

Topic: Fake Faiths

Scriptural References

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, 2 Tim 2:2-4, 1 Peter 5:8, James 2:14-26

Biblical Explanation

Our aim as a community of faith is for believers to grow in Christ (Acts 2:42-47) through learning God's word, enjoying fellowship with one another, praying alone and with church members, and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with non-believers. While glorifying God is what we were made to do, over the years many have fallen victim to either rejecting that Jesus is Lord, redefining God on their own terms, or worshipping a being God created. In our local context, community members—some professing Christians and some not—are being deceived into joining faith groups like the 5 Percenters, Hebrew Israelites, and the Nation of Islam.

These three groups are different but have a common theology that elevates black men to the role of a supreme being, one who is more intelligent, stronger, and more powerful than any other culture. They believe power is innate because of who black people are. Sadly, white Christians have contributed toward the creation of this theology through what James calls a dead faith—a faith that is mental and believes in God yet does not work itself out in social interactions and everyday life (James 2:14-26). Specifically, a faith that worships God but does not consider black people as sisters and brothers who are equally created in the image of God communicates a superiority that the three groups hope to attain. Historically and currently this type of faith has been demonstrated to the African American community from some white Christians.

The gospel speaks of certain challenges that seek to rob believers of their joy and faith in Christ. In Matthew 13:1-9 & 18-23 Jesus shares a parable, which is a story used to communicate a deep truth, about a farmer spreading seeds with hope of a great harvest. Jesus explains that seeds can flourish in good rich soil, but in shallow rocky areas as well as areas with weeds the seeds do not grow and they wither away. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2), which means He is the only one who can create faith in people. But people can be used by Satan to create rocky environments or serve as weeds that choke the understanding of gospel out of others. For instance, slavery, Jim Crow, denial of civil rights, wars on drugs, police brutality are all expressions of white Christians historically loving God and believing in

Him yet treating their neighbor, their black neighbor, as if he were less than human. The dehumanizing of black people leads folks to not only reject white culture, but also reject anything associated with white culture like the God who is believed to be on the side of white people and happens to be depicted as white. That type of treatment generation after generation leads blacks to have a desire to be viewed with dignity, value, and worth.

With this void present, local groups in our community and in urban centers around the nation (primarily in the north) have risen in stature and grown in numbers, grabbing new members and converting Christians to their false doctrine because they are speaking to the void created by Christians. The 5 percenters believe, *"that the Black man (collectively) was the "Original Man" and "God," and (the founder) "rejected" the Nation of Islam's doctrine that its light-skinned founder, Wallace Fard Muhammad, was Allah. Members of the group call themselves Allah's Five Percenters, which reflects the concept that ten percent of the people in the world know the truth of existence, and those elites and their agents opt to keep eighty-five percent of the world in ignorance and under their controlling thumb; the remaining five percent are those who know the truth and are determined to enlighten the eighty-five percent.* (Wikipedia). *"The Nation of Islam (NOI) is an African American political and religious movement, founded in Detroit, Michigan, United States, by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad on July 4, 1930. Its stated goals are to improve the spiritual, mental, social, and economic condition of African Americans in the United States."* (Wikipedia) *"Black Hebrew Israelites (also called Black Hebrews, African Hebrew Israelites, and Hebrew Israelites) are groups of Black Americans who believe that they are the descendants of the ancient Israelites. This identification with the Israelites was a response to the sociopolitical realities of their situation in the United States, including slavery and racial discrimination. For African Americans, appropriating Jewish history was part of a rebellion against the American racial hierarchy that deemed Africans inferior. It was also a means of fulfilling their desire to know their origins and regain their lost history"* (Wikipedia). These doctrines are black supremacy at its finest, but serve as a means of providing the dignity, value, and worth many African Americans are starving and hungering for. But these doctrines mimic that of white supremacy, which is embedded within culture and is considered normal. White supremacy within Christian contexts also falls prey to making God meet and suit our needs to be just like us. For Jesus to look white, be on the side of American wars, provide blessing and prosperity to those within the church are norms within the broader white church.

Jesus is clear that the gospel gets choked out because of weeds and shallow soil and our aim as a church is to prevent any person that might accept Christ from being deceived and the gospel not fully growing deep in your heart. Whether white or

black, the question is what void is present that you may seek to fill with something other than the gospel? This Fellowship Guide gives us the black experience because present today in our community are the three groups mentioned which are threats to believers and nonbelievers. But the void can be present from an absent father, low self worth from being bullied at school, poverty, body image issues, drug abuse in your upbringing, physical and/or sexual abuse. The list of contributors to our voids can go on forever, but Jesus Christ died to restore all things and to fill our deepest pain and deepest void. Jesus is our answer because He is our peace and our resting place. Jesus calls each of His believers to believe in Him and to put their faith in action, to live their love for God in a way that it does not hinder others but helps them know Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:2-4 says, “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” This verse is fitting because today many people are pursuing, “teachers to suit their own passions”, but our prayer is that while recognizing the need to reprove, rebuke and exhort you will first enter into these types of dialogues with “complete patience”. Be patient as people share their void. Don’t debate whether their void is valid. Simply provide a listening ear and build capacity and seek wisdom for the correct time to encourage, reprove, exhort, and rebuke. May God help us all as we bring our voids to him.

Main Points

- We desire for the body of Christ to grow.
- Growth can be encouraged by community and support or discouraged by denial of community and dehumanization
- In our community of 48214, we have black faith-based organizations that are rising in stature and converting believers and non-believers to their false doctrines.
- Some Christians have believed in God but treated their neighbor as less than human and that type of treatment has helped create a void in black people. The void is of value, dignity, and worth in the eyes of whites.
- Christ died to shatter all voids—that they would be filled by Him and all need would be met in Him.
- White supremacy and black supremacy have no place in God’s kingdom because He is the only supreme one and He has made us all equal.
- Recognizing that people have created faiths as a response to pain will help you minister and serve others as your guide folks to Jesus Christ.

- Be patient with people giving them a chance to be heard. You can listen and at times affirm (if legitimate) their pain and void. Be wise when it is best to challenge them on their theology.
- Witness, share Christ, and recognize people have pain that may be hindering them from hearing the gospel. Ask someone to pray with or for you if you know this is you and you are not going as deep as you should be because of a pain or void in your life.

Suggested Questions

- What are the best environments for new Christians to grow in their understanding of Jesus Christ?
- What types of challenges would make it tough for a new believer in our community to grow deeper in their faith?
- What type of void might exist in the young white hipster that moved in Detroit in the last year? What type of void might exist in the middle aged black resident of Detroit?
- Name and describe some ideas, entities, or norms that seek to choke out the gospel.
- Name voids that some people have and places where people find community to fill that void.
- How might racism, sexism, etc. affect a person's ability to own the gospel?

Additional Resources

- Jamon Jordan - Historian. Black Scroll History and Tours. <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/black-scroll-network-history-amp-tours-10947541087>
- Slavery in Detroit. <http://mappingdetroitslavery.com/graphs.php>
- Michaels, Tiya. (2017). THE DAWN OF DETROIT A CHRONICLE OF SLAVERY AND FREEDOM IN THE CITY OF THE STRAITS.
- Lambert, Tim. A Brief History of Detroit Michigan. <http://www.localhistories.org/detroit.html>
- CuriosiD: Who Were the Natives in Detroit? by Laura Herberg | May 1, 2017. <https://wdet.org/posts/2017/04/30/85115-curiosid-who-were-the-natives-in-detroit/>
- MYTHS & MISUNDERSTANDINGS: THE NORTH AND SLAVERY. The American Civil War Museum. <https://acwm.org/blog/myths-misunderstandings-north-and-slavery>
- 7 Things You May Not Know About Malcolm X. <https://www.history.com/news/7-things-you-may-not-know-about-malcolm-x>
- Allen, Richard (Bishop). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Allen_\(bishop\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Allen_(bishop))

- History of African Americans in Detroit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_African_Americans_in_Detroit
- Blake, John Malcolm and Martin, closer than we ever thought: <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/05/19/Malcolm.x.king/index.html>
- Five-Percent Nation - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five-Percent_Nation
- Nation of Islam - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_of_Islam
- Hebrew Israelite - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Hebrew_Israelites