise to God but also speaking to each other, in psalms and hymns and building up each other. We are also called to make melody in our hearts and sing to the Gentiles, so that they can also rejoice and praise God (Rom. 15:9-11). All professional singing in the modern churches is entertainment. The Babylonian captives hung their harps on the Willow trees and refused to sing the Lord’s song to entertain. Spontaneous singing is worship. (Psalm 96:1,2; 137:1-4). Any way, Christian songs are very self-centered and highly individualistic. It is all about “I love my Jesus and He loves me.” Even in corporate worship, we sing “bless me” songs.

TONGUE TWISTING BANNED IN PUBLIC: The trouble with the church is that she talks too much and is hard of hearing. God spoke to Moses 47 times and Moses replied only 11 times. The rest of the time he listened carefully and did whatever the Holy Spirit commanded him to do. Even otherwise we must allow the Holy Spirit to pray through us as we do not know what to pray and how to pray (Rom. 8:26,27). Speaking in tongues was used extensively for private prayers, but not in public, especially if Gentiles were present, unless there was someone to interpret (1 Cor. 14:22-28). This was very important

in the NT Ekklesia because many newcomers would be present, who came to be prayed for or to listen to a new doctrine, or just for curiosity. They would be confused by people speaking in tongues. Another great disadvantage of collectively praying in tongues in the Ekklesia is that everyone prays his or her own prayer; therefore, people cannot be of one mind and pray with *“one accord.”*

PRAY WITH ONE ACCORD AND EXPECT SUPERNATURAL RESULTS: In the early days of the Ekklesia, we see disciples praying with *“one accord”* (Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:24). The apostles had already decided that the ministry of the word and the ministry of prayer were going to be their core ministries (Acts 6:3, 4). Hence, whenever there was a crisis, they spent hours praying until their prayer was answered in a supernatural way (Acts 12:5). To pray effectively we must *“pray with the spirit and with understanding”* so that *“the whole body is joined and knit together.”* (1 Cor. 14:12-18; Col 2:2)

CITY SHAKING PRAYER: The Holy Spirit descended in full force on the Day of Pentecost and shook the whole city of Jerusalem, even while they were just sitting together in a house, simply because, by the end of ten days of praying together, they were in one accord (Acts 2:1,2). Unity is not to be confined to one congregation, but the entire citywide network of Assemblies must pray together. A divided city Ekklesia cannot stand, and without unity among the Assemblies, the city cannot be saved (Matt. 12:25). It is important that the Ekklesia does not get bogged down with praying for petty and selfish matters, but focuses on city, national and international issues (Rev. 8:3-5; Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4). One of the main purposes of plural leadership of fivefold ministry gifts is to bring unity in the Body of Christ, which is a sign of maturity of the city, or the regional Ekklesia. (Eph. 4:13-16)

PRAY FOR THE CITY BY NAME: Cities and nations like Babylon, Assyria, Moab, Cush, Philistia and of course, Sodom and Gomorrah have been blessed, cursed or punished by name (Prov. 11:10,11; Ps 106:38). Individuals commit sins but cities also have a history and culture of corporate sins and need to be redeemed. The land is polluted by sins. This is why breaking curses on site and blessing through prayer walking is very important. Jesus prayed *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem”* by name. We have been commanded to pray for the welfare of our cities (Luke 13:34, 35; Jer. 29:7). Our prayers must produce tangible transformation of the individuals, families, communities and the nation. The mutation must be multidimensional shaking up the spiritual, social, economic, ecological, political domains and belief systems. Jesus came so that we may have abundant life, which is inclusive, with no secular/sacred dichotomy. (Rev. 8:3-5; Eph. 4:16; Matt. 12:25; 1 Tim. 2:1-4)

THE PROPHETIC EKKLESIA: Like any other father, God likes to talk to all His children directly and not through any intermediary and certainly not through church hierarchy. This is why He is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh so that He can talk to everybody. Prophecy simply means listening to the Father and telling it to others. This does not mean that everybody is a prophet but we can all prophesy. The early Ekklesia was a prophetic Ekklesia because every one prophesied. They prophesied edification, exhortation and comfort. They knew that God would not do anything in their region without first revealing it to His prophets (1 Cor. 14:3, 31; Amos 3:7). Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Daniel are part of a long list of other Major and Minor Prophets to whom God spoke in different ways. In the NT, He spoke in many ways to the apostles. But now He is fulfilling His promise for the last days. He is pouring out His Spirit on ordinary people

(Joel 2:28,29). Today, He is speaking to the emerging Ekklesias in remote villages and even to Muslim clerics and other non-Christians. (Heb. 1:1,2)

Throughout the Bible we see God speaking in supernatural ways:

Daniel and Joseph dreamed their way into the Prime Minister's office. (Gen. 41:38-40; Dan. 2:46-48)

All the OT prophets saw visions. (Hab. 1:5; 2:1-3)

Through reading the word. (Dan. 9:2,3)

By talking face to face with Moses. (Exo. 33:11)

Isaiah, John and Paul were lifted up to heaven. (Isa. 6:1-8; Rev. 4:1,2; 2 Cor 12:2-4)

The Lord spoke to Paul on his way to Damascus. (Acts 9:3-6)

An angel spoke to the disciples. (Acts 5:19,20)

The Holy Spirit spoke to Paul, Silas and Timothy on their way to Phrygia and Galatia. (Acts 16:6-8)

THE NON-CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS: Hindus, Muslims and even Buddhists are training alarming number of Defenders of their faiths. They are well versed both in their own scriptures as well as in the Bible. In open debates they make mince meat out of genuine but naive Christians, who are ignorant about other faiths and their world views. Jesus quickly pulverized those who acted smart and tried to trap Him. He gave befitting contextual answers to the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and the Samaritans (Matt. 22:34-46; John 4:21-24). Paul liberally quoted to the Epicurians and the Stoics from their own literature. Modern Christians, including our scholars and great expounders of the faith, are clueless when confronted with objections from non-Christians. The NT elders were equipped to soundly convict those who contradicted (Titus 1:9). The NT believers would have convicted and converted any nonbeliever accidentally straying into the Ekklesia. (1 Cor. 14:24-25)

THE CHURCH SUFFERS FROM MALNUTRITION OF FOUNDATIONAL TEACHING: Many feel that personal relationship with Jesus is the most important thing, while others think that worship and intercession are most important, even as others feel that evangelism is important. Many feel that discipling in depth and expository teaching is the key, while some feel that church-planting is the ultimate. The fact is that they are all correct and we need them all. They are all part of the mosaic, which constitutes the church. There are many scholars in the modern church, but very few with 'teaching gift'. A gifted teacher not only transfers knowledge but transforms people. The Ekklesia must teach the foundational teachings to believers. The syllabus is given in Hebrews 6:1,2, which includes topics like repentance from dead works, faith in God, the doctrine of baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection and eternal judgment etc. The Ekklesia must equip the saints for the different ministries. One area in which the Ekklesia must really prepare her people is in teaching them how to convict non-Christians who contradict (Titus 1:9). The first indicator of proper equipping is that it leads to the edification or growth; the second is that it should lead to a greater unity among the Ekklesias; and the third is that it should produce Christians with Christ-like character. (Eph. 4:12,13)

BREAD CRUMBS AND A SIP OF WINE IS NOT THE LORD'S IDEA OF A SUPPER: The highest point of the forty years of travel through the wilderness for Israel was, when God invited the

seventy elders for a dinner. There was a lot of thunder and wonder. We cannot imagine what God had on the menu, but it certainly was not just bread crumbs and a sip of wine (Exo. 24:9-11). Over one thousand four hundred years later, Jesus came and told His seventy disciples to *“Go and eat whatever is set before you in the house of peace,”* followed by signs and wonders (Luke 10:5-9). After that, all the activities of the early Ekklesia were centered around sharing a simple meal. The Lord Jesus Himself always made full use of the mealtime to make an important point. At Martha’s home, it was about choosing the best part; in the house of Pharisee, where the sinful woman came and poured fragrant ointment from an alabaster jar over Jesus’ feet, it was about His death and burial; with Zacchaeus, it was about repentance and so on. On the first day of the week we go to church to worship, but Paul came to Troas to break bread with them, and they ate at least twice during the “meating” (Acts 20:7-12, 20). Eating out privately on Sundays is divisive. Eating together in our class, color and caste conscious society, sends a very powerful message. It is a great relief to women who do not have to rush back home to prepare meals after worship. The extra time can be spent in discipling new believers. Eating together leads to growth and multiplication of the Ekklesia . (Acts 2:46,47)

JESUS SERVES ROAST LAMB FOR DINNER: Incidentally, Jesus always served a very tasty non-vegetarian meal, whether it was feeding the five thousand with fish, or the Passover meal with roast lamb, or breakfast of hot bread and fish baked over a coal fire on the beach (John 21:9-12). He is knocking on your door, to have a meal with your family (Rev. 3:20). He will not be satisfied with a wafer and a sip of wine. In the meantime, He is preparing a big feast for His faithful. It is our privilege to go to the highways and hedges and invite everyone to His Royal banquet. (Luke 14:23; 22:30; Rev. 19:9; Deut. 16:11)

PAUL TRAVELED ON SUNDAY: Religious Christians do not travel on Sunday, equating it with the Jewish Sabbath. The first day of the week started on Saturday night for the Jews. After breaking bread all night, Paul left Troas early on Sunday morning, and traveled to Assos by ship. It is important for a messenger to travel any day. The young Gentile Ekklesia of Antioch was a mature Ekklesia because they sent senior members like Paul and Barnabas as missionaries. Only mature Assemblies send missionaries, whereas our modern churches keep feeding milk to death. You can see them every Sunday, looking up to the pulpit with their mouths open, lapping it up. Next Sunday they are back again for some more of that homogenized bottled stuff. Of course, there is a small fee for the service. The church refuses to let them grow up, eat meat on their own and become teachers (Heb. 5:12). Our church cemeteries are burial grounds for baby Christians who never became teachers. Sunday is the best day for going out and salvaging them from premature death.

IT IS A LAW OF NATURE TO MULTIPLY: A bird builds a nest, gives birth to young ones, and a day comes when the young ones fly away to build their own nests. This way, new nests are built in different places and multiplication takes place. Likewise, in house Ekklesias there is rapid maturity leading to multiplication. One day the children are ready to fly away and build their own nests. Multiplication, replication, duplication and cloning are genetically ordained for the Bride of our Lord but not the barrenness.

THE ROYAL PRIESTS MUST FULFILL THE ROYAL LAW: God raised a man such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Daniel and the other prophets, who changed the history of the nations. Sadly, in the last 2,000 years, with rare exceptions, most of the leaders led the church into

the Dark Ages (Acts 20:29,30). Now, the Holy Spirit is available to everyone to do great exploits. If Christians open their homes to their neighbors, they can change the history of this country in a very short time (Matt. 24:14). Jesus challenged us, *"You say it is four months until the harvest, but I say to you it is ripe and ready now."* (John 4:35)

THE EKKLESIA NEEDS SPIRITUAL OPHTHALMOLOGISTS: Many churches suffer from severe myopia or shortsightedness. They have self-centered vision and cannot see beyond their noses, while others have cataracts with opaque lenses and cannot distinguish between kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. They need vision correction and spiritual lens implant. *"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it"* (Acts 28:28). Jesus says *"Rise up and fulfill the purpose, which has been revealed to you. I will protect you from Christians and non-Christians, and will open their eyes in order to turn them from darkness to light and rescue them from worshipping the Devil so that they may receive forgiveness for this great sin and become the people of God."* (Acts 26:16-18)

Thank God! Many believers are opening their homes to their neighbors and fulfilling the royal law, *"Love your neighbor as yourself because all the law is fulfilled in this."* (James 2:8; Gal. 5:14)

The churches should install umbilical connectivity with each other and provide user-friendly terminals throughout the city, before seeking connectivity to heaven.

*A true tryst with God should lead to a tryst with the destiny of nations.
Only fasting and united intercession can transform our cities and the nation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.*

*United prayer has consequences as it happened on the day of the Pentecost.
Breaking denominational barriers when the city prays inter-denominationally the city is healed. When the nation prays unitedly the nation is healed.*

*Prayer does not change things - God does - when we fast and pray unitedly.
Informed intercession catapults the church from the wilderness into the Promised Land.*

THE PRAYING EKKLESIA

PRAY, PROCLAIM AND POSSESS: God commanded, *“If My people will pray, then I will heal the nation”* (2 Chron. 7:14). Jesus reaffirmed that *“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”* (Mark 11:17). He prayed so hard that His sweat became like blood. Peter declared that his main ministry would be prayer and the study of the Word (Acts 6:4). Paul travailed like a mother in labor for people until Christ was formed in them (Gal. 4:19). He asked us to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). We all know that the fervent prayer of a righteous man can be very effective and can achieve much (James 5:16). Because she was persecuted, the NT Ekklesia spent much of her time in fervent prayer and as they prayed, great numbers of people joined them and the Ekklesia grew exponentially (Acts 6:6,7). We also know that great prayer movements have preceded all the great missionary movements of recent years. The modern church needs to off-load a lot of excess baggage and start praying if she wants to fulfill the purpose for which she has been created.

PRAY AND PRAISE AND SAVE THE JAILOR: The apostles were always praying, asking for protection, boldness, miracles and fruitfulness (Acts 4:28-30). The result was that a multitude of new believers kept joining them (Acts 5:12-14). Their prayer included thanksgiving, even in adverse situations (Eph. 5:18-21). Paul and Silas were in jail with their backs torn and bleeding from severe scourging. Their hands and feet were locked in the stocks and they were hungry and thirsty, yet incredibly, they prayed and sang songs of praise in the middle of the night, which the other prisoners also heard. God shook the jail and arranged for their release and nourishment, while the jailor and his household found salvation. (Acts 16:24-26)

WORSHIP AND CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY: “Worship” really means, “prostrating oneself before God.” The twenty-four elders are constantly doing this before the throne of God. They throw their crowns, showing their humility and the worthlessness of any symbols of greatness in the presence of God. With bowls full of the prayers of the saints, they reverently prostrate themselves before the throne of the Lamb and constantly praise God (Rev. 5:8-12). Even though Moses grew up in the palace of Pharaoh, the most powerful monarch on earth at the time, he was the humblest man on earth, and so God made him the greatest leader of all times. He always fell on his face before the Lord and prayed (Numbers 16:1-4). Jesus also prayed with vehement cries and tears (Heb. 5:7). All the humble fishermen were great men of prayer and they changed the course of history. It has been said “It is not great men who change the world but the weak, in the hands of a great God.” We read the newspapers and listen to all the bad news on TV, radio and do nothing. Through the media, the world is calling out to the Christians to pray and turn the bad news into good news. Reading about great heroes of faith does not make us great, but doing great exploits in the name of Jesus. (Daniel 11:32)

EVERYBODY ELSE PROSTRATES EXCEPT FOR CHRISTIANS: Hindus prostrate themselves before their idols. Muslims kneel down for their “Allah” five times a day and the Sikhs bow their heads before the Guru Granth Sahib, their holy book; but the followers of the Most High Living God, have Father and son relationship and they have the freedom to pray everywhere (1 Tim. 2:8), anytime and in any position (1 Thes. 5:17). They can pray while sitting down (Acts 2:2), standing up (Mark 11:25), lying down (Matt. 26:39; 2 Kings

4:35) and even while they are walking (Luke 13:33-35). However, eventually every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord. (Phil. 2:10,11)

RAISE YOUR ARMS AND YOUR VOICE AGAINST THE DEVIL AND CHASE HIM OUT: People who loved to pray in the synagogues and on the street corners prayed impressive prayers with fancy words. However, the Lord called them hypocrites (Matt. 6:5). In the NT Assemblies, they used to lift their voices as well as their hands to pray because raising hands shows submission to God (Acts 4:24; 1 Tim. 2:8). In the past, when one of the kings was about to lose the battle, he and his followers would raise both their hands as a sign of surrender before the victorious king. Lifting up holy hands in submission to King of kings and praying everywhere is the first step in making the Devil flee from the land. (James 4:6-10)

PRAYER WALK AND BREAK THE CURSES FROM THE LAND: God says, *“Ask of Me and I will give the nations for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession”* (Psalm 2:8). The Lord wants all nations to stand before His throne. He also wants the gospel to reach the ends of the earth because He does not want anyone to perish. He wants everyone to go prayer walking *“I desire that men pray everywhere lifting holy hands”* (1 Tim. 2:8) and break the curses from the land and set the people free. The land cannot be cleansed without intercessors (Isa. 59:12-16; Eze. 22:24-30; Heb. 7:25). All this is possible only in small apostolic-prophetic Assemblies, as the big churches have a different agenda and waste a huge amount of time raising prayer for money-hungry fruitless projects. The best way to protect the land from curses is to restore relationship between the fathers and their sons. (Mal. 4:6)

PRAY FOR LABORERS UNTIL YOU BECOME A LABORER: The Lord had compassion on the lost and the least of this world. He said, *“The harvest is ready but the harvesters are in short supply.”* Then He specifically asked us to *“pray to the Lord of harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest fields.”* Despite the huge Christian manpower in the world, hardly anyone has any training in reaping the harvest of souls. Therefore, there is a massive shortage of grass-root level evangelists, Ekklesia planters, teachers, disciplers, apostles, prophets, helpers, facilitators and administrators. Many governments impose compulsory training of their youth in military camps to make sure there are enough soldiers available at all times. It is time all Christians were sent to labor camps to learn how to labor in the Lord’s harvest fields. This does not mean that they have to go to Bible schools. That is the last place where they will learn anything about church-planting. They should be mentored by successful Ekklesia planters on the field. (Matt. 9:37,38; Luke 10:2)

PRAYER IS A PROCESS: *“I exhort you to offer supplication, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving for all people starting with all the rulers, because then we will have a peaceful and godly life. God likes this kind of prayer because He wants all people to come to know Jesus and be saved.”* (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

The first step is supplication (*deesis*), which includes the petitions for prayer. This has to be in the will of God so that whatever you ask will be done by the Father. It is also important that two or three agree so that it has the endorsement of Jesus because this has to be asked in His name (Mat. 18:18-20). **The second step is the prayer** (*proseuche*), which is speaking with God about issues and concerns. **The third step is intercession** (*enteuxis*), which is standing in the gap, identifying, and intensely pleading on behalf of

somebody. God is looking for the intercessors (Eze. 22:30). When Daniel prayed, there was intergalactic war between the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and the territorial evil princes of Persia and Greece (Dan. 19:10-21). When saints intercede, their prayers reach the golden altar in heaven and cause thunders, lightnings and earthquakes (Rev. 8:3-5). The 24 elders, wait for the saints here to pray and fill their golden bowls so that they can prostrate before the throne and worship God (Rev. 5:8). Christians should stop praying like the goats saying “me. me. me”. Intercession y saints causes upheaval both in the heavenly realms as well as the earth, resulting in the *“kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord”* (Rev. 11:15). **The fourth is Thanksgiving (eucharistia)**, is believing that the request has already been granted (1 John 4:14,15). The Prayer process must be all inclusive. All believers praying everywhere with their holy hands lifted up (1Tim.2:8) for all the unsaved people, resulting in their coming to the knowledge of truth and being saved. Prayer should lead to growth and multiplication of the Ekklesia as it happened during the Pentecost.

ELECT POLITICIANS AND RULE THE NATION THROUGH INTERCESSION: God wants us to pray for our rulers, so that we can have a peaceful and godly life. God wants that our rulers should be saved (1 Tim. 2:1-4). The blood of Jesus has made us priests and kings and that we shall reign on earth now. We will continue to do so for a thousand years and even forever (2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 5:17; Rev. 5:10; 20:6; 22:5) . We are servant kings and not those who lord it over others. The best way to accomplish both our priestly and kingly role is to provide a prayer shield for *“all”* politicians by name, so that they do not fall into corruption. God wants us to pray, not just for wisdom and understanding for good governance by our politicians, but also to pray until they come to the knowledge of truth and are saved (1 Tim. 2:4). Thus, we will rule this nation by targeted intercession. For this, the local Ekklesias need to gather the names of *“all”* politicians, judges and officers, *“all”* those who have rule and authority over us and pray for them regularly in our private and corporate prayers. The simplest way is to farm out the names to the triplets. The best way to govern this nation is to have righteous rulers. Therefore, the election time should be busy prayer time for Christians. Every political party and every candidate should be bathed in prayer, every polling booth should be prayer walked and every ballot box protected from the evil one. We should pray that only those who will facilitate the coming of the righteous kingdom should be elected.

PRAY FOR THE CITY: During His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was overwhelmed by the forthcoming disaster. He wept for His city and prayed and prophesied for her by name (Luke 19:41-44; 13:34,35). Soon after Pentecost, almost the entire city of Jerusalem was converted. God specifically commanded the Jews to pray for the Gentile city of Babylon, where He had taken them in bondage for disobedience to Him and kept them for seventy years. The Jews had been faithfully praying, morning and evening, facing towards Jerusalem. God said “No!” because He had brought them all that way to pray for the redemption of Babylon (now Iraq), the sinful city of the Gentiles. The Jews had never even thought about praying for that city. However, God said, *“And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace you will have peace”* (Jer. 29:7). All the house Gatherings were named after their cities. The city Ekklesia was a network of house Assemblies. Therefore, it was natural for them to pray for their cities and naturally, whole cities were transformed as a

result. Even today, whole cities in South America have been transformed through fasting, prayer siege, prayer summits and prayer assaults.

PRAY FOR BOLDNESS: The early Ekklesia prayed a lot for boldness to face the constant threat of persecution from the authorities, as well as from the Jews and Gentiles. The large influx from other faiths was the main reason for their persecution. There is no such problem with the modern church as there is hardly any growth by conversion. Most of the growth is either biological or growth by transfer. There will be no significant growth until ordinary Christians start praying and proclaiming the gospel (Acts 4:17-20). Many mistakenly think that faith is a private affair. However, Jesus died and suffered shame, publicly for them. They are simply hiding in bunkers. The Scripture says that cowards will be leading the pack of murderers, sexually immoral and others, who will not make it to heaven. (Rev. 21:8). Praying to the Lord to send bunker busters to transform hiding Christians into hell's gate busters should be in our daily prayer menu. If the early apostles needed boldness, then we certainly do (Acts 4:29). If you are not being persecuted, then it is time for a **"persecution audit"** to find out why the Devil does not think you important enough to bother.

PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED EKKLESIA: But for persecution, there would be no United States of America, which was inhabited predominantly by the pilgrims, who were victims of religious persecution in Europe. Unlike the Jerusalem victims, who planted Ekklesias, the American pilgrims slaughtered the local Indians by the thousands. It is time for serious identificational repentance. Every year, about 160,000 Christians are killed worldwide. In the last decade, Sudan killed 2,000,000 fellow citizens, which makes Tsunami disaster only a storm in the teacup. Saudi Arabia alone bankrolled billions for its own extremist version of Islam called *"Wahhabism"* through Islamic centers, which dish out a hefty dose of fundamentalism in Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa. Bin Laden is a Saudi and his Al-Qaeda has recruited 40,000 suicide bombers ready to destroy *kafirs* or infidels through *Jihad* or the holy war. Anticonversion and Apostasy laws are brutally applied. North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Iran, Maldives, Somalia, Bhutan, Afghanistan and many Communist, Islamic and even Buddhist countries, lead the pack of persecutors. This does not include those who are maimed, raped, put in prison, whose properties are destroyed and who are made refugees in their own countries. Their only crime is that they are Christians. It is a sad day indeed when the comfortable churches do not even pray and help their suffering brothers and sisters.

PRAY FOR OPEN DOORS: Paul often asked for urgent prayers that effective doors would be opened. There should be constant prayers going up for effective and influential doors to be opened for the gospel. Jesus has promised that when He opens a door, no one can shut it. We should pray for open hearts, open hands, open homes, and open heavens. (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3; Rev. 3:8, 20)

THE DISUNITED AND DYSFUNCTIONAL CITY CHURCH: Jesus prayed for His city by name. *"Oh, Jerusalem, how often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings...!"* (Luke 13:34). The Scripture asks us to pray *"to keep the bond of unity."* There is only one God, one Jesus, one Spirit, one Body, one hope and one baptism. Although it has many parts, there is only one body and if the parts do not function together, then that body is not worth the name, as it will soon die.

Christianity is all about relationships, and mutual love is the most effective medium for keeping that body united and functional. (Eph. 4:1-6, 15,16)

THE MONGOLIAN MESS: Mongolia was a country of Buddhists, Islam, Shamans and no Christians. Some Christian missions had been fishing there for many years, but without any Mongolian fish in the net. They assumed that the Mongolians were a very hard people. However, in 1990, God revealed to Phil Butler that Mongolians were not the problem, but it was the disunity among the missionaries that prevented the Holy Spirit from working among them. His efforts to bring about unity were met with strong opposition. It took nearly two years for denominational pastors to come together. However, once they got together, the Holy Spirit convicted them and they repented, fasted, prayed and shared the Lord's Supper. In the last ten years, 10,000 new believers came to the Lord. (Act 4:32; Matt. 12:25)

OBTAIN A MAP, LAY A SIEGE, SURROUND THE CITY AND REBUILD IT: The Lord told the prophet Ezekiel to get a clay tablet of the city and lay a symbolic siege against it by setting up battering rams all around. Further, God asked him to eat only frugal meals cooked on dung, to drink only a measured amount of water and to sleep on one side with his face set against the city. The Lord commanded this severe penance on the prophet, to bring the city to repentance (Eze. 4). When Israel sinned and polluted the land by worshipping the golden bull, the Lord refused to dwell among them and Moses had to pitch the tabernacle of meeting outside the camp (Exo. 33:7). We must understand that God views very seriously all that is going on in the city. We need to obtain a detailed map of the city and spy out the land (Num. 13:1,2, 17-25). We need to prayer walk every nook and cranny, crying out to the Lord and breaking all the curses, which have come upon it because of our iniquities (Lam. 4:12,13). Like Joshua, we must surround the city until the strongholds come tumbling down. Like Nehemiah, we must visit the city in the middle of the night and rebuild the fallen wall using local manpower and resources. Like Ezra, we must restore worship all over the city; and like Jonah, we must prayer walk through the city until all come to repentance.

JESUS SELECTIVELY ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS: Jesus has assured us that when two of us agree as touching anything, He will do it provided it is within the will of God (Matt. 18:18,19). It is also performance related, that if we bring forth fruit that remains, then whatever we ask, the Father in heaven will give it (John 15:16). He did not agree to the prayer of the demonized man, to hang around with Him. He asked him to be His witness in Decapolis, a region of ten cities (Mark 5:17-20). Jesus will agree to whatever is within the will of God but not to our hanging around and waste time in church activities. He would rather send us as His witnesses, to regions beyond. (2 Cor. 10:16)

The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Do not say I am but a youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you and whatever I command, you shall speak. Do not

be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you...Behold I have put My words in your mouth.

See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, to pull down, to destroy and to tear down. "To rebuild and to plant again"

It is time to send suicide bombers like Jeremiah to tear down all the unscriptural models of the church, plant again and rebuild the New Testament models of Ekklesia.

We need to plant modules which merge with the culture of the people, vibrate with missionary zeal and pulsate with the heart of God.

Some say you must worship in a special way, while others say you must baptize in a certain way. Yet others say that you must speak in tongues otherwise you are not saved. Many argue for and against the role of women. You can get money, cameras, computers and foreign trips, if you are willing to "follow" their denominational doctrines.

But Jesus said, "Follow Me" and I will make you fishers of men.

A church without the Great Commission is a just a club. A fisherman is not evaluated on the basis of club activities or the number of sermons he delivers to the captive fish.

A fisherman is evaluated on the basis of how many fresh fish he catches.

The church needs to appoint a pollution control board to remove all the extra-biblical divisive doctrines and other impurities, which hinder growth and multiplication of the fish.

JESUS' METHOD OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

THE MISSION STATEMENT: A church, which has not identified and defined her mission/purpose statement in clear terms, is a purposeless church. It is only selling dreams and fantasies at best and sedatives and placebos at worst. At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus publicly made His “mission statement” (Luke 4:18,19). He was here to transform the whole world by liberating the captives and restoring sight to the spiritually blind through the gospel. To accomplish His global mission He needed the best talent in the world. (Rom. 12:2)

TALENT SCOUTING FOR WORLD CHANGERS: Business people try to recruit the best talent available. The most important contribution a CEO can make to his company, is to recruit from the best management schools. Jews were the most literate people in the world. Even 2000 years ago, the literacy rate among them was almost 100%, because every Jewish child had to attend the Madarssas where the Rabbi taught them to read and write. Jews were known as the “People of the Book.” Jesus went talent scouting for people who would turn the world upside down, but He did not go to Jerusalem, where the smartest young men were undergoing training, under the most talented teachers of the time.

JESUS REJECTS THE INTELLECTUALS AND OPTS FOR THE PERFORMERS: Jesus went to the lake-side and fished out ordinary fishermen. Now we all know that seafaring fishermen are hardy, and used to working odd hours in dirty, smelly and uncomfortable situations, away from the comforts of home-cooked food, soft bed and family. They are used to taking risks because of the hazardous weather conditions, and they can survive at sea as well as in the competitive world of the fish market. A fisherman is evaluated on the basis of how many fish he catches. Jesus Himself was evaluated by John. Similarly, an Ekklesia is a club of “fishers of men,” and will ultimately be evaluated, not on the basis of the club activities, but on the basis of their performance. (Matt. 4:19; 11:1-6)

JESUS BREAKS THE MONOPOLY AND DIVERSIFIES: Jesus was looking for people who would capture and create a global market for His product, salvation through the gospel. For this, a completely new kind of talent was required that was not available at the top ‘B’ schools in Jerusalem, where students were being trained primarily for temple business. Jesus was planning to take “His Father’s business” (Luke 2:49) out of the monopoly of the oligarchy of elite few and diversify it into the hands of the common person worldwide. This required a completely different talent, which, surprisingly, was available in abundance everywhere. Jesus knew that God the Father had put the bud of leadership skills inside every person. All they needed was space and opportunity to blossom, through careful nurturing and mentoring.

JESUS BUILDS A SUICIDE SQUAD: It is one thing to recruit talent and another to equip and retain them. People are only as competent as their training. Training is not a transfer of knowledge through lectures, but a complete transformation of the trainee. Jesus was training a suicide squad (‘witnesses’ means ‘martyrs’ in Greek) who would be willing to conduct a holy war against the malignant monsters and release the earth from their illegal possession. For this, He did not give them a Sunday morning pep talk. He took them to the human harvest fields every day and gave them hands-on experience. The best place for learning the skills of spiritual warfare is in the demon-infested trenches of real life and not the classrooms. At the end of three years, they not only had the game plan but also the

skills for intergalactic star wars against the extraterrestrial powers that are out there. He had the strategy because He Himself came 2000 years ago from beyond the galaxies.

JESUS STYLE WAS CONFRONTATIONAL: The modern church looks for tranquility, resulting in low impact in the society, while spirituality thrives in volatile situations with booming productivity. Every time Jesus went to the temple, He encountered a hostile situation with the temple authorities. Finally, he took a whip and cleaned the temple. He was brutal with the Pharisees and other religious leaders, and called them hypocrites, a brood of vipers, whitewashed graves etc. to their face. The original meaning of the Greek word *hupocrite* is actor. The church today is full of religious actors who put on all kinds of special effects, dress, titles and facial expressions to act out the role. Jesus called Herod a fox. His disciple, Peter, went one-step further and called the Jews murderers in his maiden public speech (Matt. 23:14-33; Acts 3:15). The church must torpedo its own unlawful structures before it can become a prophetic voice to the world. A surgeon must tell his patient that the cancer has to be removed, otherwise it will kill him. Jesus is the great physician with the sharp scalpel, which is for the healing of the nations. Jesus did not follow the soft option of being “*a man pleaser*,” but He died to convict the world of sin. He said that when the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth (John 16:8-14). The truth can be very brutal. Your family, friends and the community may reject you. The Bride must be without spots and wrinkles. (Eph. 5:27; Gal.1:10)

JESUS REPLACES THE TOP DOWN HIERARCHICAL MODEL WITH THE ROLE MODEL: Like the secular world, the church and missions also have become hierarchical, bureaucratic with top down management. The symbols of power are buildings, large staff, air-conditioned office, vehicles, latest music sound system, computers, laptops, lots of money and being surrounded by sycophants and boot lickers. In the NT Ekklesia, the only power that they had was being clothed with the Holy Spirit and they managed to turn the world upside down (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Equipping a successor may be like Jonathan’s love for David, which meant willingly giving up his own legitimate right to the throne (1 Sa. 18:1-4). Jesus reversed the self-seeking model and died to fulfill the vision given to you personally by God, however insignificant you might be. Paul said, “*Imitate me as I imitate Jesus*” (1 Cor. 11:1). The disciples were to be trained by imitating His life-style and of course His teachings. In other words, He was a role model. He removed the teacher/student and caste/class divide and called them friends, brothers and sisters (John 15:15; Luke 8:19-21; 22:24-27). He reversed the top down hierarchical management system and Jesus the Guru washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:5). Finally, He taught them the ultimate lesson that the captain must be the first one to face the firing squad and say, “Mission accomplished!”

JESUS SUCCEEDS IN SUCCESSION PLANNING: The most important thing that Jesus did was to train His disciples (John 17:4). Today, we live in a “talent economy.” Your business can only be as good as the talent available in your company. Since no one is perfect, the best CEO surrounds himself with the best talent. Once the disciples were trained in “*discipling the nations*,” Jesus, their boss, set them free. He did not control them. This does not mean that Jesus abandoned them. He sent His Spirit, who did not control them either, but became their business partner (John 14:16-18; 15:26,27; 16:7-15). Often when a charismatic leader dies, his movement also dies. In the case of Jesus, the movement not only thrived but today it is the biggest, multinational enterprise generating billions of

dollars and providing employment to thousands of people, and in the process transforming the lives of the millions.

TALENT SCOUTING SHOULD BE AN OBSESSION OF EVERY BELIEVER: In a knowledge-based world economy obsessed with talent, there is no other competitor who comes anywhere near Jesus' model of transforming ordinary people. He built His disciples into a team of goal-oriented entrepreneurs who literally turned the world upside-down. Jesus developed techniques, methods and financially sustainable services by deploying the hidden talents of ordinary men and women. He instilled in them such a passion that they would be willing to commit their entire lives to His mission (Acts 4:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2). Not surprisingly, all His disciples, like their Master, willingly became martyrs.

SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND: The world is ready for social, economic and spiritual plunder, but there is insufficient skilled talent available for capturing the global market. We need to be obsessed with finding talent, equipping them with core competencies and then letting them go to plunder the goods that are in the illegal possession of the strongman (Matt. 12:29,30). The most important thing that we can do is to find common people with hidden talents and to equip them to become extraordinary channels of grace and power. With Jesus beside them and us out of the way, they will be more than conquerors so that all God's people can live in peace, harmony, equality, justice and love.

The Ekklesia exists to intercede for the meanest rascals, where they can be transformed, equipped and sent out into the world as extraordinary channels of His grace to rescue other rogues and scoundrels and good for nothing people. (Eze. 3:17-19; Rom. 11:25; Matt. 24:14)

Any claims of the church possessing supernatural spiritual powers is nonsensical, while it denies access to the real consumers. Because of the shoddy performance of the church, salvation has reduced to a trickle, the death toll rises daily and millions are languishing in Hell.

It is not good enough to know sound doctrines, even the Devil knows them. (James 2:19)

Doctrines by themselves are meaningless unless spiritual aims and objectives are defined and the biblical means to reach the last Gentile on earth are made operational. (Acts 26:16-18)

Paul said imitate me as I imitate Christ. Wherever he went, he planted sustainable, multiplying churches through accompanying signs and wonders. (1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Cor. 12:12)

There are no dignitaries in the Ekklesia. The real heroes are mentors, mobilizers and martyrs.

Paul's discipling chain: Whatever things you have heard from me, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2)

The best form of permanent evangelism is not just preaching, teaching, baptizing and making disciples but flocking the sheep. Jesus did all that but left the greater task of planting churches to the Holy Spirit, through His followers. (John 4:1-2; 10:16; 14:12, Acts 1:8)

Only when Ekklesias begin to reproduce Ekklesias, does the spontaneous movement begin.

This is the only way Gen. 12:3, Mal. 1:11, Matt. 14:6, Hab. 2:14 & Rev. 7:9, 10 will be fulfilled

APOSTLE PAUL'S METHODS

PAUL WAS EQUIPPED WITH THE LANGUAGE AND THE SCRIPTURES: Apostle Paul is the greatest missionary of all times. His methods and the model that he set are ideals, which are worthy of emulation. Since Paul's time, there have been hundreds of mega plans and projects for world evangelization, but none has succeeded. Therefore, we need to seriously look at both the man and his methods. Paul grew up in a Jewish ghetto in Greek speaking Cilicia and spoke both the Greek and Hebrew languages. Later, he studied under Gamaliel and mastered the Scriptures (Acts 22:3). Both these languages proved a boon to him, and he never attempted to speak or to translate his writings into any of the local languages, not even into Latin, which was the *lingua franca* of the government of the day.

PAUL WAS A ZEALOUS MAN WHO SUFFERED: David said that his heart was hot with fire within and then he spoke (Psalm 39:3). Jeremiah said that the word of God was like a fire within his heart and his bones would burst if he did not mention it to others (Jer. 20:7). Paul was consumed with a passion to see the kingdom of God planted everywhere. To this end, he worked day and night. He was even willing to go to Hell just to save his people (Rom. 9:1-3). He underwent incredible suffering to accomplish the task given to him. He suffered starvation, homelessness, being beaten and unlawfully imprisoned many times. He was reviled, persecuted and left for dead. At times, he was treated like the filth of the earth. However, he gladly suffered all this for his Master who had suffered the same and shed His blood for all mankind. Paul was running a race for an eternal crown and no price was too great for him to pay. He believed in "perform or perish." Unfortunately, the Ekklesia was replaced by "showmen and laymen". Jesus finds nominal Christians nauseating and has warned us that unless we become hyper with high levels of adrenaline running in our veins for the lost, He will spit us out. God likes passionate people who are willing to suffer. (1 Cor. 9:16-23; 4:9-13; Phil. 3:12-14; Rev. 3:15,16)

PAUL'S VISION WAS TO REACH THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: Paul did not plant churches at random. He chose the four strategic "provinces" of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia. In fourteen years of his ministry, he systematically planted Assemblies in these provinces, which rapidly multiplied and saturated the "regions" (Acts 13:49). In doing this, he was following his Master's footsteps. Jesus did not focus on one particular place but traveled extensively throughout the surrounding "regions" (Mark 6:54-56). Although Paul had planted only a few Assemblies, he had the audacity to say that he had preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum in Macedonia and that there were no more places left for him to preach the gospel (Rom. 15:19-24; 2 Cor. 10:16). He could honestly make this claim because the apostolic Ekklesias he had planted and nurtured were so vibrant and prolifically fertile that he was sure that they would multiply and saturate those regions. He wanted to reach Spain because he thought that Spain was the end of the earth. His strategy was to plant rapidly multiplying Assemblies in the "regions" beyond. He actually succeeded in doing so, "*the Ekklesias were strengthened in faith and grew in numbers daily*" (Acts 16:5)

PAUL USED DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE GROUPS: Paul always visited the synagogue on the Sabbath, where he expounded from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah, they had been waiting for. Most of the "**Jews**" rejected him, and in many places they persecuted him and nearly killed him (Acts 14:1-6; 19,20; 17:1-5). However, Paul

always managed to extract a handful that would be helpful to him in starting new Assemblies. Secondly, in the same synagogues often there would be Gentile **“Proselytes”** (Acts 13:43) who had undergone circumcision and fully adopted the Jewish religion. Thirdly, in the same synagogue, there were also **“God Fearers”** who believed in the Jewish God but had not gone through the ritualistic process. Cornelius was a God fearer (Acts 10:2). The majority of the people who came out of the synagogues were believers of Gentile origin. Fourthly, there were the Gentiles who heard him at the Agora, where he had his tent making shop, **“The Hearers”** to whom Paul turned after the Jews rejected him. Vast majority of his believers were from this segment (Acts 18:4-8). To them he preached against idolatry, sexual immorality and the prevailing blindness caused by demons. Paul planted church modules that merged with the local people.

PAUL DID NOT CONDUCT HEALING AND DELIVERANCE CRUSADES: Paul rarely preached on the street corners, nor did he take part in any organized healing crusade. All the miracles took place spontaneously. To his credit, he never exploited the miracles for conversion, or for Ekklesia planting but they invariably resulted in doing so. He almost certainly preached in his tent-making shop in the *Agora* or the market place. All his formal meetings took place in the synagogues and homes. The meeting in Athens was only open to the elite Epicureans and the Stoics. Luke very carefully mentions the places where Paul stayed and preached. At Philippi, he lodged at Lydia’s house and since there was no synagogue there, he preached by the riverside (Acts 16:13-15). At Thessalonica, he lodged with Jason until his house was destroyed (Acts 17:5-9). At Ephesus, he preached in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). At Corinth, he lodged with Aquila and preached in the house of Titius Justus (Acts 18:1-8). Paul was always dragged out of a house and never from an open air crusade.

PAUL OPTS FOR FULL TIME MINISTRY AMONG THE GENTILES: Although Paul never lost his concern for the Jews, at this point, he washed his hands of the Jews because of their cussedness, and went into full time ministry among the Gentiles (Acts 18:6-7). Another reason was that there was very little fruit that remained as a result of his Jewish ministry. These house meetings were open to all “hearers.” The hearers were mostly Gentiles from the market place where he talked about his faith while making tents. The others came out of curiosity, having heard of miracles. The astonishing result of this dialogue at his work site was that all who dwelt in that region heard the gospel.

THE GATES OF HELL AND THE EARLY EKKLESIA: The Devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth, claiming that everything belonged to him (Luke 4:5,6). John says that the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:18,19). Paul says that the Devil has closed the minds of all those who are perishing (2 Cor. 4:4). In those days, demons lurked in all the trees, rivers, forests and on the mountain tops. Olympia was the abode of the Greek gods like Zeus, Apollo and Hermes. Athens was the most idolatrous city. Paul delivered his talk to the wise men of Athens under the watchful eye of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, at Areopagus. Poseidon, a sea god, holds in his hand an ancient trident, a three-pronged spear (trishul). Thousands thronged to make animal sacrifices. The temples were full of priests and ritual prostitutes. Practitioners of occult, like the sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16) could be found on every street. Actually, demon worship was the main religion of the people. Idolatry is nothing but demonolatry. (1 Cor. 10:19,20)

PAUL FOUGHT SPIRITUAL WARFARE: The Lord gave a clear job description to Paul “*to open their (Gentiles) eyes in order to turn them from darkness into light and from the power of Satan to God...*” (Acts 26:18). No wonder Paul spent the better part of his ministry waging war against the python spirit in the young girl at Philippi, or Diana of Ephesus or burning fifty thousand silver coins’ worth of occult literature. Fighting the demons of violence in the minds of both the Jews and Gentiles (Eze. 14:1-6; Heb. 4:12). Jesus says that you must first bind the “strongman” and then take possession of his goods (Matt. 12:29). Power preaching by Paul, resulted in mighty signs and wonders (Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:4,5). He describes the weapons of war and how to fight against an invisible enemy. It may be safely said that even though no specific miracles are mentioned, such as in Antioch, Thessalonica and many others, Paul wrought ‘*signs and wonders and mighty works*’, which resulted in Ekklesias being planted (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 12:12). Even today, the fastest way to plant an Ekklesia is through power encounters and spiritual warfare.

NO FIVE STAR HOTELS FOR PAUL: The first thing Paul would do on reaching a city was to find a lodging place in an inn. As he paid the hotel bills from his own pocket, he would opt for the cheapest place, which came loaded with bugs, lice and mice and no running water or toilet facilities. The next thing was to look for a strategic place in the Agora or the market place to set up a shop for tent making. Finally, he had to find the local synagogue where he would preach the next Sabbath. Some places did not have even ten Jews to constitute a synagogue; there he would find the place of prayer, as he did in Philippi. Of course, over a period of days, the new believers would invite him to their homes. Even there he insisted on paying for board and lodging.

FINANCIALLY PAUL WAS ABOVE REPROACH: Sacred ministry is a vocation or a calling and not a profession. It does not necessarily require financial support from the church. Paul modeled an exemplary bivocational life style, doing more than full time ministry. He earned his own living and also supported the ministry with his own income. He scrupulously avoided taking money wherever he went to preach (Acts 20:33-35). He had a low opinion of those who peddled religion for money (Phil. 1:15-18), but did not discourage those who lived by the gospel and in fact, encouraged the believers to support such people (1 Tim. 5:17). Once he took money from the Gentile Assemblies to the famine stricken Ekklesia in Jerusalem, but also took the precaution of taking local people with him to make sure that everything was above board (1 Cor. 16:2-4). He set a model that all money matters should be meticulously accounted for and should be handled by the local Ekklesia and not by outsiders. All the Assemblies that he planted were financially independent with no outside support.

THE EKKLESIA IS A CENTER FOR DETOXIFICATION OF SINNERS INTO SAINTS: The OT patriarchs and prophets had weaknesses just like us. Adam failed the apple test. Noah got drunk and disorderly. Abraham, the friend of God, got scared and ditched his wife. Moses, the lawgiver, committed murder and became an absconder from law. Aaron, the high priest, committed high treason by leading Israel into idolatry. After calling fire from heaven and boldly slaughtering 450 priests of Baal, Elijah, the fearless seer, set the record for a marathon race when a woman called Jezebel scared him to death. We do not need to add details about David, the man after God’s own heart. The list goes on. The NT Ekklesias were not composed of sanitized saints either. One glance at the Ekklesia of Corinth reveals incest, sex scandals, gluttony and drunkenness even during the Lord’s Supper,

litigation, class discrimination, demonized people, bitter rivalries etc. Actually, Ekklesia planting is easier in this kind of “good soil” of sinful people. The Lord’s promise is that *“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow”* (Isa. 1:18). Paul says that the mystery is that sinners will become saints. If your Ekklesia is welcoming and converting the scum of the earth into inheritors of the kingdom of God, then you are on track; otherwise, you need to humble yourself and pray to have the mystery revealed to you. (Eph. 3:5,6)

PAUL’S CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH: When Paul went to Athens, a city dedicated to goddess Athena, he first collected the *Harvest Field demographic data*. He surveyed the people and the places, the Synagogue, the market place and found Jews and Gentiles, as target audiences (Acts 17:17). Secondly, he obtained *Harvest Force data*. He went to the Jews and Gentile Proselytes. They already knew the Scriptures; therefore, he could first bring them to Christ and then use them as bridges, for church planting. He also conducted *Spiritual Mapping*, *“For while I was ...examining the objects of your worship, I found an altar with this inscription: To The Unknown God”* (Acts 17:23). Paul studied the *Past Sinful History*, which brought curses as well as the *Redemptive History*. There had been a great pestilence about 500 years earlier, which could not be stopped by placating the local gods. Telemachus, a disciple of Mentor, told them to offer sacrifices to the Unknown God, which brought instant relief. Every Athenian was curious to know about this mystery God. Paul delivered his keynote address on the Hill of god Aries, based on this masterpiece of contextual research. Research is not just number crunching or data collection but a strategic message. It needs trailblazers to take ownership; otherwise, it is worthless. Research is not new. Moses and Joshua sent spies to research Canaan. Nehemiah secretly researched the city at night. Every church must have a credible Research Unit for an environmental scan to set informed goals to complete the Great Commission. Jesus had a strategy session with His disciples for 40 days, pertaining to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)

CRISIS LEADS TO CHANGE: Generally, change does not take place as a result of intellectual discourses but only when an individual or a society is in crisis. Athens had no crisis situation and therefore no need for change; hence, Paul abruptly abandoned the campaign (Acts 17:16-34). In contrast, Paul got the best results in Corinth, which was in turmoil because Emperor Claudius had just expelled all the Jews from Rome who had moved to Corinth as refugees. This included Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2). Power encounters also create crisis and lead to change, as happened in Ephesus. (Acts 19:26,27)

PAUL DID NOT CONTROL THE ASSEMBLIES: Through the efforts of Paul, hundreds of Ekklesias were planted, but it must be said to the credit of this great man that he never tried to control them, not even by remote control. All the administration was in the hands of the locals, and he did not impose an outsider (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). This does not mean that he abandoned them, but sent one of his trusted lieutenants like Timothy or Titus, and at times he himself would go and sort out their problems. Even if he admonished them, it was as a father and never as an autocrat (1 Cor. 4:15). He sent letters, to be read aloud publicly. Paul never handed over the Ekklesias to the locals, as they never belonged to him in the first place. Not handing over to the local believers, results in unhealthy, weak and dependent churches.

PAUL'S TRADITIONS: Jesus said, *"Follow Me"* and set a goal by adding, *"I will make you fishers of men."* Paul said, *"Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ."* He praised the Corinthian Ekklesia for keeping the traditions just as he had delivered them. Then he took them to task for messing up the Lord's Supper, which should have been a simple shared meal, but they had turned it into an eating and drinking party. The modern church has changed it the other way round and made it into a holy sacrament, which can be given only by clergy. (1 Cor. 11:1,2, 20-26). He rebuked them for observing special days for worship and for getting bound to these weak and beggarly elements (Gal. 1:8; 4:9-11; Col. 2:16-23). He clearly instructed the Galatian and Thessalonian Ekklesia to hold fast to the traditions, which had been given to them and not to add anything new or they would be accursed (1 Thes. 2:15). Sadly, we have added traditions, with no salvific value to the lost. The only tradition we need is to make fishers of men.

PAUL IS OUR ROLE MODEL: The task before Paul was to remove the middle wall separating Jews and Gentiles. His success in putting them together was a miracle. He succeeded because he focused on Christ and his ministry among the Gentiles (Acts 28:28). Paul knew that *"Christ in us is the only hope of glory for the Gentiles."* As a role model, he told the Ekklesia, *"The things, which you have learned, heard, received and saw in me, these do."* He taught Timothy to multiply his teachings with faithful men. He also travailed in prayer until *"Christ is formed in you."* No wonder he was such a great Christian who changed the entire course of the history of the world. However, Paul did not write the history with ordinary ink but with sweat and blood. (Col. 1:27; Phil. 4:9; 2 Tim 2:2; 1 Tim 2:1-4; Gal 4:19)

LIFT UP YOUR EYES AND SEE THE WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY: When God asked Abraham to lift up his eyes and see, he saw as far as Egypt and God promised to give this land to him. In faith he went around the Promised Land and made altars and offered sacrifices. Much later, Jesus asked His disciples to lift up their eyes and see. They saw the Samaritan woman bringing the whole village to the feet of Jesus. Jesus is now waiting for us to lift up our eyes and see the windows of opportunity all around us. The windows of opportunity are especially among the poor, the powerless and the marginalized, who are mostly illiterate and belong to the oral tradition. To them the written word means nothing. The book culture speaks only to 10% of the population, while the story telling speaks directly to 90% of the people. Uneducated does not mean unintelligent. Many of them are very wise. You do not have to be literate to be a church planter. By Pharisaical standards, Jesus was an illiterate (John 7:15). Today, there are three billion illiterates in the world, 300 million in India, mostly in north India, especially among the women. Jesus chose to reach such people through story telling and Paul chose to work among them. (Matt. 13:34; 1 Cor 1:26-31)

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Many NT Ekklesias were established only after a fierce spiritual warfare. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil. He gave us the sword of the spirit to fight a global war

against the diabolical demons (1John 3:8; Eph. 6:10-18). In Cyprus, it was a sorcerer named Bar Jesus (Acts 13:6-12). In Corinth, it was the erotic spirit of Venus and Delphi, leading to immorality and idolatry (1 Cor. 6:9; 10:19-21). In Ephesus, it was the spirit of Diana (Acts 19:23-35). In Philippi, the Python spirit of Apollo, who was worshipped at Pytho (Acts 16:16). At Antioch, it was the legalistic spirit of Messianic Judaizers, who insisted on circumcision and fulfilling other Mosaic laws (Acts 15:1,2). In Smyrna, it was the synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9). In Pergamos, it was the compromising spirit of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6,14,15). In Thyatira, it was the spirit of Jezebel (Rev. 2:20) and so on. In each place, the territorial spirit was given marching orders.

There are many ways you can fight a good fight (1Tim.6:12; 2Tim.4:7). Like the apostles, plunder the temple or a mega church, take out the people and saturate the city with house Ekklesias. You can do it Paul's way, walk into the Governor's house, blind Elymas the strongman and plant a church. Jonah style requires walking and prophesying over the city until it comes to repentance. You can also try Joshua style: silently prayer walk around the city, until the demonic walls of defense come crumbling down. You can do Elijah style, invite all the sorcerers, call down fire from heaven and destroy them. Like David, you can go in the name of the Lord, identify Goliath, the strongman; have fun with the slingshot and finish him off with the sword of the Spirit. The more adventurous can try John the Baptist's method, call pharisaical Christians, a brood of vipers, bring them to repentance, dunk them in a river and then share a tasty meal of locusts laced with wild honey.

However, the most difficult arena of warfare, is the mind, the site of battle between the flesh and the spirit. Jesus has given us thought busters to demolish the gates of mental ghettos. (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

Jesus said - if they persecuted Me they will persecute you also. (John 15:20)

Peter says that the very appellation of a Christian should attract persecution. (1 Pet. 4:1, 2, 12-19)

Paul said - all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12)

Killing of Stephen and persecution in Jerusalem caused the believers to flee, which resulted in hundreds of Ekklesia being planted in Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.

Persecution can never stop the juggernaut of the Ekklesia. It can only launch her. Rather it is the lack of persecution that can stagnate her.

Thank God for His promise, no weapon formed against you shall prosper because you will be counter attacking the enemy with live bullets of love, forgiveness, blessing and prayer. (Isa. 54:17; Matt. 5:44)

PERSECUTION

ONLY THE PERSECUTED WILL MAKE IT TO HEAVEN: John saw a very large crowd of people in heaven, from every tongue, tribe, and nation, standing before the throne of God in white robes and praising Him. An elder told him that they had come out of the great tribulation and therefore are before the throne of God to serve Him day and night. (Rev. 7:9,10)

PERSECUTION GUARANTEED: If you are not being persecuted, then you need to be worried that you may not be doing sufficient damage to the kingdom of the Devil to attract his attention. This does not mean that you have to go looking for trouble, but the Scriptures make a categorical statement that, *"All those who wish to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* (2 Tim. 3:12). The Lord assures us, *"If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you too"* (John 15:18-20). When Paul was persecuting the Ekklesia, the Lord said to him, *"Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* When you are being persecuted, always remember that it is not you, but the Lord Himself who is being persecuted. We need to pray for our persecutors because, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Heb. 10:31; Luke 10:16; Acts 9:4)

JESUS WAS THE MOST PERSECUTED: Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, Isaiah described the suffering He would undergo (Isaiah 53). *"He was a man of sorrows, rejected, and acquainted with grief. He was bruised and afflicted so badly that people could not bear to see His face. However, He was wounded for our transgressions. Therefore God has raised Him high, because He bore so much suffering for our sakes"* (Isa. 53:2-5). It is only because of His stripes that we are healed, and because of the shedding of His blood that God could reconcile this sinful world to Himself. Through His suffering, we have been appointed ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-20) to reconcile the whole of creation. What could be a worse deception than to think that we, the disciples of a suffering Lord, can go to heaven without suffering!

ALL THE APOSTLES WERE PERSECUTED UNTIL DEATH: Persecution has taken place down the ages. Jesus rebuked Jerusalem for killing all the prophets. History tells us that 2000 believers were murdered along with Stephen. Philip was hanged in Phrygia. Matthew was killed in Ethiopia. James was thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple. Matthias was beheaded. Andrew was crucified in Asia; Paul was killed in Rome, and Peter was hanged upside down. John died in his nineties in prison on the island of Patmos. Millions of martyrs have followed them and thousands are still dying today.

PROTECTORS TURN PREDATORS: The church consists of peace loving people is a much cherished myth. At the slightest provocation it indulged in acts of bestiality, unknown to beasts. It is said that in the past 2000 years, about 100 million believers have been martyred by hostile governments, defenders of other faiths and the historical church. Even now, 160,000 are being martyred every year, and the indications are that this number may double very soon. These figures do not include those who were beaten, maimed, disabled, raped or whose property and human rights have been taken away. Omar Al Bashir, the dictator of Sudan, alone is responsible for killing 2 million people and making 4 million homeless. He routinely bombs civilians, and tortures and massacres non-Muslims. President Idi Amin of Uganda killed pastors and bishops and ate them for breakfast. President Kim Jong II of North Korea is using 150,000 people, mostly Christians, as forced labor. Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia treats possession of a

Bible, a crime. Chairman Mao of China killed over 6 million people, including 1 million Christians, during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76. Jesus told Peter that “*Satan will sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you*” (Luke 22:31). Peter was purified by torture and became a great witness. God’s word to Hosea was, “*They shall seek My face; in their misery they shall earnestly seek Me*” (Hosea 5:15). All the martyrs are now rejoicing in heaven while their unrepentant persecutors are baking in hell. (2 Cor. 6:3-10)

THERE ARE AT LEAST FOUR KINDS OF PERSECUTION:

The first one, much publicized, is persecution from hostile governments and fundamentalists of other faiths. (Matt. 5:10-12)

The second, much more prevalent, is where Christians of different denominations persecute each other. The world is full of such persecuted brothers and sisters (Matt. 5:22). Though the Roman Government finally hanged Jesus on the cross, the entire episode was orchestrated by His own Jewish people. This was inevitable because He came and challenged the hypocrisy of the ritualistic religion of the temple. Jesus emphasized righteousness, which is right relationship with God, and condemned the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. Sadly, even today we guard our man-made traditions and “*make the commandments of God of no effect*” (Matt. 15:2-9). Stephen preached a long sermon, which had no effect until he spoke against the temple saying that God does not dwell in temples made with human hands (Acts 7:48,49). The religious leaders became furious and stoned him to death. Even today, missionaries have much trouble from local churches that do not make any attempt to reach the lost, and do not allow others to do so. Missionaries are not sheep-stealers. All sheep belong to Jesus who died for them. (Acts 20:28)

The third and the deadliest is when there is no persecution because the church has compromised with the world. They are no more the salt of the earth because they have lost their saltiness; therefore, the world is merrily trampling over them. They are no longer the light of the world because their light no longer shines on men through their good works, which glorify God. (Matt. 5:13,14). A Christian has the choice to trample on the head of Satan or to be trampled over by him. There are no alternatives (Rom. 16:20). If you are not being persecuted then you are already in his net and there is no reason for him to bother you.

The fourth and fastest spreading persecution is “invited” persecution. To raise funds for their ministry, many missions publicize themselves on the internet and in glossy brochures, and often give exaggerated reports of their achievements. When this information gets into the wrong hands, it leads to severe persecution for all concerned in that area.

Open air and street corner preaching, tract and literature distribution, screening of religious films in the villages and mass baptisms are no longer safe in India, especially in North India. They infuriate the opponents of the Christian faith, leading to violence. The early Ekklesia was a secret Ekklesia and yet it grew fast. Paul and Peter, with rare exceptions, did not practice open air preaching but confined their meetings in the homes of the people. Large, open-air meetings, in spite of extravagant claims, are counterproductive when evaluated on the basis of long term “*fruit that remains.*” (John 15:16)

REAL PERSECUTION IS YET TO COME: Sporadic incidents of violence against Christians have been steadily increasing. The time of serious persecution is not far away. Following the strategy planned by the fundamentalist, churches are being burnt, missionaries beaten, threatened and put behind bars and occasionally killed; nuns are raped, disturbances are created during crusades, idols are being placed in churches and Bibles are torn and burnt. On their internet website, the names of leading Christians are openly published on a hit list. The “*ghar wapsi*” or the “return home”, to reconvert Christians to their original faith, include purifying rituals like drinking cow urine etc. Even governments are funding and equipping thousands of workers for this.

THANK GOD FOR THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE GOSPEL: Throughout the history of the world, the agenda of all major religious groups has been to ban religious conversions. India is no exception. However, the Lord said to Pharaoh, that great opponent of God, “*For this reason I have raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name will be declared in all the earth*” (Exo. 9:16). On Christmas eve, AD 2000, some anti-Christian elements burnt 67 bamboo churches in Dang district of Gujarat. Since then the local tribals have built hundreds of churches with local resources. By demolishing the anti-Christian party during the last national elections, it has been shown that there is no match for the Intercessory Brigade. (Rom. 9:17)

THE APPELLATION OF A CHRISTIAN SHOULD ATTRACT PERSECUTION: Persecution is not a curse, but a blessing. The Lord said, “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven... Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...*” (Matt. 5:10-12). The more active the Ekklesia is, the worse the persecution. More active does not mean more programs, but zealously seeking the lost of this world. The early Ekklesia, when persecuted, prayed for more “*boldness to speak the word and for more signs and wonders*” (Acts 4:29-31). Peter says that the very appellation of a Christian should attract persecution, “*Beloved do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though something strange has happened to you.*” Persecution proofing should be integral part of missionary training, “*...he who has suffered persecution has ceased from sin and the Spirit of God rests on him.*” (1 Pet. 4:1,2, 12-19)

THE EKKLESIA MUST HAVE THE MINDSET OF WORLD CONQUERORS: Like many modern churches, the Three Self Patriotic Church Movement (TSPM) in China is a compromised government sponsored church. They must have government approved leader and location and must not allow children under 18 years to attend the meetings. In complete contrast to the modern day compromised churches, Jesus openly went around daily demolishing the gates of Hell. In the Book of Revelation, He is wearing blood-splattered robes, riding a white horse and going out conquering and to conquer the world (Rev. 6:2; 19:11-16). The Lord has said, “*...the gates of Hades shall not prevail against My Ekklesia*” (Matt. 16:18). God said to Jesus, “*Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your foot stool*” (Acts 2:34, 35). The Scripture says, “*And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly*” (Rom. 16:20; Luke 10:17-19). Jesus trained all His disciples to be more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37). We, as His disciples; must also have the mindset of world conquerors and be equipped to be militant and mobile, and then trample over the Devil.

BRAVE AND BATTLE-WORTHY CHRISTIANS ARE ALWAYS A MINORITY: Moses sent twelve spies to spy out the land of Canaan. Only two, Caleb and Joshua, trusted God and opted for immediate attack to take over the land. The remaining ten, even though they had seen the power of God, turned out to be suffering from grass hopper syndrome and perished with their households in the wilderness. We must carefully follow the examples of Caleb and Joshua by trusting God to give us victory even in the face of grave threats. (Nu. 13:17, 14:6-9)

DIG TRENCHES AND GO UNDERGROUND AND MULTIPLY: Planting secret churches below the radar screen to avoid detection is the best remedy for protection against persecution in a hostile situation. In 1982, the Communists of Ethiopia imprisoned all the pastors, sent back all the foreign missionaries and took control of the Christian radio station to broadcast Communist propaganda. At that time, there were barely 5000 members of the Mennonite Church. Many thought that the Church would die. However, the church went underground and prayed. Ten years later, Communism was dead and the church had grown from 5000 to 50,000. During this period, the Bench-Christians translated the Bible in their own language and reached out to the forest dwelling Sheko tribe. The gospel in Ethiopia is experiencing an uncontrolled growth. The Mekene Yesus (The House of Jesus) has grown to four millions in the last fifty years.

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE: Jesus advised us to flee from city to city when persecuted (Matt. 24:15-20). This is not an act of cowardice but results in multiplication of churches. A house built with hay and wood can be burnt, but the living Ekklesia of Jesus gets refined like silver and gold through the fire of persecution (1 Cor. 3:11-17; Rom. 5:3,4; Zech. 13:8,9). Building a church house is like anchoring a ship forever, which cannot catch fish. We are strangers and sojourners, looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. (1 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 11:10)

BE WISE AS SERPENTS BUT DO NOT BITE: The Lord has not given us the right to curse our persecutors, but He commanded us to love our enemies and to pray for them (Matt. 5:39-44). Jesus prayed the greatest prayer of all times from the cross - "*Father forgive them for they do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34). The Lord has sent us like sheep among wolves, but we are not to deliberately invite trouble. The Lord has also advised us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16). This instruction is for us not to be revengeful but to be a blessing, even to our persecutors. (Rom. 12:14)

SERVE MEMORANDUMS TO THE DEVIL AND NOT TO THE PRESIDENT: These days when persecution comes, we organize big protest marches and present memorandums to the political leaders. This would be like the disciples of Jesus Christ presenting a memorandum before Caesar to save Him from being crucified. The Ekklesia is here to serve memorandum to the Devil notifying him that his head is about to be trampled under the feet of the believers. However, this does not exclude advocacy. Paul claimed his legal rights as a Roman citizen more than once. (Matt. 16:21-26; Rom. 16:20; Acts 16:37; 22:25; 25:16)

HAND THEM OVER TO THE LORD AND NOT TO THE POLICE: The Lord has said very clearly, "*Whoever accepts you accepts Me, and whoever rejects you rejects Me*" (Luke 10:16). God has said, "*Vengeance is Mine,*" therefore "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of living God*" (Heb. 10:30,31). If we hand over our opponents to the police, then they

will handle it in their own way, but if we leave them in the hands of the living God, then He will deal with them in His own way, which could be fearful and even fruitful.

PERSECUTE THE PERSECUTORS THROUGH PRAYERS: The Lord has given us a clear option, that if we will humble ourselves and pray and seek His face, then He will heal our land (2 Chron. 7:14). God heard the cries of the Israelites, oppressed by slavery, and He destroyed the mighty king, Pharaoh (Exodus 2:23-25). An Eastern European Communist dictator arrogantly declared that dictatorship would last a thousand years and that God was dead. One early morning, all the believers formed a human chain around his palace and prayed to God to change him. Shortly the dictator died of an undiagnosed fatal disease and now the gospel is spreading rapidly in that country.

ON SITE WITH INSIGHT: When a farmer visits his harvest field, the farm literally talks to him, where the crop has run dry for lack of water, or the weeds have overrun, or the insects have attacked or where the crop is ready for the harvest, so he can take appropriate action. Moses met Pharaoh on site and annihilated Egypt. David met Goliath on the battlefield and dispatched him with his best shot. Jesus met the Devil on the cross and disarmed him forever. The Samaritan woman faced the people who despised her and brought them to the feet of Jesus. God has promised that in the last days, He will establish a kingdom, which will break into pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and His people alone shall rule on this earth (Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 27; Rev. 5:10). This will happen through those who proactively carry the battle to the enemy and demolish him on site through prayer vigils, prayer walking and journeys. The bull's eye of a scholar is the head but a righteous man shoots arrows of godly love into hearts. The church needs some good sharp shooting saints to go on site, break into pieces, consume all other kingdoms and establish His kingdom.

SATYA MEVA JAYATE = TRUTH ALONE TRIUMPHS: The Constitution of India carries the above prophetic words. By this time, our country should have known that Jesus is the truth. It is now nearly two thousand years since Christianity came to India. Unfortunately, instead of transforming others, Christianity itself was converted into a religion. If we had opted to be obedient to Christ and willing to pay the price, then the history would have been very different. Let us pray together that the Lord will blow His breath on the dry bones of our churches, so that she will boldly prophesy that *Truth (Jesus) Will Conquer*. We need to implement the Nazarine manifesto (Ezekiel 37:1-14; Luke 4:18,19). The Lord is raising a new army through the house Ekklesia movement all over the country. He is gathering new wine into new wineskins. Hopefully, the rest of India, like the North-Eastern states, will soon follow suit and boldly proclaim, "...*blessed is the land whose Lord is God.*" For this to happen, His army must march on bended knees, then only we will be able to defeat Satan and his forces and then the Truth (Jesus) will triumph. (Psalm 33:12; Rom. 8:37)

THE EKKLESIA IS A SECRET FELLOWSHIP

THE EKKLESIA IS 24 HOURS X 7 DAYS "ONE-ANOTHER" RELATIONSHIP: We are the Body of Christ, joined to each other by sinews and ligaments to grow and multiply (Col. 2:19). We do not go to church, as we are the Ekklesia, wherever we happen to meet, in a house or anywhere else. The house Ekklesia is not a series of meetings in someone's house on a

particular day, at a certain time, led by a particular leader. It is a household of God, consisting of twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week relationships. Praying, searching the scriptures, eating, encouraging, admonishing, exhorting, prophesying, speaking to each other in spiritual songs and comforting one another, are all lovingly carried out. Here we share our life and material blessings with each other. There is no pulpit here for sermonizing or expounding systematic theology or profound doctrines by some celebrity preacher. Jesus never did that. This is the place where we can really practice the **“One Another”** (references given below) stuff and build each other. This is where the rubber meets the road. The bedrock of this Ekklesia is love as our Lord taught and practiced. We are very much in the world but not of the world. The world sees us and knows that we are different. We are here to change the world, starting with ourselves and our neighborhood. (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 14:26-32; John 13:34,35, 17:15,16; 1 Thes. 3:12, 4:18, 5:11,13,15; Rom. 12:10; 14:13,19, 15:7,14; Gal. 5:13, 6:2; Eph. 4:32; 5:21; Phil 4:2; Col. 3:13,16; James 5:16, Heb. 3:13, 10:24; 1 Pet. 4:9, 5:5, 1 John 1:7, 3:15, 23, 4:20,21)

THE EKKLESIA IS A FISHY BUSINESS: Take out the icing and you will find that the modern church is a retail commercial outlet, where dream merchants openly attract customers by offering freebies, organizing Sunday Bazaars and invite chartbusters to rock and roll. Whereas, the highly fruitful NT Ekklesia met secretly in small groups. They used the secret sign (IXOYE) or “Ixthus”, which in Greek means fish. This acronym carried the basics of their faith: I-Jesus. Yeshua in Hebrew and Iesus in Greek means - Lord saves (Matt. 1:20-21); X- Christ, means the anointed one (Matt. 16:13-20); O-Theo - God, Jesus is God (John 1:1-4); Y-Son, (John 1:32-34); E- Savior (Rom. 10:9,10). Only the believers knew that the occupants of the house are Christians.

THE HOUSE EKKLESIAS ARE BAD NEWS FOR RELIGIOUS BUSINESS: House Ekklesias are bad news for the government, as laws of a higher kingdom start operating. There was dynamic growth in the NT times, leading to great opposition from both Jews and Gentiles. They were rightly worried that their religions would vanish causing great financial loss to religious professionals (Acts 19:23-32). Naturally they persecuted Christians who spent much time crying out to the Lord. When modern churches hear about the great house Ekklesia movement in distant China, they are very happy; but when it starts in their own backyard, then it is threatening and hence the opposition.

CHINA OPTS FOR THE NT MODEL: In the year 1900, bare-chested fanatics calling themselves Boxers, slaughtered 188 foreign missionaries and 32,000 local Christians in Shanxi and other northern provinces of China. In 1947, Communists expelled foreign missionaries, religion became a crime, the church buildings were confiscated and pastors were put into prisons. By 1958, Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, told foreign visitors, “Christianity in China has been confined to the history section of the museum. It is dead and buried.” In 1970, the visitors could not find any Christians. The Ekklesia went underground and prayed. After 55 years, the Ekklesia is not only surviving but thriving. The seed of the blood of the martyrs has blossomed into thousands of secret house Ekklesias. The number of believers shot up from 1 million in 1947 to a staggering 100 million believers. In spite of persecution, about 20,000 new believers come to Christ every day. Now they are planning to send out 100,000 missionaries along the ancient Silk Road, all the way to Jerusalem. The runaway success of the Chinese Ekklesia, the largest church in the world, is due to structureless model with no buildings, traditions or

professional clergy, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to function without obstacles. It may be safely said that in God's economy, if the traditional church in China had not been destroyed, the church itself would have killed the house church movement. Diminishing role of the institutional church is a prerequisite for rapid church growth.

DYSFUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES: Once the church lost its mandate to disciple the nations, it went in to a tailspin, lost its bearings and crash-landed on showbiz and gimmickry. It designed obscenely ornate buildings to attract customers. It acquired showmanship from the imperial Roman courts and rituals from Greek heathen temples. It put the spectators in the pews and the performers on the pulpit. It made lofty steeples to reach out to God, when God has already made His tabernacle among His people. It destroyed the daily walk with God and fellowship with the saints, into weekly entertainment and called it worship. It destroyed the caring and sharing organic body life and made it a corporate business organization. She hollered, "Hallelujahs" and "Praise the Lord" during the show time, but refused to play the game during the weekdays. The church does not need steeples to reach out to God but needs to transform itself into lightning conductors to bring the Holy Spirit, down into peoples' homes and hearts.

SECRET SMALL EKKLESIAS ARE THE ONLY OPTION: For obvious reasons, Christians in many Muslim countries prefer to remain invisible. This not only averts danger but helps them in starting new assemblies in other places. The elders earn their own living and lead the Assemblies. Thus, secret Assemblies are being established where the good news has not been preached before. (Rom. 15:19-21)

BE STRATEGIC: A church, which is mired in programs, offers no future to the lost. The Ekklesia must address the Generation X issues rather than sticking to the old people with outdated paradigms (1 Thess. 2:7). The ground realities have changed so must we. No discipling, no persecution problems. The only persecution the church faces is from within. (Gal. 1:10; 1 Sam. 15:22-28). In view of the forthcoming tribulation, the only safe alternative is to divide and multiply into small secret house Ekklesias now. This will include empowering guides from within the Ekklesia. The wise will make the necessary paradigm shift now, to be strategically placed when trouble ensues.

The Church is the only salvation broker for those over whom the Hell is looming large

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Discipling is an on going process. The church is not the end- product but a by-product of discipleship. The process must continue until all the nations are disciplined.

Discipling should free the sinner from the shackles of ignorance, prejudice and unfounded belief and lead him to the practice of truth regardless of consequences.

Ultimately, the battle for the souls of men will be won on the basis of the quality and quantity of disciples. Sadly, many churches do not have any battle plans

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The Ekklesia is the army of God, which cannot be made battle-worthy to fight against the demonic forces by singing victory songs and listening to pep talks once a week. The Ekklesia needs to come out of the barracks for daily field exercise. (2 Tim. 2:2, 4, 15, 19)

WHO IS A DISCIPLE?

The Lord Jesus said, *"You go and make disciples...I will build my Ekklesia"* (Matt. 16:18; 28:19). The word disciple must be an important word as it occurs 269 times in the Bible. What are some of the characteristics of a disciple?

1. **A DISCIPLE OBEYS THE MASTER:** *"If you abide in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31,32). Naturally, disciples must be obedient to their Master, otherwise they are not true disciples. When the Lord called Peter, John and the other fishermen, they immediately left their boats full of fish and followed Him (Luke 5:4-11). When He ordered them to go to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth as His witnesses, they obeyed even unto death. To qualify as true disciples, we must obey the Master's command to go and make disciples of the people of other faiths. This is true discipleship.
2. **A DISCIPLE IS ONE WHO MAKES DISCIPLES:** It does not matter how religious you are; how good your worship service is; or how wonderful your church programs are, if there is no fruit, because you are not really glorifying God and therefore not truly His disciples. Church membership does not ensure discipleship. Ordinary believers are not disciples. Only those who make disciples are disciples. *"My Father is glorified when you bear abundant fruit; then you will be My disciples"* (John 15:8).
3. **A DISCIPLE WHO MAKES DISCIPLES IS A CHRISTIAN:** It was the disciples in Antioch who were first called "Christians." True Christians are those people who make Jesus the Lord of their lives, love Him and are obedient to His commandments. They are willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of their Master and carry their cross daily. They are loaded with the fruit of saved souls. The above are the benchmark of a true Christian. Calling oneself "Christian" without fulfilling the above qualifications is deception because even Satan is a believer who trembles before God. (Acts 11:26; James 2:19)
4. **A DISCIPLE IS WILLING TO MAKE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE:** *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and yes, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."* Nobody can serve two masters, the world and the Lord. You cannot be a true disciple, if anything is more important to you than the Lord - your family, friends, profession, money, TV, newspapers, magazines and hobbies. (Luke 14:26,27; 16:13; Matt. 6:24)
5. **LOVING RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE ULTIMATE PROOF OF DISCIPLESHIP:** *"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* If there is strife and lack of mutual love, then it is not a church of true disciples. It is very important to be of one heart and mind. Lack of love among Christians is a great obstacle for people of other faiths. Loving and caring relationships are only possible where a small number of people congregate to worship as a family. (John 13:34, 35; 1 John 4:20, 21; Matt. 5:21-24)
6. **Bring an offering of Disciples and Enter His gates with thanksgiving:** On the Day of Judgment, many people will stand before the Lord and say, "Did we not cast out

demons and do many wonderful things in Your name?” But He will declare, “I do not know you!” It is only those who do the will of the Lord who will be saved. The will of the Lord is that none should perish and that is only possible when we make disciples of all nations. (Matt. 7:21-24; Psalm 96:7, 8; 2 Pet. 3:9)

QUESTIONS THAT DEMAND ANSWERS

1. *The Lord said “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray to the Lord of harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37,38). He then sent out seventy disciples, two by two, to find “the sons of peace,” and commanded them to baptize and to make disciples (Luke 10:1-9; Matt. 28:19). He empowered them with the Holy Spirit and sent them to the ends of the earth to establish the Kingdom of God. (Acts 1:8)*

Q. Is your church doing all this? If not, why not?

2. *The main task of an Ekklesia is to equip disciples so that the body of Christ grows (Eph. 4:12). An Ekklesia is an equipping centre where new disciples are constantly groomed and sent out to reap the harvest. Today, India needs one million “sons of peace”. They need to be disciplined so that every village and every colony of the region can have their own house Ekklesia. If all the existing Ekklesias were to take discipleship seriously, Jesus would be able to make His Ekklesia Universal, very soon. (Isa. 60:21,22; Matt. 16:18)*

Q. Is your Ekklesia an equipping center or merely a worship place?

3. *“Go into the entire world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)*

Q. Is the gospel being preached by your Ekklesia in your neighborhood (let alone the rest of the world)? If not, should you not be thinking of making some changes?

4. *“Go and make disciples of all nations; baptize them and make them obedient to all My teachings.” (Matt. 28:18-20)*

Q. Is your congregation being trained in fulfilling the task of the Great Commission, or is it a Great Omission?

5. *“And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matt. 24:14)*

Q. Will this Gospel of the kingdom reach all the different ethnic groups in your city? If you will not do it, then who will?

6. *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations...” (Luke 24:47)*

Q. The first task in the process of making disciples is to bring people to repentance. As a result of your ministry, are sinners running for sackcloth, falling on their knees, and repenting of their sins? If not, should you not be repenting?

7. *“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” (John 20:21)*

- Q. Is your Ekklesia sending disciples as Jesus did? If not, is it not time that you start imitating your Lord and Master?
8. *"... You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)
- Q. The one sure sign of receiving the Holy Spirit is not speaking in tongues, but boldly witnessing (Acts 4:31). Jesus started His ministry immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit. If you have truly received the Holy Spirit, should you not be witnessing to others?
9. *"...these who have turned the world upside down have come here too."* (Acts 17:6)
- Q. Are you being accused of turning the world upside down?
10. *"The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.'"* (Acts 2:34,35)
- Q. Jesus is patiently waiting for us to make His enemies His footstool. Will going to church religiously every Sunday make His enemies His footstool? If not, then would it not be better to quit whatever you are doing and start trampling over the strongholds of the Devil?
9. *"And so I have made it my aim to preach the Gospel where Christ was not named. I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ to whom He was not announced."* (Rom. 15:20-23)
- Q. Are you able to boast like Paul, that there is no place left in your area where the gospel has not been preached? If not, should you not be doing everything necessary to proudly announce like Paul "Mission accomplished?"
10. *"The Lord is long-suffering ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Pet. 3:9)
- Q. God does not want anyone to perish, but the way the church is functioning, it is quite possible that all, including the church members, will perish. Should not the Ekklesia be concerned about all the people in the city who are heading straight for the gates of hell? (Jonah 4:11)
11. *"He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Tim. 2:4)
- Q. Will all men come to know the truth (Jesus) and be saved through your busy program in the church? If not, should you not scuttle the whole program and completely overhaul it?
12. *"Nor is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12)
- Q. Will people know by your righteousness that only Jesus can save? If yes, then praise God. Otherwise, Hell is always ready with its mouth wide open for multitudes to enter. Do you know that you will be held accountable for them? (Isaiah 5:14; Ezek. 33:8)

IS THIS POSSIBLE IN YOUR CHURCH?

1. *"Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."* (James 5:16)

Even in a small Gathering, it is difficult to confess our sins and pray for each other, but in a large group, it is impossible.

2. *"Exhort one another daily."* (Heb. 3:13)

Is this command possible in a once-a-week Sunday congregation? Daily exhortation is only possible in a daily gathering.

3. *"Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching."* (2 Tim. 4:2)

Where is it possible to rebuke or to exhort? This is only possible in the intimate environment of a small group.

4. *"Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."* (Heb. 10:24,25)

If you give advice like this to someone in a big congregation, he is likely to be offended and to ask you to mind your own business!

5. *"Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, and has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."* (1 Cor. 14:26)

This injunction is consistently disobeyed in every church, because in a large congregation it is not possible to give everyone an opportunity to express themselves, which is essential for growth.

6. *"When you pray with fasting, like the Ekklesia at Antioch, does the Holy Spirit have the authority to tell your Ekklesia who should go as a missionary?"* (Acts 13:1-3)

Perhaps your church is so occupied with its own programs, that she has not time to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. Can your church really be a mature Ekklesia until it sends missionaries?

7. *"When you come together, let the word of Christ dwell in you in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, singing hymns and spiritual songs with grace."* (Col. 3:16)

If you try to admonish anybody, or, under the inspiration of the Spirit, start singing on your own in a big congregation, then you are likely to be led out by an usher very promptly.

8. *"Submit to one another in the fear of God."* (Eph. 5:21)

In a large congregation, how many people can you submit yourself to? Some are not even born again; perhaps you would refuse to submit yourself to many of them. In a true Ekklesia of God, every one will submit to one another.

9. *The Lord gave a new commandment; love one another so much that the people of other faiths will begin to believe in the Lord.* (John 13:34,35)

Such a demonstration of love is not possible in a large congregation. This can only be manifested in a small, family-like atmosphere.

10. *“And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet.”* (Rom. 16:10)

Is Satan’s head being trampled by your church? In order to trample Satan’s head, it is necessary to find out where his head is, then prayer walk, tread over it, claim the land and plant an Ekklesia for permanent occupation.

11. *“He will deliver the kingdom to the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and authority and power.”* (1 Cor. 15:24)

Is your church preparing earnestly for the imminent Second Coming of the Lord? If not, then better start cleaning up the gutters and sprucing up the city with flags, flowers, arches and a huge crowd to welcome Him.

12. *“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”* (Rom.16:16;1 Pet.5:14)

Do the members of your church greet each other with a holy kiss? If not, then why not? Is it because such a demonstration of intimacy will be misconstrued? Then keep the membership limited to where this is practicable. Others can start new Ekklesias in new localities.

THE GRAVES OF CRAVING: A cursory study of the Scriptures will reveal many more such instructions for “one another”, which cannot be practiced within the present framework. Size and structure is crucial to obedience. It is better to trim the size and get rid of excess fat until the Body is able to practice the commandments of God (John 14:21-23). All it takes is two or three believers gathering in His name to call it an Ekklesia, which can practice all the instructions given above. They can ask God for anything, provided they are in agreement that it will glorify God. In fact, God will honor it even when He is not in agreement, as He did with the Israelites when they asked for meat to eat in the wilderness. He provided quails but then He sent a “leanness of spirit”, which killed them in the wilderness (Psalm 106:14,15; Num. 11:31-33). The place where this happened was called “*Kibroth Hattaavah*,” which means “Graves of Craving.” You might crave for a job in the Gulf, and He might even give it to you, but you might be digging your grave because it may not be in His scheme of things.

ACCORDING TO PATTERN ONLY: According to the second law of thermodynamics, everything undergoes entropy. The wood will rot, the iron will become rust, the living creatures will become mud and the universe itself is dying a slow death. The modern church is no exception. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of the first high priest, Aaron, tried to change God’s pattern and died. To live forever, the Ekklesia must function, not according to man-made rules, but “*according to the pattern*” given by God. (Lev. 10:1-2; Exo. 25:9; Heb. 8:5)

Christians invariably go back in history only to the church fathers looking for traditions and rarely go to the golden age of the Apostles. But God says:

“Stand in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it Then you will find rest for your souls.” But they say, “We will not walk in it” (Jer. 6:16)

“Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy He who goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing shall doubtless come with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with Him”(Psalm 126: 5,6)

“Then the King will say ... ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34)

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32)

Many missionaries lose their apostolic calling when they plant an Ekklesia and settle down as a local pastor.

Jesus took over three years to turn ordinary men into disciples. Then the Holy Spirit took over and turned them into apostles - the sent ones.

No decent school allows anyone to stay in the same class forever.

Anybody staying on as a member of the same church for years is a milk drinking Christian because by then he should be a teacher.

Either he is a dull disciple or has a lousy mentor. (Heb 5:12-14; Matt. 10:24, 25)

THE ANTIOCH Ekklesia - AN IDEAL MODEL

Antioch was a beautiful large city known as the Queen of the east. The main god was called Charon who carried the dead spirits to the under world. They also worshipped Apollo and immorality flourished. Within eight years, the saturation church-planting program of the Jewish Jerusalem was accomplished. In fact, the city had already entered post-Christian period as thousands of Christians had fled the city due to persecution. Many were planting Ekklesias in other places. The Judean model was a clone of Jerusalem model, but apostles, the superstars were not there, even though they did visit from time to time.

The second phase of the expansion of the kingdom began with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of Cornelius the Gentile, which was a cataclysmic event for the Jews. It was, in fact, the fulfillment of promise for all nations and a Gentile Pentecost. Antioch, about 300 miles from Jerusalem, was the first fully Gentile Ekklesia (Acts 11:19,20). The apostles immediately sent Barnabas, a senior leader, who was an encourager. He realized that the Gentile Ekklesia needed a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures, so he personally went to Tarsus and persuaded Paul to come. Both Barnabas and Paul had grown up in the Gentile world and spoke Hebrew at home and Greek in the market place. Both knew the Greek culture. A superstar apostle, from Jerusalem would be no good here, because of the language and cultural barriers. Together, they exhorted them for a whole year; as a result, this Ekklesia had prophets and gifted teachers. The administration of this Ekklesia was so flat that it did not even have elders. These disciples were the first to be called Christians (Acts 13:1-3; 11:25,26). One day, during a period of fasting and prayer, they heard the voice of the Holy Spirit and accordingly, laying their hands on their senior leaders, Paul and Barnabas were sent out as self-supporting missionaries.

The Judean champions of circumcision and the Sabbath laws, came to enforce the Jewish ceremonial customs, as a prerequisite to becoming Christians. Even the apostles Peter and Barnabas succumbed but Paul boldly rebuked them. The Jerusalem council then gave the Magna Charta of liberty to the Gentiles from the oppressive Jewish traditions (Acts 15:5; Gal. 2:11-14). After this episode, the word of God spread throughout the whole region. (Acts 13:48,49)

The Ekklesia of Antioch is a “model Ekklesia” because:

1. It was planted by ordinary believers. (Acts 11:19-21)
2. Paul and Barnabas equipped a gifted multinational congregation.
3. The Ekklesia was not dominated by a leader but had a horizontal, multiple gifted guides like teachers, prophets and brethren.
4. They were sensitive and responsive towards the revelations of the Holy Spirit. They fasted and prayed, laid their hands on their most senior leaders and sent them out as missionaries.
5. Even in its early days, the Ekklesia sent out monetary help to those stricken by a severe famine in Jerusalem. (Acts 11:20-30)
6. It superseded Jerusalem as the center of operations and became a launching pad for reaching out into the Gentile world.
7. Paul and Barnabas were accountable to this Ekklesia and periodically came back to give progress report (Acts 14:26,27)

The Antioch model contains many important lessons for us. The first is that missionaries can be sent by a very young Ekklesia. Secondly, the senior leaders should leave the Ekklesia in the hands of the local people. The Ekklesia significantly did not give any financial support to Paul and Barnabas. They had to pay their own way. This sends a very important signal to the modern day missionaries (Phil 4:14-19). If they had stayed back, they would have lost their apostleship, become local pastors and controlled the church. Many modern day missionaries make these mistakes. Thirdly, we should never be so busy with our programs that we completely miss the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit. This Ekklesia changed the evangelical topography of the world.

The church is a hospital for the spiritually sick and not for the healthy righteous. It was started by one who had suffered from severe stripes. It is staffed by specialists like the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers who are known for their skills and zeal for saving those who have taken suicidal doses of Gin and sin and suffering from terminal illness. They have emergency trauma services for those hurt by fiery darts, poisonous snakes and stinging scorpions. They transplant new hearts in those who have calcified hearts. They detoxify kids suffering from overdoses of MTV and visiting forbidden sites in the Internet. They provide intensive resuscitation facility for moribund and comatose Christians. They know all the sinister viruses and have powerful supernatural anti-virus vaccines. They also know that love is the glue that heals. Interestingly, all those who are healed here, go and start their own clinics.

Christians are do not know that the destiny of nations depends on them and fritter away golden opportunities of saving souls on frivolous activities. Jesus died to bridge the saved/unsaved gap. He is looking for people who dare to step outside the traditional box and stand in the gap. (Eze. 18:4, 23; 22:30; Isa.42: 5-7)

God told Jonah that He is concerned about all the inhabitants of the city, including the animals and the environment because He does not want anyone to perish.

You are out of sync with God's vision if your vision is limited only to the welfare of your family or your church.

They are only platforms for launching out into the world.

The Great Commission should be the signature tune of every church.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

When Jesus started His earthly ministry, the first thing He told His disciples was that He would make them fishers of men. Jesus then spent three and a half years training them to do just that. The last thing Jesus did was to give the Great Commission whereby He commanded them to go to the ends of the earth and make disciples of all nations. It has many important components:

Go: The Pharisees tried to frighten Jesus and told Him that Herod wanted to kill Him and that therefore He should go into hiding. Jesus told those Pharisees, *“Go and tell that fox that I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected (martyred). Nevertheless, **I must journey** today, tomorrow and the following day.”* (Luke 13:31-33). The Ekklesia is the army of God, and The Great Commission is her marching orders.

Ethnic: *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples of **all the nations (ta ethne)**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”* (Matt. 28:18,19)

Geographical: *“You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the **end of the world**.”* (Acts 1:8)

Statistical: *“Go into **all the world** and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* (Mark 16:15,16)

Global: *“I looked, and behold a great multitude, which no one could number, of **all nations**, tribes, people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”* (Rev. 7:9)

In other words, *“The Ekklesia must preach the whole gospel to all nations, baptize all nations, equip all nations and send them on.”*

This Commission does not suffer from gender bias and is for all believers. It empowers us to disciple, baptize, equip and send. When completed, every human habitation will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). Additionally, every person will confess that Jesus is Lord and every knee shall bow down and worship Him (Phil 2:9-11). This is the true mission of the Ekklesia and the rest is all wood, hay and straw. (1 Cor. 3:12-14)

FROM THE GOSPEL OF NONE EFFECT TO CLUSTER EFFECT: There are millions of villages and towns in the world. India alone has over a million villages and townships. Every person must be confronted with the gospel until he accepts or rejects it. We cannot say that the whole world has been evangelized until every village and human habitation has its own Ekklesia. It would be impossible for this Ekklesia to be a structured church, complete with buildings and professional staff. It also could not happen through traditional methods of preaching and evangelism. Even though Saint Paul claimed that he had fully preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum and there was no place left un-reached, actually, he had planted only a few regional Assemblies. However, through a “cluster effect,” eventually the whole region was saturated with Assemblies. For instance, through his

work in Ephesus where for two years he performed signs and wonders and disputed and persuaded the people, all who dwelt in Asia heard the gospel. This is the appropriate model for us today. (1 Cor. 1:17; Acts 19:10)

JESUS, THE GREAT GO COMMISSIONER: The Great Commission is a “Go” commission. Jesus came to find the lost and to save them (Luke 19:10). Jesus was on the go everyday (Luke 13:33). He preached in the temple (Luke 4:15). He taught in the houses (Luke 10:8-42). He refused to stay in one place and said to them *“I must preach the Kingdom of God in the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”* (Luke 4:43; Mark 1:38). Jesus went through every city and village preaching the good news of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:1). Jesus was constantly aware that there were many other sheep, which were not in the sheepfold. It was necessary to go and look for them and to bring them into the fold. (John 10:16)

NOT ONLY COMPASSION: DO SOMETHING: When Jesus saw the multitude, He was filled with compassion (Matt. 9:36-38). He did not go away and forget about them, but He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1,2). After these things, the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them out two by two (Luke 10:1). Nowadays, we ordain our young pastors on the basis of their theological qualifications and send them to man the problematic old Congregations. Jesus sent His disciples out with power to cure diseases and to expel demons, and then to expand the kingdom in new regions. His concern was not just local but global. In fact, His interest was not just human beings but the entire creation. Jesus commanded His disciples, “Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature and reconcile the whole of creation.” (Mark 16:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-20)

ANGELS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT JOIN THE FRAY: The gospel rapidly spread from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. From the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit and the angels of heaven joined in the fray. An angel of the Lord released the apostles in the temple jail and told them to go and stand in the temple courts and speak to the people (Acts 5:20). An angel of God told Philip, “Arise and go...” So he went, preached to the Ethiopian high official and baptized him (Acts 8:26,27, 35, 38). The Spirit asked Peter to arise and go and preach the good news to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:19,20). Paul was told in a night vision “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent.” (Acts 18:9,10)

GREAT COMMISSIONERS ARE GREAT GATHERERS: Great Commissioners are not just evangelists who preach to large crowds and then forget about them. They are also not local leaders who take care of barren sheep. Instead, they strive to shepherd the new believers into a flock, and strengthen them in their faith by planting house Assemblies led by local leaders (Acts 14:23). Then they move on to new pastures to find and gather new sheep. (John 10:16)

EKKLESIA PLANTING REQUIRES ENABLERS: For Ekklesia planters to function effectively, many other resourceful people are required:

1. Senders: Acts 13:1-3; Rom. 10:14, 15
2. Equippers: Eph. 4:11, 12
3. Intercessors: Eph. 6:18; 1 Tim. 2:8
4. Encouragers: Rom. 16:3-16; Acts 4:36
5. Financiers: Luke 8:1-3; 2 Cor. 9:6-15; Acts 11:29, 30
6. Shelter givers: Acts 16:14, 15; 3 John 1:6-8
7. Helpers: Rom. 16:2; John 14:16; Heb. 13:6

YOU TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN FAITH AND JESUS WILL DO THE REST: When God wants you to do something for Him, He also arranges the resources for it. However, the precondition is *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:32, 33). You must take the first step in faith and see what God does for you. If He can take care of the sparrows, then He can certainly take care of His saints. The reward for taking that crucial first step is 100% return on investment. *“And everyone who left houses or brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or land for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundred fold, as well as the right to everlasting life.”* (Matt. 19:29)

COME CHURCH OR GO EKKLESIA: Here is one way of finding out whether your church is a “go” Ekklesia or a “come” church. Sleep through the boring sermon but carefully listen to the announcements. If they say, “Monday, brothers’ meeting, come; Tuesday, sisters’ meeting, come; Wednesday, youth meeting, come; Thursday, church committee meeting, come; Friday, cottage meeting, come; Saturday, choir practice, come; Sunday, of course you must come, but bring your offerings. Needless to say, this is a man-made “come church” and has nothing to do with the “go church” of Jesus. He went every day and sent His disciples two by two to make disciples (Luke 10:1). Now that you know that this is a come church, it is time to call it quits. You need to go, make your own disciples and gather your own flock.

THE EKKLESIA AND EVALUATION

THE VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS OF JESUS AND HIS EVALUATION: Of all the things that the Devil stole from the people of God, vision is the most important thing. Without vision, people perish (Prov. 29:18). Without a clear vision/purpose statement, the church has no road map. Jesus declared His vision statement at the very outset. He was baptized, fasted for forty days, faced the Satan, came to Nazareth and only after declaring His manifesto, started His ministry. He said, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to deliver the captives, to restore sight to the blind and to set at liberty those who are oppressed”* (Luke 4:18,19). Was any evaluation done? While in jail, John sent two of his disciples to evaluate Jesus. Jesus replied *“Go and show John that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them”* (Matt. 11:1-6). The Christian goal is to transform communities by being the light and the salt. The church needs to change from a program driven institution to a purpose driven enterprise. Regular evaluation leads to revisioning and course correction.

NO LITIGATION: NT Ekklesias were evaluated from time to time. Any Ekklesia going astray was visited by Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus or a believer. By reasoning, and if necessary admonishing, they would bring the Ekklesia back on track. Sometimes, Paul sent “Epistles” to them. When the Ekklesia at Corinth went into litigation to settle their disputes, Paul sternly warned them, *“Do you not know that we shall judge angels?”* Paul allows us to be defrauded rather than going to the courts to settle even non-spiritual matters (1 Cor. 6:1-11). Jesus set up a very cheap and effective court of appeal of fivefold ministry gifted elders, where *“every word should be established at the mouth of two or three witnesses”* (1 Tim. 5:19,20; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 13:17)

CONFUSION GALORE IN GALATIA AND THESSALONICA: In Galatia, when the Jewish Christians wanted to introduce Jewish customs, Paul got annoyed and called them “foolish” (Gal. 3:1). The Thessalonians thought that Christ was coming back in their lifetime and so they left their jobs to wait for His second coming. Paul immediately sent them a message clarifying that many things still had to be fulfilled before His coming (2 Thess. 2:1-11). Peter also wrote epistles to Assemblies and warned them against false teachers and prophets. (2 Pet. 2:1-4)

THE EKKLESIA OF CORINTH GOOFS: The Ekklesia of Corinth had many problems. The Lord’s Supper had become an occasion for drinking and feasting. There were dissensions, disputes and other serious moral lapses (1 Cor. 11); for example, when a man had an immoral relationship with his stepmother. Paul commanded that such a man should be removed from the congregation and his body be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. (1 Cor. 5:1-5)

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN FOR DAY TO DAY CHRISTIAN LIVING: Questions about many subjects like offerings and the role of money (1 Cor. 9:1-14), eating of food offered to idols (1 Cor. 10:19-21, 28-32), going abroad to earn money (James 4:13-17), whether to marry or not and whom to marry, divorce (1 Cor. 7:1-40), care of the poor (James 1:27) etc., needed to be answered for the newly emerging Ekklesias.

BUSINESS HOUSES CHECK PORTFOLIOS DAILY: Businessmen set clear goals of maximizing profits and check their portfolios daily to make necessary course correction. Regular review keeps them on course, taking them from rags to riches. An army commander

makes strategy by the hour to deal with the tactics of the enemy. God in His economy has given *“faith once delivered to all the saints”* (Jude 1:3,4). It is the same package deal for every single Christian, whether it is Paul or Billy Graham or us. It is for each one of us to maximize these talents. This depends entirely on our vision. Sadly, *“bogus men have crept in”* and disabled the church, which is not even able to tickle the gates of hell. As world conquerors, maximizing “daily strategy” mentality is a must, to pulverize the enemy and possess the God given territories.

SPIRITUALITY IS MEASURABLE: The church is the only enterprise without any stated goals, where success is measured by “nickels and noses.” Many think that spiritual goals cannot be set and monitored. Yet we see evaluation taking place in the early Ekklesia from day of the Pentecost, when Peter sent some young people to count the number of baptisms. The church must have score boards, which are essential for champions of faith, because it indicates running to finish the race and playing to win (1 Cor. 9:24-26). Even spirituality is measurable using Biblical standards. The goal of the Ekklesia is to disciple all ethnic groups which is measurable (Psalm 2:8). A tree is known by its fruit, the yardstick of spirituality is spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22). The Lord asked us, *“to be one in faith and the knowledge of the Son and become perfect to the measure of the stature of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13). Unity and maturity can be easily assessed. The goal of the church is to reach the ends of the earth, which is measurable. (Rom. 14:11,12; Acts 1:8). The most reliable touchstone of a mature Ekklesia is, *“she grows in faith and in numbers daily”* (Acts 16:5). A mature church must set up “Measurable Efficiency Parameters” for completing the task of the Great Commission.

THE BACK DOOR: Industries dispose off all the non-moving stock, similarly, the church needs to be decongested by showing the exit to all the space occupying legions in the pews. Nominalism is the malignant cancer of the modern church. The Bride should be free from spots and wrinkles but she has accumulated lumps and bumps. She needs liposuction surgery to get rid of the excess flab and become slim, active and vibrant with her youth renewed like an eagle. (Ps. 103:5)

HABAKKUK INSTRUCTED TO WRITE DOWN THE VISION STATEMENT: The oft repeated Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds are doctrinal statements of their beliefs but they have no stated goals. A goalless institution represents an obsolete, obscurantist exclusivism that is antithesis of the exoteric role of the church in the world. God instructed the prophet Habakkuk to write down the vision on tablets, so that everyone could read it (Hab. 1:5; 2:1-3). We need to do the same, so that everyone will know our role in accomplishing the goals given to the Ekklesia.

CHURCH GROWTH OCCURS IN THREE WAYS:

1. **BIOLOGICAL GROWTH:** The membership of a church can be increased biologically by producing offsprings, but unfortunately, no one becomes a Christian by birth (Mk 16:16; Jn 8:37-44). Everyone must repent, accept the lordship of Jesus, be baptized

and become fruitful. Most qualified professional pastors are fruitlessly dishing out profound but incomprehensible charisma to Christians, who are already suffering from obesity due to overdose of traditional fodder and lack of any spiritual exercise.

2. **GROWTH BY TRANSFER:** Christians coming to the city looking for jobs either join a suitable church or form their own groups and appoint pastors. Sometimes a mega-church may draw people because of its attractive program. This results in closure of the surrounding churches. This is not growth, because they are already Christians. Here, the majority of the members are financially well off, but are poor in the fruits of the Spirit. We all need to go and reap, lest the harvest perish.
3. **GROWTH BY CONVERSION:** This is true growth. This is an apostolic Ekklesia, which proactively goes and finds lost sheep and gathers them in small local groups. It then nurtures them to maturity where they bring forth abundant fruit. There is more labor as well as persecution. While the salary and comforts are less, there is plenty of fruit that remains. The final stage of maturity of the Ekklesia is when she begins to multiply. The greatest challenge before the church is to convert nominal Christians into quality Christians.

JESUS IS PERFORMANCE ORIENTED: In the parable of talents, Jesus praised two of them who worked hard and doubled their talents. They were given authority over cities but the nonproductive fellow was rebuked and consigned to everlasting punishment for not making any profit. Clearly, Jesus expects us to multiply the talents. He expects us to produce thirty, sixty and even one hundredfold return on the investment He has made in us. (Luke 19:12-27; Mark 4:8)

THE CHURCH HAS MANY SHOWMEN AND LAYMEN: Leaders are not those who lead the singing or the service on Sundays, or even those who conduct crusades and conventions. Such leaders are merely stage performers. Many of them do an excellent job, but fail to bring about any permanent change in society. Real leaders are those who transform societies. For this, they need to have a clear vision and specific goals. Martin Luther King publicly announced his vision and said “I have a dream, to bring about equality between the blacks and the whites.” Gandhi clearly stated that the independence of India was his goal. John Knox prayed to God, “Give me Scotland or I die.” These leaders changed entire nations. Jesus’ vision is to establish God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth...*” At the very least, we must restore the earth, as it was in the Garden of Eden. The blood of Jesus has made us priests and kings and He has sent us to change the world (Rev. 5:10; Josh. 1:8). He has given us “talents” and expects us to double them so that He can make us rulers of cities according to our performance. Jesus prefers success stories and not platitudes. The natural trajectory of leaders is to climb the ladder, but Jesus went down and pushed others to the top.

JESUS IS COMING SOON FOR OUR PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: There is a stern warning in the Scriptures about each person’s performance being tested by fire. This includes everyone. Paul lived in terror of appearing before the judgment seat of Christ where each may receive recompense for the things done while in the human body, good or bad (2 Cor. 5:9-11). Christianity is not about solo playing but building a winning team. Every Christian’s soul winning track record is being meticulously recorded on a scoreboard in heaven. The referee is coming soon and will blow the whistle on those who are playing foul and give the crown to those who are playing to win. (Rev. 20:12; 22:12)

MAKE SURE THE SCOREBOARD IS FIREPROOF? *“Each one’s work will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test each one’s work of what sort it is. If anyone’s work, which he has built, endures it, he will receive wages...”* (1 Cor. 3:13-15)

A MODEL EKKLESIA IN ACTION

We were about fifteen believers and a few seekers from other faiths, seated comfortably on mats in the pastor’s living room. The pastor wanted to start by singing songs of praise. However, he was gently reminded that in the New Testament Ekklesia, there was open worship with no preset order of service. We decided to function according to 1 Cor. 14:26-31, which says that everyone can participate. So instead of singing we started by studying these scriptures passages.

We then asked if there were any prophets in the group, because it is the prophets who do most of the speaking and not the pastor. Initially there was an embarrassing silence. But then we realized that in the house Ekklesia, every believer could freely prophesy (vs. 31). We also learned that prophecy has essentially three components. Firstly, edification is about the growth of the Ekklesia; secondly, we can exhort or challenge each other; and thirdly, we can comfort each other. If we do these, then we are actually prophesying (vs. 3). All this time we thought we were only lay people and we were to sit quietly and listen to the pastor, but suddenly we all felt encouraged and prophetic. We further discovered that the spiritual gifts start operating from day one of being born again and are to be used on a daily basis. (1 Cor. 12:6-7)

We also found out that God does nothing unless He first reveals it to His prophets (Amos 3:7). There was a very audible silence as the impact of this revelation hit us. We understood that God had been speaking to us for a long time both individually and corporately about what He wanted to do in our city, but we had been deaf.

From the beginning, God spoke directly, or through dreams and visions to His prophets. He spoke to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and a long line of major and minor prophets, and told them what He wanted to do. Even in New Testament times, the Lord speaks through dreams, visions and through the Holy Spirit to all His saints and to Gentiles like Cornelius. God even spoke to nonbelievers like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and many others.

During the discussion, we realized that God communicates with His people even today in dreams, visions, revelations and prophecy etc. This is in fulfillment of the promise: *“It shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My spirit on all flesh, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”* (Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:17,18)

So we asked people to share their dreams, visions or whatever God had been revealing to them in the recent past. In the beginning, there was some hesitation. Then the pastor read from one of the Psalms, which he had been meditating for the past week. Its theme was God’s love for all nations (Psalms 2:8). Then a brother said that he had seen in a dream a huge serpent covering his city with its hood. Another person told us that he had seen a

big, bright light in his dream with many small lights like stars shining around it. One sister said that she saw many empty vessels waiting to be filled.

Together we tried to discover the meaning of all these revelations, and understood that God is expressing His concern for the unsaved Gentiles. Satan has a dark hold over them now, but Jesus is the bright light and the house churches are the little light houses. Together we are capable of overpowering the darkness. The empty vessels are the Gentiles, waiting to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and whoever brings them to the Lord will shine like the stars. (Daniel 12:3)

The pastor stood up to give his sermon, but before he could start speaking, his little daughter came crawling on her knees and started talking to him in “tongues.” We reminded the pastor that God was saying through his daughter (Psalm 8:2) that there would be no sermon that day (1 Cor. 14:30). Everybody laughed and the sermon came to an end before it even got started. A brother of another faith remarked that he was utterly amazed that God speaks to us. He wanted to know more about this God. We thanked the Most High God (1 Cor. 14:24,25). Then we sang songs of praise and prayed for each other (Eph. 5:19-21). Later we took up a collection for a widowed sister to help with her children’s school fees.

We then broke the bread, thanking God that, as the Lord’s body, we can break into small groups to go and witness to lost people. Then an elder passed grape juice around in a cup, and reminded us that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for people of all nations, even for those who are outside the fold. People opened their lunch boxes and shared the contents with each other as a simple fellowship meal. They then happily greeted each other with a holy kiss.

People were amazed at how quickly the time had passed. We were equally amazed at the number of prophets among us.

Many difficulties and problems came to this small house Ekklesia. The next day, the house owner asked them to vacate the house as he did not want an Ekklesia in his house. So they all prayed with one accord, and the very soon they found a better house. Some members joined another church because they preferred the traditional way. But within a month, many more members joined the Ekklesia and even the ones who had gone away gradually came back. (1 Thess. 1:5-8)

THERE IS NO STANDARD MODEL OF HOUSE EKKLESIA: Joshua never fought two battles the same way. Jesus did the same miracle differently, every time. Similarly there are different models of the churches:

1. The University model: This is the commonest and the least effective with the a professor giving lectures to a captive audience.
2. Bollywood/Hollywood model with lots of filmy style singing, dance items and dramatic orations.
3. The Bazaar model of mega-congregation, like a market place.
4. The Committee model with everything having to go up to the boss.

5. The Open church model like the one described above which is the fastest growing model.

CHRISTIANS BEWARE

This world is full of Christians who know a lot about Jesus Christ, but do nothing to fulfill His commandments. True Christians are a minority. There are many misunderstandings about what makes a person a Christian, which need to be clarified:

1. **HEREDITARY CHRISTIANS:** Being born into a Christian family does not mean you are born again. Therefore, it does not ensure your salvation. You have a big advantage in that you have known the Holy Scriptures from your childhood (2 Tim. 3:15), but for salvation you will have to go through the process of surrendering yourself completely to Christ. (John 1:12,13; 3:3-5; Luke 9:23)
2. **BAPTISM:** Going through the ritual of baptism in your church, it does not mean that you are saved. Only a believer should be baptized. The sign of a true believer is that he can cast out demons and cure diseases etc. (Mark 16:18-20; Acts 8:13-24)
3. **SUNDAY:** Just because you go to church faithfully every Sunday does not ensure salvation. Church attendance can be a mere formality where most of the people only give lip service, but their hearts are far removed from God. Anyway, it is a man-made commandment. God is looking for people who will worship Him in truth and in spirit all the time. (Isa. 29:13; John 4:23,24)
4. **GOOD WORKS:** Just because you are involved in humanitarian mercy ministries does not ensure your salvation or that of those whom you serve. You are saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Your good deeds and righteousness are like filthy rags. (Eph 2:8,9; Is. 64:6; Titus 3:5)
5. **FAITH:** Faith alone will not save you. Your faith must be matched by your works. Faith without works is dead. Even the demons believe and tremble. You have been created by God for good works. Not any good work, but abounding in the work of the Lord. Jesus is coming soon and He will reward you according to your works. (James 2:17; 2:19-24; Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 22:12)
6. **TITHING:** You will not go to heaven just because you tithe regularly. If you are thinking of buying a one-way ticket to heaven by giving money, then be forewarned. A broken and a contrite heart is the sacrifice, which God will not despise. (Psalm 51:17; Acts 8:20)
7. **TRADITIONS:** Rituals, ceremonies and the celebration of the sacraments will not take you to heaven. Even yelling "Hallelujah" etc. will not help because the Lord looks at and weighs the thoughts of your heart. God has decided to turn our voices of mirth and gladness into lamentation because we have set up idols in our hearts. (1 Sam. 16:7; Jer. 17:9,10; 5:14; Ezek. 14:1-8)
8. **WORSHIP:** Listening to Christian hit songs on expensive sound system is not worship. God hates our ritualistic songs and the sacrifices of our lips because we do nothing to bring justice and righteousness in to the world. We fail to take care of our neighbor, the fatherless and widows. (Amos 5:21-24; Jer. 7:4-11)

9. **FASTING:** Even fasting for selfish reasons will not help, unless you are also breaking the chains of oppression, bringing healing in your wings and thereby glorifying God. (Isaiah 58:4-12)
10. **PRAYERS:** Many take their prayer requests to others, especially celebrities, as they want others to do their praying. These will not be heard, if they are selfish prayers. God has commanded us to pray for the nations, rulers, cities and for laborers for the harvest. He made an everlasting covenant with Abraham that he and his descendents would be a blessing to all the nations. God hates covenant breakers and calls it treason. (Psalm 2:8; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Jer. 29:7; Luke 5:14; Ezek. 17:16-20)

The Lord said, *"If anybody desires to follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."* (Luke 9:23)

VALLEY OF DECISION

Find out what kind of Christian you are based on the parable of the sower, and then decide what kind you want to be.

1. **FESTIVAL CHRISTIANS:** These are like the seed dropped by the sower on the roadside. They can be seen in abundance at Christmas and Easter times. They are like the frogs that appear in abundance in the rainy season; make a lot of croaking noise by singing Christmas carols, which are of no help as they are about distant reindeers and snow, while our people are riding on ox carts under the hot sun. The other Christmas carols are lullabies, trying to put Jesus to sleep. Our culture is normally lubricated with alcohol but during festivities, it is drenched. Christmas is now synonymous with excessive drinking, debauchery, slaughter on the highways, consumerism, gluttony and other criminal activities. In fact, a non-drinking Christian feels positively disenfranchised and out of place during the festivals. Unfortunately, like the seeds on the roadside, which were eaten by the birds, they will also be devoured one day by the Devil and his angels. (Matt. 13:18,19). It is time we transformed all the festive seasons for missional purposes, through intercession, just as the Pentecost was used by the Holy Spirit to start the Ekklesia age.
2. **SUNDAY CHRISTIANS:** These are like the seed scattered on stony ground. They come to church in their Sunday best to "feel good." Many of them sing with gusto and even take part in church activities. It is amazing how many meetings and seminars and conferences the "Regular Christians" attend and take down copious notes and even stand up to be prayed for and blessed in every revival meeting without ever stepping out to bless the people of other faith communities. They regularly pray, *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth,"* but then the rest of the week, they do nothing about bringing the kingdom. They live in their comfort zones, and when persecution comes, they compromise. (Matt. 13:20,21). Sunday should certainly not be wasted in traveling to a long distance church but spent in reaching the neighbors, who are our primary responsibility. In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus rejected the temple going priest and the Levite (Luke 10:31-37). Attending worship service is optional but making disciples is mandatory.

3. **CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS:** These are like the seed sown among bushes. They pray for the sick and they are healed. They bind the strongman and cast him out, but they do not gather the harvest so they have no fruit that remains. The Lord has clearly said, "He who gathers is with Me, but he who scatters is against Me." (Matt. 13:22; 12:28-30). There are many who will on that day claim saying, *"Did we not cast out demons in your name; but He will simply say sorry, but I do not know you, depart from Me."* We can disregard the injunction about gathering the harvest at great peril to us. (Matt. 7:20-23)
4. **GREAT COMMISSION CHRISTIANS:** These are the seed sown in good soil. They multiply their spiritual gifts and resources, and produce a harvest of souls, some thirty fold, sixty fold, and even a hundred fold harvest. Then they prepare these new disciples and send them out to reap an even bigger harvest. (Matt. 13:23)

IF YOU ARE NOT A GREAT COMMISSION CHRISTIAN, THEN YOU HAVE AT LEAST THREE CHOICES:

1. **LET THINGS CONTINUE AS THEY ARE:** "What will be, will be". This will not last long because of the mass exodus of young people from the church. Many traditional companies thought that the Japanese companies could not touch them but they are now wiped out. Even if things look OK now, your church is of no use to the Lord, if new souls are not being added as a priority. The megashift from the traditional church to the house Ekklesias is already on.
2. **DANCE TO TWO TUNES SIMULTANEOUSLY:** When out in the world, behave in a worldly fashion and in the church behave religious. Pass the Sunday worship test with loud hallelujahs and praise the Lord but fail the Monday test by suffering from dyslexia when it comes to speaking about Jesus. This will keep both God and the world happy. However, anyone who has his feet in two boats will eventually fall, not into water but into fire. Sadly, many Christians consistently fail the Saturday night alcohol test. (2 Pet. 3:10,11)
3. **MAKE A PARADIGM SHIFT:** As long as they invited their friends and neighbors, many churches in the past were great places of fellowship but now they are empty. They abandoned their brothers and sisters, so God abandoned them. Whatever the cost, it is better to make a paradigm shift now in your personal and corporate life. This will have eternal consequences. (Rev. 18:8, 16-19)

CHOSEN TO CHANGE THE WORLD: You were chosen by Him before the foundation of the world for good works, which God prepared beforehand for you to do (Eph. 1:4; 2:10). When the call comes, like Isaiah, all you have to say is *"Yes Lord, send me"* (Isa. 6:8). Being Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise, your personal and corporate goal is to be a blessing to all the nations of the world. (John 15:16; Gal. 3:29; Gen. 12:3)

THE CELESTIAL DANCE: It took 300 years of civil war before Britain became a constitutional monarchy. It took a blood bath to unite the United States of America. There is always a strong resistance to change in any society. Try and change traditions and you could find your name written in the book of martyrs (Matt. 10:22). The Lord says, *"Speak to them all that I command you. Do not be afraid of kings and rulers... they shall not prevail, for I will deliver you."* He has commanded us to destroy all the old worthless unscriptural traditions and replant the original model of the Ekklesia (Jer. 1:9,10, 17-19).

Indeed, there is no other headline news that skyrockets to heaven faster than bringing the lost sheep into the fold, and sends the heavenly angels into celestial dancing and skylarking in heaven. (Luke 15:10)

Hell has opened its mouth beyond measure, for those who have no knowledge. (Isa. 5:13, 14; Hos. 4:6)

God blessed Abraham and his descendants to possess the gates of the enemy.

(Gen.22:17)

Jesus came to demolish the bastions of the Bully. He said I will build My Ekklesia and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18; 1 John 3:8)

Jesus taught His disciples - first of all, plunder the plunderer and then gather the harvest. (Matt. 12:29, 30)

The gospel did not come to you in words only but in power to demolish the deceptions through suggestions, ideas and thoughts. (1 Thes. 1:5; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5)

The demonic scoundrels hold people captive in mental and spiritual fortresses. They can only be set free by bulldozing the fortresses through power encounters. (2 Cor.6:15-17; Eph. 6:12)

GATES OF HELL

The Lord Jesus said, *"I will build My Ekklesia and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matt. 16:18)

THE GATES OF HELL ARE ENTRY POINTS OF DEMONS: The gates of hell are legal entry points for evil spirits into a person's life. They cannot enter without the permission of the owner. We can allow them entrance through things like idol worship, telling lies, stealing, fornication, drinking, smoking, exploitation, watching filthy movies, reading pornographic magazines, drugs, alcohol, violence, etc. When we do these, the evil spirits can make a legal entry and build a stronghold. When we collectively commit sins like idol worship or give priority to anything that takes away the glory from God, then we are opening both personal as well as corporate gates of hell. The demons then take over the entire community with legal authority.

DEMONS CAUSE GENERATIONAL CURSES: Without our consent, an evil spirit cannot enter. In fact, without our consent, even Jesus will not enter our hearts or homes. Jesus is knocking on the door, and only if we open, He will come in and have fellowship with us (Rev. 3:20). If we compromise with evil spirits, then they continue to dominate for generations and appear in the form of curses in our family. It is essential to break these generational curses to lead a fruitful life. (Exo. 20:5)

THE DEVIL SUCCEEDS IN SATURATION STRONGHOLD PLANTING: The Devil has opened gates of hell in almost every home, as well as in every community. Many homes have "Pooja" or "worship rooms" full of pictures, icons and idols. In many houses the stone idols have been replaced with TV, which also operates through a chip made out of a stone called Silicon. Yet others worship money. All these are gates, which lead directly to hell. By this criterion, almost all the homes are corroded. Thus, there are millions of gates of hell where the demons can enter legally with full authority to destroy homes, entire communities and even nations. The only aim of these evil spirits is to demolish the kingdom of God through creating spiritual blindness among the people, including God's people, through lies and deception. (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19)

THE DEVIL MAKES A LEGAL ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH: while the Lord is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, primarily through dreams and visions, to expand His kingdom, the Devil is not far behind in pouring out his evil spirit and building a huge army. The Lord came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8). There is a battle royal going on, and the Ekklesia is the frontline organization designated by the Lord to fight on His behalf. The Lord has assured that *"I will build My Ekklesia and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* Unfortunately, the Devil is openly doing an inside job, by using Christians to piggyback, to open the gates of hell right inside the church, through disputes, back biting, corruption, drunkenness, fornication, sorcery, jealousies, wrath, dissensions and greed etc (Gal. 5:19-21). Hugh Latimer was killed in Oxford, by Queen Mary of England, in 1555, for calling the Devil, to be the most diligent Bishop in all England.

THE GATES OF HEAVEN REQUIRE NO BUILDINGS: In a dream, Jacob saw angels ascending and descending from a ladder from heaven. There was no house there but he said, *"Surely this is Bethel, the house of God"* (Gen. 28:10-22). So we do not need a building to call a place the house of God. Any place from where people can go to heaven is a house of God.

On the contrary, any church, however ornate the building or professional the music and impressive the worship, cannot be called a house of God if it is not opening the door to heaven for the lost people in that area.

THE EKKLESIA MUST PLUNDER THE SPIRITUAL AND ECONOMIC GATES OF HELL: The Devil got Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden of Eden. He dispossessed them of all their possessions and authority. The Devil took Jesus on a high mountain and claimed that all the glory of the kingdoms belonged to him. The Devil even offered it to Jesus if He would bow down to him. But Jesus had come to dispossess the Devil of his kingdom and give it to His Ekklesia (Luke 12:32; Dan. 2:44). Even today, salvation is with the church but all the wealth of the nations is with the Devil. The Scripture says that kings and nations will bring their glory and honor into the kingdom (Rev. 21:24-26). It also says that the servants of the Lord shall eat the riches of the Gentiles (Isa. 60:11; 61:6). Jesus very clearly taught that unless you first expel the Devil, you cannot plunder his possessions, which includes the wealth of the nations. It belongs to us in the first place (Matt. 12:28-30). The Ekklesia must restore wealth to the believers, who are its rightful owners. Along with spiritual strongholds, the economic strongholds must also be demolished. This is not a license to earn wealth to become rich but we must keep expelling the demons from all spheres of life until *“His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM: Immediately after proclaiming, *“I will build My Ekklesia,”* Jesus handed over the keys of the kingdom to the Ekklesia, with authority *“to bind and to loose”* (Matt. 16:19). The key to expanding the kingdom of God is to bind demons and loose those in bondage. Jesus said, *“If I cast out this evil spirit with the help of the Holy Spirit, then the kingdom of God has come upon you”* (Matt. 12:28). Expelling demons is done through the power of the Holy Spirit, which is available to every believer (Mark 16:17). It is not enough to preach and come back but have Ekklesias in every human habitation to close all the local gates of hell and open the gates to heaven. Thus, all will have an opportunity to go to heaven. It is the primary duty of the Ekklesia to prayer walk and lock up all the entry points of hell, take possession of the city and establish God’s kingdom.

CHRISTIANS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISMAL STATE OF THE CITY: God has ordained that only those, *“who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done within the city”* are to be spared (Eze. 9:3-6). Jesus cried and sighed for the city of Jerusalem by name as a person (Luke 13:34,35). Paul planted a network of citywide Assemblies and travailed for them (Rom. 16). The Lord has warned us, *“The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies to enter”* (Nahum 3:13).

“A lion has gone out to destroy and devour your city and your country” (Jer. 4:7).

It is amazing that, with so many Christians in our cities, the adversary has managed to enter through the city gates. This is only possible when we lose the burden for the city (Lam. 4:12,13). *“The city has become the habitation of demons and a prison for every foul spirit”* (Rev. 18:2). The Devil offered all the glories of the kingdoms of the earth to Jesus, but He rejected it (Matt. 4:8,9). Unfortunately, when he dangles the carrot of city life in front of Christians, they quickly grab it. Well-off Christians will be lamenting on the day when their city is destroyed, because they will lose all the luxuries and benefits of city life (Rev. 18:8,9). The Israelites rejected God’s manna and lamented for the leeks,

cucumbers, melons and meat of Egypt, and they perished (Num. 11:4,5). Even today, Christians prefer to spend their money on meat and melon, rather than buy a good Christian book and feast on it. As a result of our iniquities, *"Sheol has opened its mouth beyond measure and multitudes are descending into it"* (Isa. 5:14). When there is love, unity and obedience in the citywide Ekklesia, *"the God of peace crush the Devil under your feet."* (Rom. 16:19,20)

THE PRIMARY JOB OF THE EKKLESIA IS TO RESCUE THE PERISHING: Jesus is called *"Yeshua"* in the Hebrew language, which means "redeemer" or "savior." The literal meaning of *"Josh"* is "to open the door to save." The church needs to get out of its safe haven and go into the choppy waters to open the door to save the perishing. When Jesus went to Hades after His death on the cross, He released all the saints who were held captive by Satan, and took them to heaven (Eph. 4:8,9). God made a covenant with Abraham that *"Your descendents shall possess the gates of their enemies"* (Gen. 22:17,18). As you go prayer walking, expelling demons and closing the gates of darkness through spiritual warfare, (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-5), then the city becomes a dwelling place for the people of God. A house Ekklesia is a gate to heaven where the spiritually sick and those in bondage can be set free, receive healing and enter heaven.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE EKKLESIA

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF AN EKKLESIA?

The Ekklesia is the Body of Christ. She is His Bride. A bride does not need a holy house, a holy day, a holy leader, or a holy pulpit to meet her husband. A bride is not a registered society. The Bride can meet her Groom anywhere - in houses, in huts, under a tree, or in farms and factories, offices and work places, in the market place, in fact anywhere. She can meet Him any day of the week, any time of the day or night. Even during working hours or the lunch break, all the time, the Ekklesia is still His Bride.

EVERY BELIEVER IS A PRIEST TO HIS/HER COMMUNITY:

The Lord Jesus is the founder of the Ekklesia (Matt. 16:18,19). He is the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20-22). He is the head of the Ekklesia (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). He is the Savior (Eph. 5:23). He has bought us with His blood and made us priests to worship Him by offering lost souls as a spiritual sacrifice (Rev. 5:9,10; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rom. 15:16). The Ekklesia is a community of priests, who are chosen and sent out by the Lord to bind and banish evil spirits and heal the sick. They are commissioned to make disciples, baptize them, equip and send them out (Luke 9:1,2; Matt. 28:16-20). Every believer is a priest to the community in which he lives and the place where he works. Many Christians would serve as priests, if the church bothered to equip them.

HOW BIG AND HOW FAR APART SHOULD THE ASSEMBLIES BE?

Whenever and wherever two or three believers “congregate” in His name, there is a “congregation” because the Lord Himself is present. A house Ekklesia can only be as big as the house can accommodate. Normally only two or three families are required to constitute an Ekklesia. If the number increases, then they should take steps to start another house Ekklesia elsewhere (Matt. 18:20). Abraham interceded for the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah but could not muster ten righteous people in the city to save it from destruction. Lot’s family, on whom he was depending, also let him down. However, this is a good model to remember; that if there are ten righteous people, they have the capacity to save their towns (Gen. 18:32). *“Fear not little flock, because it has pleased the Father to hand over the kingdom to you.”* (Luke 12:32). In addition, it is good to remember that a Sabbath day’s walk was about 2000 cubits, which is about a kilometer (Acts 1:12). This is a good measure for the distance at which to plant another Ekklesia. A pregnant woman with two little children in the village would have difficulty in walking further than that.

WHAT DOES AN EKKLESIA DO WHEN THEY MEET TOGETHER?

An Ekklesia behaves like a loving family. The traditional church is program-based while the NT Ekklesia is based on love. They have fellowship, share meals, worship, pray, prophesy and study the Scriptures. They help each other. Their caring love for each other is an example to the rest of the community. No meeting is required to run a household. Similarly, God’s family functions without any formal program. (Eph. 2:19)

SHOULD WE ATTEND A DENOMINATIONAL CHURCH?

A good farmer gathers the harvest into local barns near the harvest fields. Transporting the harvest to the city would be wasteful. Similarly, the Lord is gathering His spiritual harvest into local house Gatherings (Matt. 3:12). Transporting people to a weekly celebration would be wasteful, because apart from wasting a lot of money and time, no

meaningful fellowship or mentoring takes place there. They can have quality time in their own little fellowships, studying the scriptures and praying for each other. More importantly, people from a village community will not go to a city church. Even if they did, no one would extend them the hand of fellowship, much less invite them to their homes to give them food and the fundamentals of the faith. In any case, these churches rarely teach anything about the Great Commission. This can only be done effectively in the local house Ekklesia. This way the Ekklesia can grow and multiply. (Acts 22:14,15)

WHAT IS THE DEVIL'S AGENDA? :

The Devil's method is deception. He has introduced false beliefs and political systems, communism, syncretism, materialism, casteism, globalism and all the other "isms" and the New Age philosophy, to deceive the people. Vast majority of the people are not Hindus, Muslims, Buddhist, Catholics or even Christians, but animists or spiritists who believe in spirits, which inhabit trees, stones, shrines, buildings, places, things or even human beings. There may be millions of gods and goddesses in the world, but behind them, there is only one serpent, the Devil. By deception he usurps our God given dominion and thus controls the nations. Since he cannot destroy God, his ultimate agenda is to destroy humankind, who are created in the image of God. His most effective strategy is to cause division among God's people and then he destroys unhindered. The city cannot be evangelized, while there is division in the city church. Needless to add, this stronghold has to be broken before we can win the city for Christ.

IS MULTIPLICATION NECESSARY?

Every demon, like a lion is genetically programmed to kill. For this reason, every Christians should be programmed to save souls (2 Tim. 4:17; 1 Pet. 5:8). Jesus said, "*the harvest is ready but the laborers are few*". Therefore, the main task of the Ekklesia is to prepare laborers for the harvest fields. As the Ekklesia multiplies and opens up new house Gatherings in other areas, more laborers will be prepared. This will give an opportunity for other community to hear the gospel. This is the only way the gospel will spread to the ends of the world. A big church has a negative role as it keeps too many laborers in bondage with no laboring assignment. It is an assembly of unutilized passive drones. In small Assemblies, multiplication takes place very fast because they are very labor intensive.

WHAT ABOUT WEDDING CEREMONIES?

God conducted the wedding ceremony of Adam and Eve in the Garden. Isaac celebrated his wedding to Rebecca in a tent and Jesus participated in a marriage ceremony in a house in Cana. Hindus do not celebrate weddings in a temple nor do Muslims in a mosque. The Christians, however, have a penchant for getting married in a church building, in Western clothes and westernized ceremony. A house Ekklesia wedding is scripturally sound and culturally appropriate. It is inexpensive and simple. The marriage certificate can be obtained from the nearest court of law. On the other hand, traditional ostentatious weddings cost a lot and can lead to debt trap, poverty and disputes.

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL EKKLESIA? :

In the traditional church, success is measured by head-count and the money in the collection bag. The larger the attendance and greater the collection, then it is sweet

smelling savor to the modern day Levite. Success in missions is measured by the large number of evangelists employed on a national or international arena but the skim off in terms of harvest of souls is often microscopic. While there is room for finding favor with the people, there is no provision for glorification of a leader. It annoys God and it sends wrong signals to the potential leaders, who measure success with wrong parameters. Another sign of success are, musical instruments, computers, buildings, sycophants, flatterers, parasites and hanger-ons. All these gizmos are important because the pulpit is now a center for data transfer rather than transformation. The early Ekklesia did not indulge in glitzy “glamor ministries” with glossy brochures, TV shows, fancy clothes, dramatic styles and large crowds. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit was enough to turn the world upside down. (Acts 1:8) The Scriptural measure of success is, *“a man shall be known by his fruit”* (Matt. 7:16,20).

CAN AN EKKLESIA FUNCTION WITHOUT A COMMITTEE?

Many NT Ekklesias functioned without elders. They all had plurality of leadership but no committees (Acts 13:1). The modern church will collapse without a pastor and his committee. Church committees often violate the principle of the priesthood of all believers. Some officials have no vision/mission, are not even saved, while others are outright immoral and corrupt, and do not qualify to be elders by biblical standards (Titus 1:5-9). Elders and the brethren (fraternity) are our advisors, rulers and accountable for our souls. (Heb.13:17)

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF DENOMINATIONS?

Some denominations started under dubious circumstances. 500 years ago, Henry the VIII wanted to divorce his wife and marry his pregnant girl friend. He did not get permission from the Pope, so he started the Church of England. The NT identifies only one flock and not many flocks. All the shepherds in the city are together shepherd the “one flock” in the city. Paul warned *“wolves will arise from among you who will divide the flock to draw away the disciples for themselves”* (Acts 20:28-31). He never wrote letters to an individual ekkleisa, but to the citywide or the regional Ekklesia. Denominationalism is divisive and unscriptural. There should be no exclusive membership of any one church. In the NT, the Assemblies were named after their founder (Jesus) and designated by their location such as “The Ekklesia of Christ in Corinth.” This brings unity to the city Ekklesia. The Ekklesia should not be named after people or saints or their funders. Titles such as Lutheran, Mennonite, Saint John, Saint Thomas, Baptist, Pentecostal etc., are unscriptural, because we are not redeemed by doctrines, but by the shed blood of Jesus. The best way to form an interdenominational Ekklesia is to gather two or three people from different denominations in a house Ekklesia to pray. (1 Cor. 1:12,13; Matt. 18:18-20)

IS THE HOUSE EKKLESIA RELEVANT IN TODAY’S CONTEXT?

When thousands of people were being added in the NT times, house Ekklesia was relevant. Today, nearly 75,000 to 175,000 every day, or 27 to 67 million every year, new believers profess faith in Christ, depending on whose statistics you follow. The church has grown more in this century than in all the previous 1900 years. Today the little house Ekklesias have more active members, than all the traditional churches. The modern churches with many high profile programs and a budget to match, bear very little fruit. It

is important to lead all these new believers to maturity. This training cannot be given in the traditional churches, nor can they all be sent to seminaries. But they can all be mentored by spiritual fathers and mothers in the highly interactive, small group dynamics of house Ekklesias, right on the field. (Gal. 2:2)

HOW RELEVANT ARE HOUSE GATHERINGS FOR INDIA?

House Gatherings are very suitable for any country. There are six hundred thousand villages and four hundred thousand colonies in the cities in India. Nobody has the resources to construct one million buildings, nor are they required. The believers' houses are already available. Sadly, they have not been utilized for the Lord's purposes. It would also be impossible to get one million seminary-trained pastors and pay salaries to them. Local mature Christians are the best answer. They are ready today. All they need is direction and encouragement.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY?

Selling the property of rich churches and giving the proceeds to the poor is Scriptural. Like the young rich fool, rich churches will probably reject this option (Luke 18:18-25). The Communist governments of China and Ethiopia confiscated the church properties and imprisoned the pastors, but surprisingly, since then, the secret house Gatherings have blossomed dynamically and filled those lands with the gospel. This would never have been possible by the traditional route.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF FOREIGNERS AND FOREIGN AID?

Foreigners should refrain from grass roots evangelism as they have language handicap and the color of their skin makes them conspicuous, which attracts opposition. Their key role is in advocacy of local leaders in raising prayer and practical support. Here also they need to be extremely vigilant, as a few jet setters have captured the international market, leaving the real apostolics high and dry. Getting involved in strategic transformational partnership is the way forward. Research with "end in view" and innovative non-formal training of grassroots level leadership to complete the task should receive top priority. Raising up hue and cry in the international media to attract attention to the plight of persecuted Christians is important part of advocacy. Foreign aid should not be used as a handout for creating dependency. House Ekklesias do not require foreign aid but their leadership training does.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN AND THE YOUTH?

95% of the people joining the emerging Ekklesias and an unknown number quitting the Mainline Churches are below 25 years of age. Young people along with women, laymen and the Catholics, are the most disenfranchised Christians. With a little course correction, they can all be turned into a mighty fighting force. Children are bored to death in Sunday schools, singing old choruses and listening to the same old stories, without ever empowering them to heal the sick and deliver the demonized. Earlier, the younger generation rebelled against the established church and became Hippies, who in turn produced the confused and directionless Generation X. Now the younger Millennial children are starving for supernatural power and if the church will not empower them, then they will go and watch their power heroes on the TV or read about Harry Potter's hero, the son of a practicing witch and a warlock. While the parents are busy elsewhere, the Devil is brewing a huge army of children, through seduction and disinformation, who will eventually turn against their parents, the church and the community. God's promise is

that in the last days He will pour out His Spirit on all kids. The non-Christian kids are also our spiritual children and a special responsibility. There is no valid reason for not handing over the authority, to prophesy, to fight spiritual warfare, prayer walking the neighborhood and discipling . The Scripture commands us to teach the children while they are sitting, walking, playing or lying down, whenever there is an opportunity (Deut. 6:1-7, 20,21). Sadly, our children are more influenced from outside than inside. We do not need Sunday schools. The children are not the promise of tomorrow, but a major resource today. (Acts 2:17,18; Psa, 8:2; Prov. 22:6)

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS AND THE PARACHURCH?

Jesus fed the 5000 hungry people. Disciples distributed food to poor widows (Acts 6:1). Paul raised money for the saints in Jerusalem, after it was hit hard by famine prophesied by Agabus (Acts 11:28; 1 Cor. 16:1,2). Actually, there is no such thing as Parachurch. Either you are a church or you are not a church. When two or three gather in His name, then it is an Ekklesia. Jesus is going to decide between the saints and sinners by their role in taking care of the least of this world (Matt. 25:31-46). Therefore, whether you are digging wells or curing diseases or teaching, provided you do so in the name of Jesus, you are an Ekklesia with full authority to disciple, baptize, and serve the Lord's Supper etc. Poor were the top priority of Paul, who eagerly wanted to serve them (Gal. 2:10). Our institutions are afraid of persecution and make many excuses. Due to a lack of vision and boldness, and in spite of many resources and plenty of opportunity, no solid discipling is done. Community development without discipling is meaningless just as evangelism without community development is incomplete. Christianity is Body life, which is not just soul winning, but to prosper in all areas of life, including body, mind and spirit (3 John 1:2). The spiritual return on investment from these resource hungry institutions is negligible, even though the potential to change the nation through the communities they serve is enormous. (Col. 1:10)

HOW DO WE FIND LOST SHEEP?

The Lord sent out seventy Ekklesia planters. He sent them two by two. "Do not go with noisy paraphernalia, but go quietly, like lambs among the wolves. Find the 'person of peace,' eat whatever is set before you, stay at his house and preach through signs and wonders. Do not go from house to house" (Luke 10:1-9). Persons of peace are usually influential in the community, like Cornelius and Lydia (Acts 10:24). You should have no difficulty in finding the lost sheep, (2 Cor. 4:3,4) because the world is full of perishing souls. The harvest is ready, all you have to do is to lift up your eyes and see.

(Matt. 10:11-13; John 4:35)

WHAT IS SATURATION EKKLESIA PLANTING MOVEMENT (SEPM) ?

SEP occurs when the whole Ekklesia proclaims the whole gospel to the whole world. We are the paradigm, the method and the message. SEP will be accomplished when Jesus is worshipped in every human heart and habitation. SEPM takes place when a particular people group take over and saturate their own community and the region with the

gospel, without outsiders being needed. The secret of achieving a spontaneous SEP, depends entirely on the quality and the quantity of disciples.

IS IT NECESSARY FOR EVERYONE TO WIN SOULS?

The reason why the Lord does not take us up to heaven immediately after we are saved is because – we have a mission to do on earth. Salvation is not enough. We have to work hard to win souls to get our rewards to rule over five or ten cities or sit on the right or the left of Jesus. After Paul was saved, he was running a race to win the reward. Soul winners are wise and will shine like the stars forever (Dan. 12:3). The watchmen, who do not win souls have been called blind, ignorant, dumb dogs, lazy, foolish, greedy etc. (Is. 56:10,11). You have a choice!

SHOULD WE NOT TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN FIRST?

This is a good thought, but wrong! If everybody had always thought like this, then the churches would never have sent missionaries and the Christian faith would have been confined to Jerusalem. The Scripture clearly states, *“Those who have seen the light, have tasted the heavenly gifts and become partakers of the Holy Spirit... If they go astray, then it is impossible to bring them back to the Lord”* (Heb. 6:4-6). Therefore, you can pray for them, but you must give priority to reaching those who are yet to hear the gospel

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH SUNDAY CHRISTIANS?

They are like beautiful multicolored fish in a glass aquarium. They need to be fed, watered and oxygenated every Sunday, otherwise they will all die. They do not multiply, while in captivity and are useless to the consumer because he cannot eat them. The best thing is to be generous and donate them to your worst enemy. That way you will improve your friendship profile, and at the same time you can follow Jesus and focus on catching fresh fish every day. Jesus did not ask us to come to church. Our job is to bring people to the person of Jesus.

WHAT IS A GOOD METHOD FOR REACHING THE UNREACHED?

Simply telling the story of Jesus is the best method for reaching the non-literate people. All the major religions of the world, including Christianity, have been conveyed throughout the centuries through very interesting story telling, recitation, dramas, skits, pictures, dances and music, with very little written material. It has the potential to produce mass movements among the unreached communities.

SHOULD WE GO TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY?

The Ekklesia was born on the day of the Pentecost, which was not necessarily celebrated on Sundays. Pentecost was calculated on the basis of seven Sabbaths or fifty days from the barley harvest or one day after the Passover, which was celebrated on the 14th day of Abib (March-April). Thus Pentecost (May-June), the birthday of the church was not on Sunday but could be any day of the week and should be celebrated as such. (Lev. 23:15)

How Do I Become More Fruitful?

1. All fruitlessness is due to prayerlessness. There are two kinds of wills, 1. God’s will and 2. Satan’s will. There is no such thing as self will. God’s will is that none should perish. Satan’s will is that all should perish. To fulfil God’s will, *“Jesus always lives to make intercession to save to the uttermost those who come to God”* (Heb. 7:25). To

improve your fruitfulness, you do not need to change your methods, just change your prayer life. **2.** The Japanese decorate their houses with stunted *Bonsai* trees as potted plants. In the natural, the apple, mango or a fig tree would grow and bring forth abundant fruit but in the pot they are just decorative with no fruit. It is important to stop decorating your church and be planted in the world and become fruitful.

15 STEPS TO EKKLESIA PLANTING

Based on Luke 10

THE GOAL: To reap the harvest

THE PROBLEM: Laborers are few

JOB DESCRIPTION: Bind the strongman; find the man of peace; plant a multiplying Ekklesia; prepare laborers; and reap the harvest.

EQUIPMENT: Power received through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1. **GO TWO BY TWO:** Go, but do not go, unless you are clothed with power (Acts 1:4-8). Do not take excess baggage. You are going as a lamb and the wolves (evil spirits whose leader is called the “Strongman,”) are waiting to welcome you. Go quietly and prayerfully. Focused prayer walking will reveal the legal entry points (the gates of hell). Spy out the land. Remember that you are on a search-and-destroy mission. (Luke 10:1, 4; Num. 13:1-5)
2. **PRAY:** There are at least five kinds of prayers you are to pray as you go. First, ask for the nations (people groups or ethnic communities) of that locality because God has asked you to do so (Psalm 2:8). Second, pray to the Lord of the harvest for laborers (Matt. 9:37,38). Third, bind the “strongmen.” Fourth, pray for the “man of peace” (Luke 10:6). Finally, bless all the families in that location by planting a house Ekklesia. (Genesis 12:3)
3. **BIND THE STRONGMAN:** Pray against all the strongholds such as centers of occult, alcoholism, drugs, pornography, movie theaters, smuggling, atheism, idolatry, worship of money, and the “idiot box” (TV), when used for watching vulgar programs. God wants you to plunder the possessions of the strongman, which include people, property and wealth and make them His possession. (Matt. 12:29)
4. **FIND THE HOUSE OF PEACE:** Finding the “shalom bayit,” or “peaceful home” is central to the strategy of Ekklesia planting. It will be your operational base from where you will launch out. Jesus was a Jewish rabbi who trained Jewish disciples in Jewish homes within the Jewish culture. The “house of peace” is the most contextual place for discipling nations in their own culture. People are His tools and the “house of peace” is the place where He will transform ordinary people into extraordinary channels of His grace.
5. **EATING NOT MEETING:** Bless every family as you prayer walk (Genesis 12:3). Keep prayer walking, binding, loosing, and blessing until the “person of peace” welcomes you into his home. Eat and sleep there. You are expecting this family to join the household of God; therefore, behave like a member of the household and not just a formal religious visitor (Eph. 2:19). Do not go from house to house of nonbelievers (Matt. 10:5). When there are enough believers in the locality, then you can go from house to house (Luke 10:5-8; Acts 20:20). Like Cornelius and Lydia, the “persons of peace” (*huios eirene*) are God fearing and influential; otherwise, they would not be able to feed you and take care of you and your companions. They are not necessarily Christians at this point. Once you find them, it is your job to bring them into the fold and also to establish an Ekklesia in their house.
6. **SPIRITUAL WARFARE:** The “person of peace” knows the local people and will gather his friends and relatives in his house, who can be redeemed. First, expel demons and pray for the sick (Matt. 10:8). Wherever Jesus went, He first expelled demons and healed the sick; only then did He teach. Likewise, when Philip the evangelist went to Samaria to preach, the demons came out with a loud voice and the sick were healed. No NT Ekklesias were planted without a power encounter. This will produce a healthy awe of the Lord, and people will ask, “What shall we do?” (Acts 8:5,6). Almost the first thing to teach is spiritual warfare because the expelled demon will

return with seven more deadly spirits, and if this person cannot protect himself, his condition will be worse than before. One of the identification benchmark of a believer is that he can expel demons. (Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17)

7. **NOW MAKE DISCIPLES:** Discipleship is not going to Bible school and then finding a job as a pastor. Jesus modeled life-style discipling by living with his disciples, eating the same food, wearing the same clothes and sharing the same facilities. Jesus taught his disciples by casting out demons, healing the sick, identifying with the powerless. Discipleship for us will include laying down one's life for the friendly and even for the unfriendly. Hebrew 6:1,2 gives the syllabus of six essential topics for foundational teaching. These include repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment. Discipleship is a process and the end product is a disciple who can faithfully commit all the teachings and practical skills to others. (2 Tim. 2: 2)
8. **REPENTANCE IS MANDATORY:** John preached, "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 3:2). Jesus started His ministry with exactly the same words (Matt. 4:17). His final words to His disciples were "*and repentance and the remission of sins will be preached to all nations in His name*" (Luke 24:47). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter thundered, "*Repent and let everyone be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38; 3:19). Repentance is an act, which results in a change of mind, purpose and action.

9. **REPENTANCE IN THE OT WAS A PROCESS:**

Step one: Confession of sins to two witnesses.

Step two: Restore relationship with the wronged person by restitution of losses incurred. It was not enough just to say "I am sorry." (Matt. 5:22-24)

Step three: Take a bath of purification in one of the nearby pools.

Step four: Restore relationship with God by offering a ram as a sacrifice (Num. 5:6-8), because "*without the shedding of blood there would be no atonement*" (Lev. 17:11).

Step five: Enter the temple precincts and pray (Psalm 96:8; 100:4).

In the NT context, repentance would mean taking exactly the same steps except that instead of a ram, we have to offer a non-Christian, as a spiritual offering (Rom. 15:16). "*The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart, which He will not despise*" (Ps. 51:17). New disciples must confess all their sins including generational curses layer by layer, like peeling an onion. Hidden sins will make a person an ineffective Christian. (Exo. 20:5)

10. **BAPTIZE WITHOUT DELAY:** "*Mikve*" is a Hebrew word for "bath of purification." Jews who had committed sin and Gentiles who intended to convert to Judaism came to the temple and took a bath (baptism) of purification in the presence of two or three witnesses, but without the help of a priest. Baptism was a sign of their repentance and personal covenant with God. In New Testament times, they did not go to the temple but took a "bath of purification" anywhere: like the Ethiopian in a pond, Lydia in a

river, and Cornelius at his home. Nowhere in the New Testament is the authority to baptize delegated to any special class of people. Every believer, regardless of gender; is commissioned to baptize (Matt. 28:19). All baptisms in New Testament times took place on the same day as their repentance and confession of faith in the lordship of Jesus. A delay in baptism results in the loss of harvesting of souls. (Acts 19:5,6)

11. **TEACH OBEDIENCE:** To obey means to come under the authority of Jesus. New believers must discard the Devil - their previous master. Members of the household of God must have fellowship together; they must **eat together** just as a family does. Eating together is very important for breaking barriers in societies that are ridden with caste, status, racial and denominational issues. **Teaching** must lead to “apostolic conversion” of Christians, which challenges them to go and make disciples of all nations. They must **Pray** intercessory prayers, just like our Lord has been doing for the last 2,000 years. It includes going everywhere and praying with holy hands lifted up. (Acts 2:42; Heb. 7:25; 1 Tim. 2:8)
12. **SHARE MATERIAL BLESSINGS:** New believers must learn to share their material blessings from day one. Poor widows gave their last dime or their last morsel for the kingdom. Poverty is a curse (Mal. 3:8-12; Deut. 28:48), which can be broken by giving. Both spiritual conversion and “financial conversion” are essential. (Acts 5:2)
13. **START A HOUSE EKKLESIA** with an open format based on 1 Cor. 14: 26-31. Facilitate rather than leading from up front. Encourage them to share their dreams, visions, prophecies, and revelations. Prophecy includes edification, exhortation, and comforting. Emphasize “one another,” which appears over 50 times in the NT. Make sure that everyone participates and that the assembly is not hogged by one or two compulsive talkers. Encourage them to multiply from the beginning by sharing their new found faith with their “*Oikos*” or extended family, fellow workers in the workplace, wherever two or three gather in His name. Ekklesia planting must become a movement of ordinary people. (Matt. 18: 20)
14. **EQUIP:** The mandate of the Ekklesia Universal is worship. The best way to glorify God is to make disciples (John 15:8). Invite prophets, apostles, teachers, and others from the network of Assemblies in your region. This will soon reveal different areas of giftedness in your Ekklesia and also create a bond of unity in the city. Without apostles and prophets, there will be no Ekklesia planting activity (Eph. 2: 20; 4:11,12). Equipping does not mean merely transferring knowledge and information but transformation. It includes imparting Biblically sound Ekklesia planting “skills”, authority to baptize and serve the Lord’s Supper. Avoid the lecture/sermon method. The early Ekklesia spread rapidly throughout world through the highly interactive, open format of the disciples who saturated Jerusalem to Rome, in record time.
15. **SEND:** Fast, pray, and lay hands on the disciples and like Jesus, say, “*As the Father has sent me, so I send you into the world*” (Acts 13:1-3; John 17:18). After you have fathered a healthy Ekklesia, bless and send them, like a Bride to go and reproduce.