

**Series: GROWING ROOTS / As We Love GOD And Love Others**

**November 27, 2011**  
**THE POWER OF BEING *INTENTIONAL***  
Colossians 1:9-14  
Speaker: Ken Davis

1. Does anyone know what the word ***nominal*** means? It basically means, ***in NAME only***. I am a ***nominal*** athlete. I run—I exercise—and I sometimes watch football on TV, but you don't want me on your football team, your hockey team, or your baseball team. I am a ***nominal*** handyman. If I'm pressed, I can usually find a way to fix things—but on the hard stuff, I have to turn it over to ***someone who knows something about that***.

-Let me illustrate ***nominal***. In Nantucket, Massachusetts, there's a ***Lifesaving Museum***. It tells the story of a time in US history when there were a ***lot*** of shipwrecks off this part of the Atlantic Coast. And a lot of sailors died—drowned—because there was no one to save them. So a group of people from the maritime communities decided that this was unacceptable and, in 1786 formed what was initially called, the ***Massachusetts Humane Society***. This group built huts, placed lifeboats—and stationed volunteers all along the coast. The mission was simple; to spot shipwrecks, deploy people, and rescue sailors. There's slogan was: ***We have to go out; we don't have to come back!***

- This group eventually evolved into the ***Lifesaving Society***—and when the concept caught on, the government established the ***Coast Guard***. Here's where it gets interesting. People ***still belong*** to the ***Lifesaving Society***. They still have meetings for members and give awards—but they don't actually watch the coast for shipwrecks and save lives anymore. They're ***nominal*** lifesavers!

-The Nantucket Yacht Club now occupies the place where the ***Lifesaving Society*** started! **[pics]** Yachts are pleasure craft! Yacht Clubs are exclusively for the comfort of the people who own the yachts! I ***love*** boats! There's nothing wrong with them—but yacht clubs are ***way*** different than life-saving stations. Yacht clubs aren't even ***nominal!***

- a. The term ***nominal*** isn't a bad one. When it gets dicey is when it gets applied to things that really ***shouldn't*** be nominal. I mean, would anyone here like to fly with a ***nominal*** airline pilot? Or have surgery with a ***nominal*** surgeon? Not good, right?
- b. Know where the word ***nominal*** gets applied most frequently? To Christians. To say that a person is a nominal Christian means that ***Christian*** is the box they check off when asked which religion they're a part of. It usually points back to a ***once upon a time*** experience that someone had—where their parents had them christened or baptized or something. But ***now*** it doesn't really mean much to them. And I get that!

2. Did you know that **nominal Christianity** can be pin-pointed to the precise date when it started? The Church—big “C” began as a big surprise for its charter members. People in our culture say things like, “I can believe in God without going to church.” What’s interesting is that Jesus never said to **anybody**, “Go to church!” What He **did** say was, “Follow me!” And some did. And those who did had a front row seat to the **amazing** things they saw Jesus do.

-But then one day He told them to do something else. And that something else changed their lives—and changed the world. And it might change you. Let’s read it together:

**When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave *them* power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere. (Luke 9:1-6 NIV)**

- a. Now, do you see the change? This would not be a **come, gather-and-watch** movement; Jesus was saying, **You get to GO!** Jesus sent **them!**

-So they went. They were to simply do what they had watched Jesus do; heal and drive out demons. And **then** they were to tell these people the Good News of the Kingdom; that these signs meant that God’s kind, loving and powerful leadership and authority over darkness was coming **back** to this planet!

-And Jesus said, “Keep it simple! **Just take what you have—nothing more. Travel light!** Good thing it was all guys this first time, eh? I know—bad joke! Incidentally—when you look back through history, you usually find the Church—big ‘C’ flourishing where people don’t have many bags, staffs, shirts, staffs, or money. I mean, sometimes when people have a lot of that—they are generous and really good things happen. But sometimes when we have a lot—the stuff we own takes up residence in our hearts and owns **us!**

- b. So, they went out two by two--and came back **amazed** at what happened. When they announced the Kingdom—they were able to follow that up with signs of the **power** of that kingdom, healing and driving out evil spirits.

-What’s interesting, as you move on in the story, you get the feeling that the authors are trying to point out how imperfect these guys were. They sometimes fought with each other; they sometimes got arrogant and pushy with people who came for help. On one occasion, they even wanted to call down fire from heaven and fry an entire Samaritan village—because they didn’t like the reception they got!

-The lesson seems to be: **God uses imperfect, immature, incomplete people.** His call is, “I don’t care **how** inadequate and imperfect and under-

resourced you feel—**just GO!** Because, I want **everyone** to go—not sit and watch!”

3. In the very next chapter, the record tells us that Jesus sent out 72—two by two—to all the villages where he was going. Jesus’ words as he sent them out, are quite interesting:

**He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. (Luke 10:2-4 NIV)**

This is Jesus’ second initiative—again, sending people out two by two—never alone. He says—“There is a **lot** to do—pray that the Lord of the harvest will **send out workers into his harvest field**” Interesting—Jesus is not telling people to go to church; He’s **sending them out to where the people are—where the need is!**

- a. This time, along with his instruction to travel light, Jesus says something that sounds a little rude: **Do not greet anyone on the road.** What is **that** about? In the Middle East, greeting people was not as easy as waving and saying, “Hi!” It was a long, formal, time-consuming process.

-Jesus is getting at the **urgency** of their mission—and our mission. He was saying, “Eternity is at stake! What you are called to do is **so** urgent, **so** critical you can’t let **anything** get in the way! Anyone here, like me, ever struggle with getting **distracted?** The Good News is about helping people who’ve lost their way—find the Good Shepherd. That’s the main thing. And we get off on rabbit trails, sometimes doing good things—useful things—helpful things—but things that are detours from core of what God is up to: rescuing people!

- b. So, they went out. And when they returned, they were **really** high—ecstatic at what God had done through 72 average people who had the guts to just **go!** You can almost imagine the buzz in the air, “Man, we were in this **one** situation with a demonized man—I have never been so **scared in my life!** One word—**BAM!** It was over!”

- c. And Jesus Himself was ecstatic! It’s almost like Jesus has done an experiment; sent 12 out—then 72—and the results are in. This strange strategy, simply called, **The Church**—is going to work. Jesus knows his future—He’s going to wind up nailed to a Roman cross. But that won’t stop things—it will take God’s mission of forgiveness, grace, and reclaiming all creation to a whole new level. Listen to these words:

**At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. (Luke 10:21 NIV)**

- d. If you can read between the lines, it's like Jesus is praying, "Now I can place this mission you've sent me on, Father, in the hands of frail men and women who screw up. They won't always understand what's happening; they'll get cranky, they'll be afraid and run sometimes, they'll get distracted and have conflicts with each other.

-But **somehow**, in the power of the Spirit, the reality of your plan and mission will get through. They will be inspired in ways that no one else even understands. And **sheep will find a shepherd**, the **darkness of this world will be peeled back to reveal the light**, and **Your Will** will be done on earth, just like it's done in Heaven!

4. The **toughest** reality they faced is found in Jesus' words as he was sending the 72 out: **Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves!**

-Anyone here who would like to be a lamb in the middle of a wolf pack? We get it, right? Danger? But most of the people Jesus was talking to had **seen** what was left after wolves got done with a lamb! It was bloody and gruesome! It kinda makes you shudder, doesn't it?

-We would **much** rather hear Jesus say, "**You'll** be like wolves among lambs. With God in you? They don't stand a **chance!** It won't be pretty!" We'd like to think that **we** will be the powerful ones, the exalted ones—the ones who make all the evil people in our world tremble with fear. But we're **not!** We're lambs among wolves—but Jesus said, **Go! Go anyway!**

- a. And if you read through the history of the next 300 years of the church—that's exactly what it was like. Jesus said, "Love your enemies—and pray for those who abuse you!" Paul said, "Pray for and submit to government authorities." And that would mean people like Nero **[pic]**—who **soaked** the ground of the Roman Empire with the blood of Jesus' followers. Paul eventually lost his head at Nero's hands. But they were an unstoppable force.

-See, their lives were caught up in something **so** much bigger than themselves, their money, their security and their pride—that they had already laid it all on the line. One of them wrote, "It's like the blood of the martyrs is watering the seed of the Church—**you just can't stop it!**"

- b. Persecution and bloodshed **drove** the Church forward. Want to know what actually slowed it down—and watered down its impact? Strangely enough—it was when being a follower of Jesus became legal. In 312 A.D., Constantine, the Roman Emperor, converted—and Christianity went immediately from being in big trouble—to the official religion of the superpower of that day.

-You'd think that would be great news—and in some ways it was. But, here's the thing—up to that time there was no such thing as being a **nominal** Christian—because it was dangerous—lethal, even, to be a follower of Jesus. Then suddenly—**everyone** wants to be a Christian because it actually makes life easier and safer! And **that's** why the start of **nominal Christianity** can be

pinned to a specific date: 312 AD. In some ways, the movement Jesus started—sending people to **change the world** has never fully recovered.

5. Some of you know C.S. Lewis [pic] from the recent **Chronicles of Narnia** movies. C.S. Lewis, a deep-thinking Christian, also wrote a brilliant book entitled **The Screwtape Letters**. Basically, it is a collection of fictional letters that an experienced demon named **Screwtape** wrote to a fledgling demon about how to pry believers away from their faith. He said:

**One of our great allies in this is the Church itself. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean the church as we see her, spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners. That, I confess, is a spectacle that makes our boldest tempters uneasy! But, fortunately, it is quite invisible to these human beings.**

- a. C.S. Lewis goes on to say that when people begin looking at the frail, goofy, hurting people who sit around them in a church gathering like this, **that will get their eyes off of the power and glory of what God is up to in redeeming this world**. And that happens, doesn't it? We get all caught up in the church, little 'c'--chairs, buildings, denominations—annoying people—instead of the **amazing, staggering** mission Jesus died for--and calls us to be a part of.

-And we **totally** miss the beauty of Jesus' people—His Church—**spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity...terrible as an army with banners**. And when we lose the plot—the faith that people laid their lives on the line for and died for becomes just a **name, an adjective**. Sometimes, oddly, a place...a building with a steeple pointing to God. Occupied by people who, sometimes, have totally lost the plot and become a club of good citizens. Nominal. Christian in name only.

- b. I just need to go on record and say that I have absolutely **zero** interest in leading or being a part of the successful expansion of **nominal** Christianity in a **nominal** Christian culture. Know why? Because that that is **off-mission**. Jesus **never** intended that for us! Right in the context of sending out the 12—and then the 72, Jesus said:

**Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? (Luke 9:23-25 NLT)**

- c. I'll tell you where we sometimes struggle. We think of church as only a **gathering**. Please don't get me wrong—that gathering, the community, communion, teaching, loving and being love, serving and being served—joy, baptisms, worship—this is all a **very** important part of living your faith, being encouraged—becoming a disciple. That's why I spent the past few weeks speaking on it. Jesus spent a **lot** of his time with gatherings like this—sometimes large, sometimes small.

-But ultimately—He sent **all** of the people He'd gathered on the same **Mission** He'd been sent to complete. Remember His words? **Go!** Will it be dangerous? “Yep—but I'll be there. Will you feel weak and vulnerable? Yep—but my power is made perfect in weakness! Will it be scary? ...**Like lambs among wolves!** But all authority and power has been handed to me. It will actually be **more** dangerous to stay and hide—than to go and love!”

-See, the deal is that **community** is beautiful—because that's **WHO** God is. Father, Son, Spirit—in this infinite circle of love, kindness, deference, and service. But **SENT** is what God does. He so loved us...so wanted us for himself...so wanted us to be remade, reclaimed, reborn—He **sent** His Son. Jesus last comments to his Followers were, “As I have loved you—you go and love; as the Father has sent me—I'm sending you!”

-To be a Follower of Jesus is to be **sent**. Some don't go—but we **all** are sent. Here's the deal; we are **sent** to where we work. Sent to our homes. Sent into our neighbourhoods. See, that's the only thing that makes sense of Jesus' calling to be salt and light. But taking our **sent-ness** seriously is sometimes a challenge, isn't it? Because, see, taking it seriously is a calling to see the **Church** for what it really is—not a gathering to attend on weekends—but a transforming force sent **everywhere** on this planet to reclaim it for God's glory.

6. I just want to ask a question at this juncture that I've asked before: **Who is responsible for me living in community—in a loving, accepting, and serving relationships with others?** Is it the Church, God...or **me?** Well, that would be **me**, right? **Who is responsible for me living out Jesus' call to GO—to be salt and light for Jesus' sake—wherever I am?** Is the Church, God...or **me?**

-I am accountable for my life. And that's a good thing, actually, because if I wasn't accountable—then I would be a victim. The Church's responsibility in this is to be authentic—and to be **on mission**. My responsibility is to teach, inspire and equip. God's responsibility is to call you—and give you power through the Spirit. But **you** are the only one who can take initiative—and make the time, space and resources available. **I am responsible for my life!**

-Let me illustrate. It's been almost a year since I went to my physician—and stepped on his scale. I had apparently been lying to myself for a couple of years about how much I weighed!! Even more troubling, he told me that my cholesterol was up—and the only way to avoid going on medication was to just lose some weight. He said, “Don't try to do it all at once; try taking off a pound a week.”

-Well, I knew that with the history of heart disease in my family—I needed to **listen!** So. Besides my usual running and exercise--I just started cutting back. It was a very basic diet; if it tasted good, I spit it out! No more fudge and butter tarts! By the way, I give them out here because, see, if you look **fat**—I look **thin!** I realized—that when it comes to matters of the heart—you **have** to get intentional.

-How many of you think it would've been okay for me to just **sincerely** believe that what my doctor was telling me was right; that it would be a **good thing** for me to lose

weight? How many of you think it would've worked if I had said, "You know what—I just need to go to the **doctor** every week and get weighed—and then go to the Fitness Club and watch and be inspired as people sweat and grunt and work out—and cheer them on!?"

-How many of you think it would've been okay if I had **sincerely** looked at each meal and said, "You know—I **probably** shouldn't eat all this...but if I'm **sincerely** sorry—and **sincerely** believe it won't stick to the inside of my heart—I'll be okay! What if I prayed and commanded the fat and cholesterol demons to **leave** the food?"

-In life, **sincerity**—to do any good—has to get quite intentional. And we **are** intentional about a lot of things, right?

- a. We get quite intentional about money **[pic]**—about earning it, spending it, saving it, keeping records of it. We **learn** that being **sincere** about making money, saving money, and spending it isn't enough. You have to get **intentional**—tracking it, budgeting it—and giving it.
- b. How many of you are intentional about your cars? **[pic]** When our kids cough and whine, we say, "Suck it up! You'll be fine!" Our **cars** cough and whine—and we obsess over them! Speak tenderly to them; feed them special fluids—take them to specialists. We even **polish** them—**wax on, wax off!**
- c. We're **very** intentional about recreation and exercise. Cottages, boats, golf games demand **attention!** We make regular pilgrimages to great temples that smell like sweat—and offer our fat on the altar! **[pic]** Sports teams? Businesses? TSE? All **very** intentional!
- d. Why do people get intentional about all that stuff? Because **there is power in being intentional!** In fact, truth is—there's not a lot about parenting, education, having a great career, saving money, or building a great friendship or marriage—or making a difference in the world that...**just happens.**

7. God is **THE most intentional Being** in the Universe. In fact, His entire plan for us was laid out before there was **anything!** He knew He'd make us in His Image—and we'd barely be out of the starting gate when we would go down hard. But He had a **plan!** He chose a family, a people—and used them to prepare the world for His Son. This plan, this story was woven through all this history, poems and prophecies in the Bible. And in **God's** perfect timing—He, himself, surprised everyone by showing up right here:

**But when the time arrived that was set by God the Father, God sent his Son, born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law so that he might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law.**  
(Galatians 4:4-5 MSG)

-So Jesus came. It became clear that He was going to do His work through ordinary, messed up, flawed, quirky people—weird people like me—and weird people like you! So weird we'd have to be changed, first. So His plan was to gather us to Himself—with each other--forgive us, transform us, love us, empower us—and then use us as

an imperfect but powerful influence wherever we go. Our *lives* would be Good News—and our *message* would be Good News.

-His calling—and His command are quite clear. Go! All the authority of heaven and earth has been given to me; I'll call you the **Church—ones who have been called out**—and I'll be with you until I finally wrap everything up. So—travel light, remember that the mission is urgent, *value* the power and life and opportunity I've given you...and **Go!**"

-You could ask, **Why? Why should I? I mean, if this is going to, as Jesus said, make me like a lamb among wolves, call me to inconvenience and sacrifice, create discomfort in my relational world—WHY SHOULD I BE MORE THAN NOMINAL?**

-Maybe the question should be—where's your treasure? Like, do you have the crosshairs on your grave marker? Is the goal of life to just be happy, use God to serve *you*—and bring good things your way—you know, health, money, happiness, the same thing everyone else wants?

-See, Jesus' call is something beyond ourselves. Jesus said that our joy and meaning and hope will *not* be found in **servicing** ourselves—but in **giving** ourselves to God's amazing plan to make *everything* right. The Church is not something you *go* to. The Church is something that you *go from!* And there has *never* been a vision for anything in the world like Jesus' vision for His **CHURCH**. And that's why it has endured for 2000 years—and will *continue* to endure!

-When everything else is on the ash heap of history, there will be nothing shining in the universe like the Church. When every company, every corporation has shut down its bureaucracy and closed its doors. When McDonald's has sold its last hamburger, when Apple has made its last I-phone, when Google has googled its last factoid, when Facebook has connected its final friend and Twitter has chirped its last tweet, and Timmy's has sold its last donut and coffee, the **Church** will still be there. **Spread out through time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners**—seen only by the Sovereign God who thought it up!

-I *guarantee* you--on that day—every person who has ever lived will either be *so* glad they were a part of it—or *wish* they had been. Because, see, then God's amazing plan will be clear—how He used a motley crew of flawed people who were like lambs among wolves—now beautiful and strong—to accomplish a perfect plan!

## Q & A

8. A few weeks ago during Remembrance Week, I watched the movie, **Saving Private Ryan**. It's a story about a Mom who lost 3 of her 4 sons on D Day. So a platoon of men, led by Tom Hanks character—were sent to bring her one surviving son, Private Ryan, home safely. In the course of doing that most of these men lost their lives. I cried as I saw this final scene. Watch.

**[Saving Private Ryan Video]**

-Can you imagine the weight of those words on your soul from a man who's given his life for you, ***Earn this!***

-Jesus, in his dying breath, never told people to ***earn*** the sacrifice He made. We couldn't. But the early followers of Jesus had a phrase that was close. As they gave their lives for Christ—gladly, I might add—their words to those who would occupy the future were these—and I'll close with them. They indicate a life that has weight—impact. They're taken from Paul's prayer for the followers of Jesus in Colossae:

**We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may *live a life worthy of the Lord* and please him in every way... (Colossians 1:9-10 NIV)**

-May I...may you...may ***we*** live lives that have the ***weight*** of Jesus' life...that are ***worthy of the Lord!*** Can I get an ***Amen?!***