

THE DIVERSE CHURCH

God's Model

Other Writings

by

DR. KENNETH HAROLD McMILLAN

God First

The Lord, the Link, and the Lost

Realize Everything Succeeds Under Loving

the Son

THE DIVERSE CHURCH

God's Model

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Preface

The world in which we live is vastly diverse. Individuals from many cultures reside in it. Because some of the cultures overlap, the number of cultures is unknown. Because of immigration, many individuals from various cultures reside within the United States. At one time in the country's history, it appeared that embracing diversity was the trend. This, of course, was post slavery and after Americans elected a Black man for president of the United States. In recent years, however, this apparent trend went downhill. Almost suddenly, the tide turned, and racism raised its ugly head again.

I frequently ask the question: "Where is the church in all of this?" I know where it should be, but this question resonates with me quite often. Other questions are: Where is the love? Where is the love for mankind? Where is the love of God? The breaking news of the day is literally about one or more heinous crimes that were deemed racially motivated. I also ask: "Why do people hate others because of their skin color?" Why does one race have a superiority complex, denoting mem-

bers of the race are more intelligent or more favored than another race? All human beings have the same color blood. "Why should skin tone matter?" "Why can't we just get along?" I believe the answer lies in the fact that nothing is new under the sun. Extreme ideologies have always been in existence. However, they did not appear to be as blatant as they are today, especially in the United States, where racial unrest and violence have become the new normal.

Jesus knew racism would exist in the world because He dealt with it when He walked the earth. It surfaced among the Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans. Individuals of one race thought themselves to be superior to or better than the other and viewed another race as an outcast. This is a major problem with racism in today's world. People are being taught that their race is superior, and others are inferior. This is contrary to the teachings of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, because we were all created in the image of God: *"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He*

created them” (Gen. 1:27). Thus, we were created as equals.

Jesus was the epitome of love and commanded us to love. In fact, He gave the greatest command:

“...You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” and stated, “And the second is like it:” *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’* (Matt. 22:37, 39).

Racism projects a degree of fear. It is apparent that some fear their race will be in the minority if they do not kill or force out those who are, in their minds, in the majority race, moving them to the side or causing them to lose control. The Word of God refutes that thought pattern and clearly states that love triumphs fear: *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us”* (1 John 14:18-21).

The church—the body of Christ—was left intact to lead the way in demonstrating unconditional

love for all humankind. All means including or not excluding anyone of any race or ethnicity/culture. The last question is “If we cannot come together down here on earth, how do we expect to be together in Heaven?” We, the church, must take the lead and fulfill the purpose for which we were called—to be a light on the hill—to evangelize to the unsaved and the unchurched, and to demonstrate the love of God so they will be welcomed in Heaven where race and ethnicity will be no more. This book was generated out of a desire to help church leaders and laity deal with the questions posed to ensure inclusiveness.

Chapter 1

Introduction

God's universal plan for humanity was and continues to be that men, women, children, and youth of all nations live in peace and harmony with themselves and with Him. However, that paradigm was shifted in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2-3; Ezek. 28, 31). Initially, no pain or suffering existed. There were no conflicts, opposition, pride, rebellion, or arrogance. Only peace, happiness, and joy granted by God, prevailed. However, when disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve entered the scene, it was no longer a paradise. I am thankful that Jesus, the Son of God, paid the ultimate price for not only the sin of Adam and Eve, our foreparents who had broken the beautiful relationship they shared with Christ, but for our sins as well. I am eternally grateful that Jesus reconciled us to Him by sacrificing His life on the cross (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:20-21).

God's plan is all-encompassing. It is not discriminatory. There is no place in His plan for racial or ethnic hatred. It includes people of all nations because God is the creator of diversity and multiculturalism. He created us in His image. However, with His creative power, He created us as unique individuals. He crafted the birth process in such a way that no individual would ever

be born with the same fingerprint as that of another. He willed it so that some individuals would look identical, e. g., identical twins. He also willed it that others would have a different appearance. However, even identical twins are uniquely created. God made sure that there would be something different about them. The difference may be minute, but it exists. He also willed it so that individuals would have different skin tones, hair textures, personalities, reside in different parts of the universe to establish individual cultures, and speak in different languages. He did it all for a purpose—His purpose.

God did not create a superior race or an inferior race. Neither did He create a superior church or an inferior church, as it is written that He is no respecter of persons: *“For there is no partiality with God”* (Rom. 2:11). He blessed all people: *“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham before-hand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed”* (Gal. 3:8). He created unique individuals and expected them to respect individualities and to live, worship, and work together. As recorded in 2 Cor., followers of Christ will be rewarded for their work in the church: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what*

he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Regarding the universal plan of God, it appears that mankind is causing a negative shift—a shift toward absolute division in the home, on the job, on the topics of race and ethnicity, on church, and among churches. Division is almost everywhere and in almost everything. God does not want us to be in a divisive place. It is not part of His plan, and it is not divinely acceptable. We pray for God to let His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven: *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10). However, do we really want what we are requesting of God? If we say and mean we want what God wants, we will acknowledge and accept His universal plan. Specifically, God's charge is to the church, the body of Christ.

Chapter 2

The True Church

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:13)

Disciples of Christ believe the Word of God is the blueprint for life, and as noted in the book of Colossians, they believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the church: “*And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence*” (Col. 1:18). Another scripture referencing Christ as the head of the church is found in Ephesians: “*For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body*” (Eph. 5:23).

The true church of the living God is diverse: “*For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another*” (Rom. 12:4-5). The church at Corinth was multicultural. Its makeup consisted of Romans and Greeks—Jews and Gentiles—with varied cultures which resulted in varied issues, causing division. The Apostle Paul, however, was instrumental in resolving the issues pre-

sented to him. Problems will exist in any church. Thus, issues are going to occur in a church with diverse personalities, diverse races, and diverse cultures. The key is to follow Paul's example in solving problems in the church at Corinth. He used the Word of God to resolve the issues.

The true multicultural church is ready to live out her creed--to embrace the community as a whole--every man, woman, boy, or girl--regardless of race or culture. To fulfill the mission, the multicultural church must be open to God and acknowledge His grace and mercy. When the church embraces the mercy and grace of God as the foundation, doors are opened for the people to dialogue, worship, and receive the blessings of God. His expectation is for a diverse church. Afterall, diverse is the description of the heavenly church: "*And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 8:11). Another vivid description of the heavenly church is disclosed by John, the disciple of Jesus:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white

robes, with palm branches in their hands. (Rev. 7:9)

Thus, while here on earth, we must work with and be cordial to people of other races and ethnicities if we expect to be offered a seat at the table when we get to heaven.

Worshipping with fellow Christians of all nations has great rewards. We are advised to take time to reflect and fellowship with our brothers and sisters—fellow believers—to lift and encourage one another:

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:24-25)

The scriptures do not suggest the assembling of homogeneous races or nationalities. In this specific scripture, Jews and Gentiles were represented. The implication, however, is that race and nationality are not factors to be considered in the gathering of believers, as believers consist of individuals from all over the world who need to remain in the Word, in fellowship, and in prayer for one another, as noted in

the second chapter of Acts: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

Every person or group must be energized and/or involved in continued development, and Christians are not exempt. They, too, need to be restored or energized to do the work in the Kingdom. To reach this point, Christians must concentrate on individually developing both their faith and their prayer life, seeking the unmerited favor of God, as noted in Jude:

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (Jude 1:20-21)

To remain in the love of God, the love of God must first be in the heart. This is the only way to sustain it, and it is certainly the only way to display the love of God in the way He commands: *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* Actuality, this is the only way for others to recognize followers of Christ: *“By this all will know that you are My disciples,*

if you have love for one another” (John 13:33-35).

Believers of every nation are God’s hands, feet, and mouthpiece. In completing our God-given tasks, we are called to work together with God: *“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building”* (1 Cor. 3:9). Fellow believers of different races and ethnicities are unique in terms of skin tone and culture. They also speak different languages. However, according to the 12th chapter of Corinthians, believers are all one family: *“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ”* (1 Cor.12). Because of commonality in belief in Jesus Christ, believers from every nation are related—they have a strong connection.

As it is written in the scriptures, they do not feel disconnected because their hearts are linked in Christian love: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”* (Eph. 2:19). The gospel of Jesus Christ is for all: *“that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel”* (Eph. 3:6).

While there are no clear cut and dried rules to embracing diversity in the church, church leaders who are genuinely

serious about fulfilling the Great Commission know it is something that must be done. Every church must decide and devise methods of creating diversity. One way to create diversity is by utilizing best practices of other churches that have been successful in their attempts. Diversity may also be created by churches utilizing their own methods and resources from within their established congregations. Church leaders may also solicit advice from experts in the field of diversity to assist them in this endeavor. Thus, the true church is multicultural in nature, and churches of today must permit the Holy Spirit to lead and guide in all undertakings.

As church leaders rethink the design, makeup, and establishment of the church, many have come to not only view the church as being multicultural in nature but have acted on making it a reality—just as God planned. This bold movement has positively affected non-believers and church members who had stopped or almost stopped attending church services. It has also been a motivational force and has significantly created unity in worship with varied cultures.

When churches operate as instructed in the Word of God, diversity will be at its core. All individuals visiting or connecting with the church will feel welcomed. Church members will not see

races nor nationalities; they will only see individuals who look and act differently. Evangelism ministries will be adept in reaching out to people of varied races, and ethnicities. Much work is needed in operating a church on earth that mirrors the church in Heaven, but it can be done. Using the blueprint for life—the Bible—is key.

Chapter 3

Diversity in the Worship Experience

Because of established immigration laws, the United States has become more diverse. Passage of these laws has made it possible for a variety of ethnic groups to enter the country, making it the *melting pot*. Initially, upon entering the country, the varied ethnic groups lived almost totally isolated from the rest of society, practicing their own cultures. This lifestyle spilled over into the churches, and individuals of the same ethnicity worshipped together, isolating themselves from other cultures. In general, America was divided within itself. Communities were segregated; workplaces and schools were no exceptions. A major shift occurred, however, in the workplace, schools, communities, and churches throughout the United States.

During this time, America moved from a segregated society to an integrated society in all areas. Within recent years, however, the trend seems to be shifting backwards. Changes have taken place in the workplace, in schools, in communities throughout the United States, and in churches. Surprisingly, the trend seems to be shifting back to segregated or partially segregated schools as several parents are pulling their children out of integrated

public schools and enrolling them in private predominately one-race schools. The trend, however, is not to a resegregated society because communities and the workplaces remain integrated. Specifically, the trend involves churches with declining memberships combining or worshipping with other churches, producing a somewhat cross or multi-cultured effect. It also involves people exercising freedom of choice to attend, visit, or connect with the church of their choice, without regard to race or ethnicity.

As society diversifies, local churches find themselves interacting with people from every tribe and tongue, but not every church is equipped to handle the realities of ethnic and racial diversity in their congregational life. They must be willing, however, to do what is necessary to fulfill the great commission and to follow the guidelines for establishing churches as outlined in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. Thus, if the church is to be effective, she must follow the examples outlined in the scriptures, which were inspired by God. Churches must rethink the purpose, take an internal look at the institution, come together, and rebuild as God has planned. John writes:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (Rev. 7:9)

One challenge in building the multicultural church is with church members who reject the multicultural concept. When congregations become diverse, anxiety increases, and attitudes of prejudice and tension are not likely to disappear. What usually happens is that both attitudes surface more. In fact, some people do not realize their prejudices until they are placed in a multicultural setting, especially if they feel it was forced on them. The church in the 21st century has attempted to meet the needs of all people by going to where they are.

In diverse communities, the local church must meet the needs of the varied population. It is the only thing to do because the church was founded on this principle. Jesus exhorts all to love and to follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit. However, some churches have their own initiatives and programs and only cater to the members of their congregation and those who are in need who live within the

church community. They also cater to those who mirror the makeup of the congregation. Churches that fail to understand that the less fortunate can come from any race or culture fail to put love in action. Therefore, they fail to heed God's command.

The aim of the diverse church is to unite people across racial and cultural lines. However, if it is to have any effect on the community, the words of Jesus Christ must be heeded, and a right relationship with the Holy Spirit must be obtained and maintained. The church, established as God planned, should be blind in terms of the race or culture of those in need of assistance. Race or culture should not matter. The Bible specifically commands the church to meet the physical needs of the less fortunate:

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? (James 2:15-16)

Generally, people in any given community will not listen if they do not see love in action. Countless surveys have been conducted and reveal similar reasons

why so many people do not attend church. The responses convey that several people do not attend church because of previous adverse worship experiences. The worship experience should not be unfavorable. It should be full of love. People attending worship services want to see and feel love. Love must fill the atmosphere--from the door to the pulpit and choir stand.

In the traditional church, people selected their place of worship based on principles and denominational relationships. Baptists, e.g., searched for Baptist churches, and Methodists searched for Methodist churches. Likewise, white people searched for churches comprised of all or predominately white members, and black people searched for churches with all or predominately black members. That is no longer the case. Times have changed and people appear to be more concerned about the style of worship and the quality of ministry.

Evangelism, of course, should not and must not be forgotten because times and desires have changed or because it is not the primary purpose of worship. It is, however, as important now as it ever has been because without it, the Great Commission would fall down the tube. In essence, the worship experience is extremely important to worshippers, and they must be made to feel a part of the

experience. This is true particularly in most multicultural communities where the residents hear more talk and see little to no expressions of love. When they attend church, they must be well received and made a part of the worship experience. If not, their first visit may be their last visit. It is true that a first impression is a lasting impression—at least where church is concerned. Many are seeking a church home, and what they see and/or hear on their first visit would have a lasting effect on them. It may be the deciding factor when they are ready to choose a church home. Church members must recognize and treat guests as their neighbors. After all, they are truly neighbors. Church members should also heed God's command to love them as they love themselves and value them mainly because they, too, are created in the image of God.

Pastors are key in the building of a multicultural church as they must set the tone. They must lead in the decision-making process regarding the worship experience, which must be meaningful for all worshippers--regardless of race or culture. They must be change agents and able to lead their congregations into positive change. This change must positively affect all who enter the doors of the church.

Pastors must allow the Holy Spirit to lead in the building of the church across racial and cultural lines. They must also be knowledgeable of the characteristics of a church in relation to the worship service, which includes everything from the physical environment and the sermon to the invitation to discipleship. In addition, pastors must be knowledgeable of the needs of the congregants and the racial and cultural makeup of the church community. With this knowledge, they must initiate a plan of action to meet the needs. Most importantly, they must be willing to, with the assistance of other church leaders, redesign the entire structure of worship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Diversity in the body of Christ comes in many forms. Among many things, its composition includes a variety of personalities. Even within a homogeneous church where people have what is said to be commonality in e.g., race, age, and/or economic status, some will have different personality types. They may not permit their personality differences to break the common bond, but they still exist. Because of the composition of a multiethnic, multiracial, and multigenerational church, the expectation should be that a variety of personality types or differences exist.

Referencing human nature, some people are almost always positive, and others are almost always negative. Neither ethnicity nor generation has anything to do with the positive-negative factor. It is simply human nature. Generally, people have differences of opinion because they have different thought processes. Some people are trusting while others are skeptical. Some people simply like different things, but they may like to do things differently.

Because the church is made up of imperfect people, personality clashes are to be expected at some point in time—even in the body of Christ. Such differences may surface during discussions regarding certain topics, e.g., dress, time, music, and songs. Some questions may be: What type attire is appropriate for church? What time should church start? Should hymns be discontinued? Should only praise music be played? Should songs of praise be sung? Should only contemporary music be played? These type questions should be answered with a great deal of tact, keeping the congregation and the term *diverse* in consideration. They must be answered in a respectful manner, considering the diverse congregants.

While everybody will never be completely satisfied, decisions concerning these matters should be communicated

clearly. Specifically, they must be just and fair. It is, however, contingent upon the pastor, or his or her designee, to arrest issues of this type that may adversely affect the church body. The Apostle Paul had to deal with many issues in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:10–4:21; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Cor. 6:1-11; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; 1 Cor. 7:1-40; 8:1-11:1; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 1 Cor. 12:1-14:40; 1 Cor. 15:1-58). Likewise, pastors are confronted with many issues within the church. A review of the issues encountered by Paul and how he dealt with them would prove to be helpful to any pastor or ministry leader. As evident in the scriptures outlined above, Paul dealt with issues from divisiveness to immorality—major issues in this moment and time.

As the Apostle Paul dealt with the issues presented to him, he pointed the people to Jesus Christ. While some issues are simply petty, others are not so petty. Those things that are contrary to the teachings of Christ are not petty. They need to be addressed expeditiously. The color of the choir robes, i.e., would be considered petty by those with their eyes on Jesus and on advancing His Kingdom. The conflict should be settled, however, but focused disciples of Christ would feel it is a waste of their time to dwell on such, as time is not only precious; it is fleeting. Their belief is

that a consensus should dictate, which would simply pave the way to move on to more important things.

The gospel of Christ is too important to spend precious time on petty stuff. Paul explained how to handle conflict. Initially, he noted that disciples of Christ should not be in conflict. He noted that they should be about peace. They should be calm and modest in helping those who oppose see the error of their ways:

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth. (2 Tim. 2:24-25)

While Paul was a great mentor, the ultimate mentor is our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. He dealt with a variety of personalities and issues within and outside of his inner circle. Thus, pastors and ministry leaders are instructed to follow His lead.

In addition to personalities, diversity in the church includes various types of music, praise, and songs. This is evident in Colossians: “... *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*” (Col.

3:16b). At the forefront of praise and worship is Jehovah God. Every song, every praise, and every instrument played is to glorify Him and Him only. All praise is to God, our heavenly Father, and He wants all who praise Him to do so comfortably and happily.

People—the unchurched in particular—can tell when much planning has been done to prepare for the worship experience. Likewise, they can tell when little to no planning has been done. They understand and visibly see how the quality of a worship experience is directly connected to the amount of planning that has been done in preparing for the service.

Chapter 4

Diversity in Praise and Worship

A congregation that is racially and culturally diverse requires diversity in praise and worship. We all are to praise God together on earth as we will be praising Him together in Heaven. John saw this scenario in a vision:

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! (Rev. 5:13)

A racially and culturally diverse congregation can also be intergenerational. This group must not be omitted. The older generation may prefer traditional songs and hymns; however, the younger generation may prefer more contemporary and/or upbeat music, songs, and hymns.

In seeking to understand the desires of prospective members who are members of varied cultures, church leaders must take into consideration their choice of music. Once it is determined, they must design or redesign the worship experience to include a variety of music. Variety, in general, is what church leaders must

provide if they expect to attract people from varied cultures. The variety can be broad and must also include the time scheduled for worship. Some cultures prefer early worship; others prefer midmorning or evening worship. Therefore, church leaders must consider the desires of their target group. They must realize that they cannot cater to every person who lives in the church community, but they can, however, make every person who enters the church doors feel welcomed, then extend an invitation to discipleship and fellowship. Church leaders must also remember that the desires and interests of the target group must remain the primary focus.

Visitors and unchurched persons are very observant. They not only have an eye for detail but an ear for detail as well. They know poor quality when they see it--whether it is in the music or in the sermon. Thus, ministry of music leaders must be knowledgeable in various types of music, be willing to prepare the choir and congregation to sing a variety of songs and ensure that the music and songs are as diverse as the congregation. This takes experience and a considerable amount of time.

More and more church administrators understand that society is more visual today than it was in previous years. The sky is the limit in the use of special

emphasis. The key is taking advantage of the many ways to use it and creating excellent ways to have meaningful fellowship. The use of special emphases gains and holds the interest of the audience. Lyrics on projection screens satisfy the taste of the congregants. Projection screens can also be used to include the words to the songs or the message in different languages. Some churches use slides to project words to songs or hymns on projection screens, while others use pictures that complement the songs or the message. This use of media is especially good in the multicultural church and is an excellent aid to help worshippers of varied cultures to see the words and pictures if they are having a problem understanding the songs or the message. Church leaders, however, will need to have knowledge of the various cultures of frequent guests and/or the culture that is in the majority within the church community to have an effective multimedia platform.

Choirs may be retained or moved to an ensemble-led ministry of music. The apparent bottom line is that everyone who plays a part in the worship experience should be considered in the selection of music and choirs. This is especially true for the guests, because they are, for the most part, the target group. Even if it

means a blend of tradition with contemporary, the masses will be satisfied.

The music ministry is only one area in which diversity should be incorporated within a multiethnic, multiracial, and multigenerational church. Leadership should be diverse. Ministry leaders should be representative of the congregation. Facilitators should also be diverse. All that matters is that they believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior, study the Word of God, teach the Word of God, and make disciples for Christ. This would be one way to help a diverse congregation overcome anxieties about another culture or race and decide to embrace it.

Church leaders and/or administrators should keep abreast of technological trends and methods of reaching people. They need to focus on what is needed to draw the unchurched to the church. They do not remain stagnant. They constantly seek ways to improve, especially in the worship experience. Specifically, the format for worship should be diversified. The diverse congregation should be taken into consideration. Seeking suggestions from the various segments would prove helpful. As more and more church leaders rethink the design, makeup, and establishment of the church, they begin to perceive the church as being diverse in nature—just

as God had planned. This bold movement has positively affected non-believers and church members who had stopped or almost stopped attending church services. It has significantly created unity in worship with varied cultures. This new trend involves churches with declining membership combining with other churches, producing a somewhat diverse or multicultural effect.

People like to visit churches with a relaxed environment. In building a multicultural church, church leaders must be knowledgeable of the desired style of worship of the varied cultures they are trying to reach. Prospective guests may desire to dress down; they may even desire a different style of music. Whatever they desire that will relax them, church leaders should address them and do whatever is necessary to oblige, within reason. When church leaders make decisions to revamp the worship experience to fit the preferred style of those in attendance, they create a relaxed atmosphere—one that will attract or ensure repeat guests who may be considered prospective members.

The concept, *variety*, is about difference. Just as people like different things, some worshippers seem to prefer a variety of speakers. It breaks the monotony. It is understood that not all worshippers like a variety of speakers. Some church members

will not go to church when they know the pastor of the church will not be there. By the same token, worshippers who enjoy a variety of speakers take advantage of the opportunities they are afforded to hear other ministers. They thoroughly become engrossed in the different messages and styles of preaching. The multicultural church is positioned to provide that opportunity. When this type of variety is included, it shows the worshippers that the church leaders are understanding and value the members and guests who represent varied cultures. The use of multiple speakers for special times such as revival, or when the pastor is away is good, but going beyond and utilizing multiple speakers throughout the year, regardless of whether the pastor is present or absent is an added bonus.

A most important aspect of the entire worship experience is scheduling. The designated days and time of worship are very important. Leaders in the multicultural church must be cognizant of the scheduling factor because they must ensure the established schedule is convenient for the targeted cultures. Thus, church leaders should survey the congregants, prospective members—those who visit often—and unchurched and unsaved community residents to determine the best schedule to accommodate them.

Church leaders should be reminded of the element of convenience, which is very important to worshippers. Convenience, however, is different for different people. Church leaders should consider this aspect because frequency and time are items that impact attendance. When determining frequency, church leaders must understand that what is convenient for one worshipper may not be convenient for another. Church leaders must also understand that the worship schedule should include variety and flexibility because different cultures have different preferences.

Multiple services should be catered to the styles of the various worshippers. In this regard, worshippers are satisfied because their needs are being met, and their style of worship is being considered. This fits well in the multicultural church, given the varied styles and cultures. Thus, progressive church leaders must use this knowledge, acquired via observation and survey data, and provide as many services as needed.

Guests do not put forth the effort to attend church to hear what is wrong in the church or to hear anything negative. They attend because they desire a positive atmosphere in which to have a positive worship experience. Among the things that many people from various cultures seek in a church is that of a positive environment,

one that is far from what they get in the community and/or in the workplace. Progressive churches strive to recognize and remove all distractions or interferences in any part of the service. They are particularly concerned with hospitality—ensuring that all in attendance feel comfortable.

Chapter 5

Evangelism

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Spreading the Gospel—the Good News—was important to Jesus, our Lord and Savior, as He issued the following mandate to His disciples before ascending to Heaven: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Matt. 28:19). He had spent a lot of time imparting knowledge to the 12 men He chose to mentor. As their mentor, He counseled, taught, and supported them.

As any good mentor would desire for his or her mentee to carry on the process with another mentee and create a chain, Jesus was no exception. In fact, He was the first mentor—the first teacher—the greatest teacher who created the greatest lesson plan! He was neither self-centered nor selfish. He left His lesson plan with His mentees and insisted that they follow it and pass it on to the next generation who would be equipped to do likewise: *“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).

In the teaching-learning process, Jesus expounded and demonstrated, ensuring that the disciples understood clearly. He was the model teacher! He varied His teaching methods and taught in individual, small, and whole group sessions. He was not just a master teacher; He was *the* master teacher! He had the disciples train directly under Him and sent them out to perform certain ministry tasks to ensure they had the skill level and confidence to do what He had done. In doing so, He was able to show them what they needed to correct. He wanted to make sure they were ready to carry the torch. As teachers do, He gave them tests. He tested their faith and trust in Him. He told them exactly what they needed to do to at least do what He had done: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father"* (John 14:12).

Before sending them out the Lord gave the disciples the blueprint in the form of step-by-step instructions, telling them exactly where to go and what to do when they got there:

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go

into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.

Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it.

If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. (Matt. 10:5-14)

Although Jesus exhorts all to love and to follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit,

some churches have their own initiatives and programs and only cater to the members of their congregation. They also only cater to those who are in need who live within the church community and who mirror the makeup of the congregation. Churches that fail to understand that the less fortunate can come from any race or culture, fail to put love in action and therefore, fail to heed God's command.

The aim of the multicultural church is to unite people across racial and cultural lines. However, if the church is to have an impact on the community, the words of Jesus Christ must be heeded, and a right relationship with the Holy Spirit must be obtained and maintained. The church, established as God planned, should be blind in terms of the race or culture of those in need of assistance. Race or culture should not matter; the Word of God specifically instructs the church to meet the physical needs of the less fortunate:

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
(James 2:15-17)

Pastors, other church leaders and laity must be willing to do what is necessary to fulfill the great commission and to follow the guidelines for establishing churches as outlined in the New Testament of the Holy Bible. To do so, they must be trained in evangelism. They must also be in expectation and receptive mode as God places non-Christians in their path, granting opportunities for association and evangelism.

Meeting needs has been a mission of the church from the beginning. The church at Antioch cut across the entire social spectrum—from Herod's foster brother to the slave. In addition, the community cut across racial lines (the Jews and the Gentiles) not only in theory, but also in practice. When the people at Antioch heard that the Jews had a material need in a different geographical location, they combined their funds and sent them to meet the needs of their brothers: *“Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”* (Acts 11:29-30). This action involves missions and evangelism. The multicultural church is committed to meeting the needs of a

varied population, and evangelism is intertwined in meeting those needs.

Churches not willing to open their doors and embrace the multicultural concept will not grow. They must learn how to truly honor and worship God by establishing and maintaining a balance. At the same time, they must be about fulfilling the purpose for its existence which is wrapped up in the Great Commission: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, 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. 28:19-20).

God commanded the church to evangelize to all. Therefore, the church must develop a plan to effectively implement God’s plan. It all begins with the key leader in the church—the pastor. If pastors are committed to lead as Jesus led, they must be the initiators in building bridges in cross-cultural partnerships. They must step up to the plate and build relationships between churches and within the church community to bring about reconciliation in worship experiences and community involvement.

Regarding evangelism, church leaders must maintain a commitment to quality in music, not only for their weekly worship

services, but also for their outreach efforts. Musical concerts of contemporary music to reach unchurched residents in the community are a means to drawing an audience. At these concerts, the call to commitment to Jesus Christ is made via the individual members as they engage in relational evangelism at some point during and after the concert.

Much work goes into evangelizing during the worship service. The main desire is to gain and hold the interest of the worshippers to first help them get into the worship mode and maintain their interest to a level that they understand the message. The desired outcome is to have the worshippers who have not accepted Jesus Christ to do so and to lead them into repentance. It is also to encourage or motivate those who have accepted the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to go into the vineyard and work.

Evangelism must be in the heart of all Christians as they are called to offer Christ to everyone, with no regard to race, color, or creed. Romans 10:17 states, "*So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" The question, then, is how can unbelievers learn about Christ if they are not attending church to hear the Word? This is where evangelism comes into play because unbelievers must hear the Word of God to acquire the faith needed to

accept Jesus Christ. Evangelism involves sharing Christ with unbelievers or with those who do not know Him as Savior and Lord. Christ followers are ambassadors. They are called to go out into the world and encourage the lost to come into the fold. Luke 14:23 states, *“Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.’*

Christ followers must have a heart for people. They must see people in need, embrace them, and do what is necessary to fulfill those needs. They must hear with their heart. Jesus had a heart to share the truth of God and offered healing and salvation to all who came across His path. Evangelizing is an act of sharing the Word, one’s faith, and testimonies to those in need of the Savior and Lord. It takes place out of love for people, which stems from a desire for the unsaved to be saved. To love God is to love people— to love God is to follow Jesus.

The love for people should encourage believers to make it their mission to witness and evangelize. However, oftentimes, believers shy away from evangelizing because they are afraid or may not know what to say. They need to know that they have what is needed and that there is nothing of which to be afraid. Believers preparing to witness and evangelize should

know that getting to know Christ is an exciting experience for unsaved individuals who are receptive. They also need to know that the evangelism process is simple. They must acknowledge that Jesus Christ is their personal Savior and Lord, be knowledgeable of the Word of God regarding salvation, possess good communication skills, and have a love for God and His people. Additionally, they need to know that sharing their testimony—their story of what God has done for them—is a form of witnessing.

While sharing with the unsaved, believers should talk about what their church is doing regarding in-reach and outreach. Their enthusiasm and excitement in telling their story, sharing the plan of salvation, and talking about meaningful church activities should be so touching and relatable that the individuals are compelled to accept an invitation to share with the fellowship, especially in Bible Study and in praise and worship. Doing so would fulfill the command in Luke 14:23b: “...compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

Traditionally, reaching out through social media may not have been defined as evangelism, but the post COVID world shows the need for a virtual evangelistic platform. Because of advancements in technology, there are many opportunities

and creative ways to share Christ around the world. The use of social media e.g., live streaming of church services and events, is a creative way to spread the gospel and witness/evangelize. Facebook has billions of active users, and other social media platforms have similar audiences. Thinking outside the box to reach the world for Christ is good if the created concept has biblical principles and is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Christ is not concerned with the instrument used to tell others about Him. He only wants His followers to have the heart to tell the world about His heart.

Witnessing and evangelizing in a manner that results in a positive response i.e., acceptance of an invitation to attend a Bible Study or praise and worship service—in person or virtually—brings joy to the heart of the believer who witnessed and evangelized. More importantly, it brings glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is amazing how a one-way communication often ends up being a two-way communication—all because the good news about Jesus Christ was shared. One does not have to be well educated to tell people that Jesus loves them, that He died for their sins, rose again with all power in His hand, and that if they profess that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord and confess—ask forgiveness for their sins—they will be saved.

The current local, state, and national news is heartbreaking at times. Specifically, the reporting of intense violence, which usually ends in death, is overwhelming. Thus, disciples of Christ must tell others about Jesus, with the hope that they will hear and receive Him in their hearts. In Romans 8:29, Philip witnessed to the Ethiopian eunuch and taught him from the book of Isaiah. The eunuch understood and asked to be baptized immediately. Therefore, it is crucial that everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord be knowledgeable in the Word of God to be able to share it with others. If Philip, well versed in the Word of God, had refused to follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit, the eunuch would have more than likely lived a life drifting like a ship without a sail. Evangelism is directly linked to the church—the body of Christ. It is a mandate from God to believers, and believers must step up to the plate.

No one knows what tomorrow may bring, but as believers, we are assured that God is in control of everything—our beginning and our end—and that we are kept by God's grace. We know there will be a day of judgment, and all who did not profess Christ will reap the consequences of not having done so. Thus, believers must be about the business—God's business—of witnessing and evangelizing to the

unsaved. They should be communicating, praying in the spirit, speaking words of comfort and encouragement, sharing their stories, and explaining the plan of salvation. In essence, believers should be encouraged to be committed to sharing the Gospel with whomever crosses their path. This is to ensure that the unsaved were provided an opportunity to confess and profess Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. Believers must be mindful that unsaved persons to whom they witnessed and evangelized may not profess Jesus Christ is Lord at that time. However, they should rest in knowing that they planted the seed and another believer, at some point in time, will follow up, in the form of witnessing and evangelizing, and water the seed. That believer, however, like the first, may not have the pleasure of hearing the unsaved profess their faith in Jesus Christ, for it is God who causes the seed to grow. In 1 Corinthians 3:6 the Apostle Paul stated, “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*” In essence, what is needed is a heart for people—a heart that has *PEOPLE* written in it and on it.

Establishing or building a multi-cultural church is a very challenging experience, but it is an accomplishable task. God never gives His followers a task that they cannot do; He prepares and leads them in accomplishing it, and is not a dif-

ficult task. God allowed the gospel writers to tell His disciples where they are to go, what they are to do, and who they are to reach. This is outlined in what is called 'The Great Commission,' which specifically requires church leaders to establish a church that reaches across racial lines. Thus, evangelism should be the major focus and mindset of disciples of Christ. Opportunities to evangelize are presented every day, and if those who profess Christ as their Savior and Lord are in the right mindset when the opportunities are presented, every Bible-believing-teaching church would be filled. Pastors, then, must ensure that opponents of the multicultural concept, especially the congregants, are made aware of the deep-rooted message in the Great Commission. The Kingdom of God must be multicultural because God is the creator of multiethnicity.

To fulfill the Great Commission, believers must step out of what is called the comfort zone—the four walls of the church—and step into the footwork ministry of Christ. Paul, an apostle of Christ, established a prime model for evangelism. He traveled to many different places and wrote letters to several churches, sharing Christ to as many people as possible. One connotation of church is that it is simply a building where people praise and worship God. The Lord desires us to praise and

worship Him, and we do so in a building, but evangelism requires church members to move outside the sanctuary or praise center to meet and talk with people of all ethnicities wherever they may be. In essence, reaching souls for Christ cannot be done by simply waiting for people to come into the church building. Evangelism is truly about going outside the four walls to profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to share His message.

Chapter 6

The Role of Church Leaders and Laity

Multiracial congregations cannot survive without strong leaders who are completely convinced that culturally and racially diverse congregations are in God's plan. To lead the congregation into unity, church leaders must have multicultural and interracial lifestyles. They must have a passion for building the church as God has commanded. They also need to possess certain qualities.

While no one is perfect, church leaders need to strive to do what is necessary to acquire the qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." They must relay the message, the passion, and the commitment to their church membership. In doing so, they must also maintain a proper balance between the purpose and reason for the church's existence—to honor and worship the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to fulfill the Great Commission. To maintain this balance, church leaders must pray for God to lead them in selecting new leaders who possess the qualities necessary to serve the present age and who are willing to do what is necessary to accomplish desired results.

Church leaders must pray for guidance in motivating and empowering new leaders to serve. Church leaders must also understand that major changes in structure are needed to prepare, assist, and send people into areas of service in which they feel they have been called. Specifically, church leaders must have a deep-seated hope of reaching the lost. Structure, not preaching, is the way to achieve the influence that is needed in proving to the world that the truth it proclaims is worth considering.

In life, we attain titles, degrees, recognition, and status, but when we commit to Christ, the only thing that holds weight is His blood because it covers us. Regarding these temporal credits, church leaders and laity should think like Paul:

*But what things were gained to me,
these I have counted loss for Christ.
Yet indeed I also count all things lost
for the excellence of the knowledge of
Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I
have suffered the loss of all things,
and count them as rubbish, that I
may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:7-8)*

Christ supersedes titles, great reputations, and the highest level of education. When people accept Christ as Savior and Lord, they become new (2 Cor. 5:17). They can

only become new if they humble themselves under the leadership of Christ. Ministry costs—sacrifices are made. Perhaps, believers should ask themselves what is it that they are willing to sacrifice for a personal relationship with Christ. In this posture, believers humble themselves in the Lord, demonstrate that they love Christ more than themselves, serve Christ and others, and do not make obtaining earthly accomplishments a priority.

Paul's lineage was from the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Roman citizen and under the name of Saul, he was a Pharisee—one who separated himself from society to study and teach the law as he was an expert in the Mosaic law. He was at the top of the social hierarchy, and he persecuted followers of Christ. He and members of the sect gained influence in the eyes of the people; however, they lacked humility. They perceived themselves to be superior and condemned people for not keeping the Mosaic law when they were not precisely following it to the letter. Realistically, they—no one—could keep all the laws. In essence, the Mosaic law could not save men, women, boys, and girls from sin. The purpose of the law was to point people to a savior.

When Christ came on the scene, the Jews rejected Him because He did not look or act like the Messiah they had envisioned,

i.e., He did not do what they expected Him to do. He, in their eyes, was not the one to which Moses referred in Deut. 18:15-18:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die. And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

The scribes and pharisees felt threatened by Jesus' presence. They felt Jesus, in His charismatic manner, would pull the people away from them and lessen their power and influence.

Christ humbled himself to come to the world as a servant—not as a king—to die on the cross for our sins. He remained humble and obedient throughout the ordeal. With one word or thought, He could have stopped all the suffering He endured, but He chose not to do so because His love for us was greater than His suffering. Our

love for Him must be greater than anything or anybody in this world because He paid the ultimate price for us. He is the absolute perfect example of humility. What we have attained or accomplished is nothing if the Love of God is not viewed as being greater. Loving God first helps us put our life in perspective by prompting us to prioritize and put the Lord first and ourselves last. Humility is a lifestyle. It must be genuine, and it must be practiced.

Church leaders and laity with humble hearts understand it is never about them because they know it is always about Christ. Generally, people want Christ to save them from the consequences of their sins, but not all act as if they want Him as Lord. In essence, they do not act as if they want to humble themselves under His leadership. However, Christ is Savior and Lord, and individuals who do not want to humble themselves to obey His Word cannot have a relationship with Him. Thus, church leaders and laity must always display a humble spirit under the Lordship of Christ Jesus. It is a form of mentoring as others will follow and do what is necessary to develop a personal relationship with Christ because they realize they need divine leadership.

Christ is the ultimate example of humility. He did not come to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:28). As His followers,

church leaders and laity must understand the importance of serving others. The act of serving others suggests that the work is about the greater good of the individuals being served. It should never be about the servant. Thus, church leaders and laity must put their desires and issues aside and focus on helping people across racial lines. Focusing on helping others oftentimes alters servants' perspectives regarding their individual issues. It enables them to see the big picture, i.e., if everyone expressed genuine concern for the next person, there would be fewer homeless, hungry, and downtrodden people. There would also be fewer homicides and suicides.

A few days before Jesus faced the horrible death on the cross, He washed His disciples' feet.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. (John 13:3-5)

He knew of His impending death, but He was not consumed with his divine

mission. He was committed to loving His people. His only focus was demonstrating love—humbly serving others. Even when the Roman soldiers came to arrest Him in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ Jesus did not resist. He humbled Himself in obedience, though agonizing, until He died. While on the cross, Christ was seeking to help others, interceding for humankind, asking forgiveness for those who were crucifying Him: *“Father forgive them for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:24).

As Christians our lives belong to Christ and as bondservants of Christ, we follow His selfless example. Christ always had a heart for all people, and He demonstrated His love by laying His life down so that all can have access into the Kingdom of God. As His followers, church leaders and laity are encouraged to lay their lives down as well. It may not be done physically, however, but it must be done spiritually. After acquiring a mindset of humility, church leaders and laity will be about relinquishing all that they are and all that they have to free themselves to fulfill the great commission.

Pastors who are embracing multiculturalism must make sure their sermons are biblically based, relevant, interesting, entertaining, simple, encouraging, and positive. This is true for pastors of any church. It is significant to note that

pastors who are about serving the present age must resolve to do more and do better in serving the church members and guests the Word of God. They must increase both their study time and their meditation time. They must make more time to listen to God as He speaks to them on how and on what to deliver to His people. They must take the business of preaching even more seriously as they reach out to people of various nationalities or to people to whom they have never thought would ever enter their church doors

If church leaders are serious about building a true multicultural church, laity must adapt to a lifestyle of specific spiritual standards and service. They must learn to live a disciplined life. They cannot afford to live any other way if they expect to project a good witness to the outside world, in their church community, and in their residential community. They must repent and live a godly life and be responsible, dependable, mission-minded, and diligent. In being responsible, they must acknowledge that large and small tasks must be accomplished in the church and be willing to work wherever needed. Another responsibility of laity is to help other church members understand that the pastor is just one person who needs visionary leaders willing to come out of

their comfort zones and help where they are needed. In accepting the role of being *team Jesus* oriented, they exhibit dependability and a devotion to missions. They must also be able to work independently and use their chosen vocations to bring fresh insight and leadership to the church. This includes strengthening the pastor with encouragement to continue in His God-given ministry. This is such a useful quality for all laity.

When the laity is strong in presenting the church mission and vision, it brings others into the fold, and when they come in, they bring others into the fold. Laypeople are living examples of true discipleship—committed to serving Jesus. Laity should have a sense of duty and obligation. When they understand it is their duty to see that the work of the ministry must be fulfilled, the plans of God are extended to the congregation. They work timelessly and unselfishly to ensure that God's plans are initiated and that the church is the growing body that God has called it to be. Specifically, laity must be fully committed to living out the Great Commission. The driving force behind the role of the laity is a *go* mentality.

And Jesus came and spoke to

them saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, 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, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:18-20)

We must *go* inside and outside the walls of the church. Pastors and laity must have an intentional heart for seeking the lost and truly making the case that everyone needs a savior. There is only one savior, and His name is Jesus. When church leaders train laity to live the Christian life the way Christ intended, they become agents of change. They, in turn, become agents of change for others.

Church leaders must first communicate to the laity that some people are just not comfortable being led to the front of the church to become a member or to invite Christ into their lives. They must teach them that public confession can be done in various ways. Most of all, church leaders should communicate to their laypeople that if the plan of salvation is explained and prospective members understand and accept it, then agree to be

baptized, it matters not that it was done in the front of the church because the baptismal is actually a public confession of one's faith and belief in Jesus Christ. When this message is conveyed to the laity, they would better understand when the pastor chooses to not bring an unchurched person under *scrutiny* where the audience becomes the inspector in the mind of the prospective member.

With culture being the resource to communicating the gospel, church leaders must make a commitment to train people to minister to cultural groups in their own language and customs. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. It is not necessarily important as to how it is done. The fact is that it must be done.

The mission of the church should be revisited and looked at from a truly biblical perspective. Church leaders must ask themselves many questions. Some include: Does our church look like a church established by God? Are our church doors truly open to anyone who may enter? Are we in receptive mode to receive people from other cultures who may join us in worship and who may desire to become a member of our church body?

Pastors and church leaders must be very sensitive to the preferences of the target group. They cannot, however, be sensitive or compassionate if they have not

attempted to discover at least some of the preferences of the target group. Knowing the preferences of the worshippers is especially important because it is the church leaders and laypeople who invite the unchurched to worship services or to church activities. It is, however, very important that church leaders and laity realize that not all unchurched people are unsaved. They may have simply become disenchanted or bored with 'worship as usual. This is one reason their preferences must be considered and incorporated in the worship design to make them comfortable and motivated to become a member of the fellowship.

In terms of the method adopted by the church and/or the pastor used in the invitation to discipleship, it is extremely important that the preferences of the saved, unchurched, and the unsaved be communicated to the laity. This should help all involved to understand that method is important and that the type of method could determine whether an unchurched but saved person returns to the 'church, or an unsaved person turns from the church. The method used could be the determining factor as to whether the sheep return to the church and/or the lost sheep remain in the church.

Church leaders who are truly attempting to grow their church and

embrace multiculturalism provide training in discipleship and evangelism to the laity. This training is necessary to equip the laity and instill confidence in their outreach efforts. Discipleship is a process in which one makes a conscious, consensual decision to change from who he or she was to who the creator is calling him or her to be. Souls are at stake, so it cannot be taken lightly. A disciple is a student of the Word of God and a follower of Christ, i.e., one who applies the teachings of Christ. John 8:31 states, *"Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed in him, If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed."*

Being in a discipleship relationship with Christ requires continuous participation in the process, which leads to discipline. It is not a start and stop process. It is often a struggle, but it is worth it if. Thus, church leaders and laity are advised to not lose heart and quit. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 states, *"As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. So, don't lose heart, don't give in or give up, don't grow weary or be fainthearted."* Being in a discipleship relationship also takes a lot of time, commitment, consistency, persistence, zeal, and hard work. Additionally, one must be willing to die to self, study and interpret scriptures, and apply biblical principles. Discipleship

is significant because it places one in a closer faith walk and relationship with Jesus Christ. It prepares one to go out and spread the Word of God to others by evangelizing, teaching, leading, praying, and serving.

The Word of God is within reach, and the Holy Spirit of God is present. However, unless believers put forth the effort necessary to become disciplined, they will be like ships without sails. Putting forth the effort involves praying, meditating, reading spiritual and inspirational literature, and studying the Bible regularly. It also involves attending church regularly and following the dictates of the Holy Spirit, who has been tasked with teaching believers so they can teach and share the Gospel with others. Consider the 24 hours in a day— 7 days per week—168 hours with which we have been so richly blessed. Most have also been blessed to work 40 hours per week and sleep 8 hours each night—56 hours per week—leaving 72 hours of free time. Thus, every believer who claims to be a disciple of Christ should resolve to devote at least 7.2 hours per week, or 1.02 hours per day to spending time with God. That calculates to a tenth of the free time God allotted humankind. God has given us so much. All He wants is our heart. Believers should love Him enough to grow in a disciplined relationship with Him.

To be teachable, one must be humble because it is difficult to teach a person who is full of pride. To remain teachable, one must remain open to constructive criticism. At times, it may feel as if self is being stripped away. This feeling is understandable because in today's world, self-denial is not among the top ten attributes. Self-love, self-empowerment, and self-made are among the attributes of the world, but Christ tells believers clearly to be His followers, and to do so requires denying self. Luke 9:23 states, *"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross ^{and} daily, and follow Me.'"*

Disciples of Christ know that they must humble themselves to godly leadership. Pastors have been tasked to teach God's people what He has given them. Knowing the Word but not living it is useless. It is like knowing the information in the drivers' education book and passing the test, but the operator of the vehicle does not follow the established rules, putting himself or herself and others in danger. Likewise, spiritually when believers and non-believers turn a deaf ear to the Word, or do not understand it, they place themselves in danger spiritually because Satan sees them as an easy target, as evidenced in Matthew 13:19:

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.” Discipleship is about hearing the Word of God, getting an understanding, then living it so the Holy Spirit can produce life within and throughout. The Word can only produce if it is allowed to take root in the heart. Thus, believers must know and adhere to God’s standards, which are divinely inspired, filled with love, and steep in faith. The world is in a chaotic and misinformed state, so disciples of Christ are needed to bring peace out of chaos and to inform the misinformed. They must be willing and able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in love, to any person, regardless of his or her ethnicity.

When Jesus was teaching the disciples, they asked him how they should pray. In Matthew 6: 9-13, He taught them the *model prayer*, which was a template. However, the more the disciples were taught and studied under Jesus, the more their prayer lives increased. All believers have a starting point, but the more they study God’s word, the more He expects from them, regarding the expression of their faith. Love is not just a four-letter word. It must be demonstrated or expressed. Giving someone a hug or a gift

and going out the way to meet and greet people are some ways to express love. Words can have a major impact on individuals' lives. Thus, believers should get outside themselves and speak a kind, caring, and encouraging word to others because it is unknown what others are going through in their lives. The Lord gives believers the right words to deliver others out of storms in their lives.

Strangers often simply want to be noticed or to see if anyone cares about them. Jesus went out of his way to engage with strangers as well as those in need. Disciples should do the same and reach out to individuals they know, individuals who are not close to them, and/or to individuals who do not have the same skin color. All souls belong to God, and they should be treated as such. Luke 10: 25-37 explains the parable of the good Samaritan and how he went out of His way to make sure the man from Jerusalem was okay after being attacked and robbed by bandits. Although others saw that this man had been beaten and his things had been stolen, none of them offered to assist him. The Samaritan, because of his heritage, should not have associated with this man. However, he provided the help needed and ensured that the man was treated properly.

When disciples of Christ step out of the way and let the Lord reign in their lives,

they do not focus on minor details. The Lord honors the act of loving others. Jesus gave Himself for others to be saved while He was alive. Disciples must strive to do the same because as believers, they are tasked to reach others for His namesake. They are all the same when it comes to the body of Christ. Even though they may like different things, they have one common interest—sharing Christ.

In determining the physical and spiritual needs, interests, customs, and desires of the local residents, progressive church leaders conduct research themselves or designate a group of laypeople to do so. As an option, they may obtain the services of an organization to conduct the research and analyze the data, which would provide needed feedback. This knowledge serves as an aid in designing or redesigning the entire worship service—whichever is needed—to meet the spiritual needs, interests, customs, and desires of the church community residents.

Reviewing survey results is just one step in the process. In terms of functioning, the church cannot remain where it is because God ordained it to function differently. Segregation is a major issue in many cities across the country. The sense of unity among believers of different ethnicities is lacking. The Anglo churches

worship together, and the Black churches worship together. Because the Lord is the God of unity, operating in this manner must break His heart. Reconciliation is desperately needed. However, to converse about reconciliation, we must be willing to have open dialogue about the separation. We must come together in truth and honesty in a spirit of prayer. When leaders bring the Holy Spirit into the conversation, God provides a true sense of direction. It is, however, very difficult to preach and teach on cross-cultural ministry to people who are not willing to come out of their comfort zones and deal with it directly.

Since more people attend worship service than any other church activity, church leaders seeking to build a multicultural church must allot much time and effort in worship design. Because of the varied cultures of worshippers and those within the church community, church leaders must select a target group and proceed to focus on the desires of the group in terms of the worship experience. They must understand that the physical surroundings are important and must ensure that they are appealing. Not only must church leaders understand the importance of the physical surroundings to prospective members, but they must also understand that people want top notch quality in every aspect of their worship

experience. They want the atmosphere to be pleasing, and they expect to be welcomed and to feel welcomed.

The biblical principles that have been set before us in the New as well as the Old Testament writings must be followed to the letter. For the church of today to be effective in reaching the people, the undeniable Word of God must be the power source. This approach within itself leads one to be totally dependent on the fact that the Spirit of God must be equal in value to the Word of God. Not only should church leaders develop ideas and plans, taking into consideration what looks and sounds good, they must also not forget that the desired results can and only will be accomplished by listening to the Spirit of God and being directed by God Himself.

Chapter 7

Fellowship

A multiethnic fellowship experience is exciting, but it could potentially be very uncomfortable for various ethnicities and everyone else who may become a participant. Understanding various cultures is not easy, but it is not impossible. Church leaders must understand the Lord's command for unity and oneness of mind among His people. The church's activities should be centered around the diverse groups within the congregation and should bring them all together as one.

General observations reveal fellowship among individuals from different cultures and ethnicities to be difficult. This has been a major challenge because of diverse cultures and backgrounds. It appears that some people do not want to learn about people of different ethnicities or how they live. To have an effective multicultural and diversified church, there must be a willingness to communicate and listen to one another. Communication is key because the dialogue must start somewhere. Listening to others and learning about their background is very important. Making an honest attempt to sit down and fellowship during a meal with people from different cultural backgrounds can increase one's knowledge and possibly

change one's views of an entire race. God seems to do something supernatural when a concerted effort is made to commune, e.g., over a meal with people who do not look or act alike.

Fellowship is not only what the church does; it is what the church is. Being a part of the body of believers, we must uphold the theme of fellowship in the church by welcoming all people, by building relationships that are real, and by being loving. The church should be inclusive. The membership and/or congregation should consist of the young and old, the rich and poor, Black, White, Hispanic or any other race. All people should be welcomed at any praise and worship service, or any event sponsored by the church. This atmosphere is created by inviting people of all nationalities or ethnic groups, genders, ages, and economic backgrounds to church.

When invited individuals appear at church, it is the duty of church leaders and laity to ensure they are made to feel comfortable. There are many ways to fellowship and encourage people to feel welcome. When we fellowship with one another, we stir up love and good works. Fellowship is inspiring and positively impactful. It motivates love. Hebrews 10:24-25 state:

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Fellowship is a mandate for believers. Believers must fellowship with all people on earth because all people will be fellowshiping in Heaven. Thus, the expectation is that believers engage other believers and get to know them. It is also a good time to embrace and evangelize to people who have not accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Laity and especially church leaders should be held accountable for meeting new and returning guests. This method is effective when laypeople follow the dictates of the Word because they would have learned how to encourage those who may be more on the peripheral.

During the fellowship period, individuals establish relationships. Heart-felt fellowship does not end at the church. It extends beyond the four walls and develops into a partnership—one of prayer—wherein the individuals rely on one another for Godly advice. It can also lead to a mentoring experience for new converts. In this scenario, the person who evangelized

will be in constant contact with the new convert to answer any questions and/or to determine needs. If there are needs, they will be forwarded to the church and fulfilled either by the mentor or by the church.

Planting a community vegetable garden and inviting community residents, especially those known to be unchurched and/or unsaved, to reap the harvest is one way to evangelize while feeding the neighborhood. This can be a time for true engagement. Provisions can also be made to share Christ with the children in the neighborhood while letting them plant seeds. This can be a tool for drawing a diverse group of parents.

Fellowship builds real relationships, and real relationships build ambassadors for Christ. It can cause a chain reaction wherein the children go to school and tell their teachers about the garden and invite them to come and see what the church is about, all because someone saw them and embraced them. Fellowship is of vital importance for the growth of God's kingdom.

To build genuine relationships, church leaders and laity must understand the importance of loving people more than they love themselves. The salvation of others must be a priority. To love people, church leaders and laity must consider others as themselves and not less than

themselves. They must not only see needs; they must meet needs. Doing so indicates that church leaders and laity have a heart for all people. Expressing care and concern for people and letting them know they matter is impactful. It can only be done when church leaders and laity step out of our comfort zones and allow themselves to be opened to connecting with others—to be vulnerable. Believers are reminded in Hebrews 13:2 to not forget to fellowship with strangers: *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”* Christ is the epitome of love. Love made Him lay down His life for people of all nations. We must have this same mindset especially when fellowshiping with the unsaved.

The Lord has provided innumerable opportunities and have generated, through the minds of His servants, creative activities and resources for churches operating under His model to reach this multicultural generation. Some of these activities and resources include food drives, community gardens, cookouts, back to school bashes, community cleanup projects, and soccer fields. Fellowship takes place once people enter the door. However, evangelism starts at the door or entranceway. It involves meeting and greeting, followed by engagement and invitationals. The bridge between stranger and friend is

built brick by brick, beginning with one interaction. The love of Jesus Christ builds bridges to reach families in church communities. Walls of separation are torn down and memories are built through sharing, in general, and through sharing Christ, specifically.

The goal of fellowship is to share the love of Jesus. It is crucial that we learn more about the interests of others and overlook our selfish ambitions. Fellowship is a means by which we express empathy, share wisdom, encourage, and comfort others. Fellowship is huge in the process of advancing the kingdom. Thus, the cycle of segregated fellowship must be broken. The enemy uses stereotypes and stigmas as tools to keep people separated, but Christ took care of it all on the cross.

Even in the 21st century, participating in a multi-cultural church is not the norm. It may seem overly simplified, but when we disregard demographics, cultures, and his-tory, we are left with the fundamental fact that we cannot live in this world alone. As noted in the book of Acts, the apostles traveled over the world to fellowship and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Jews and the Gentiles. Thus, if churches are to mirror the Word of God, they must fellowship with and reach out to diverse cultures.

Social media has opened an untapped reservoir for many churches and businesses to take advantage of the diverse groups of individuals who could be reached with one post, one live stream, and one share. We have been instructed to go out to “Jerusalem, Judah, Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Social media wraps these places up into one, with a simple click. Through Facebook, churches have been able to interact with individuals who live over 2000 miles away.

With today’s technology, churches can reach more people quickly, regardless of the distance, culture, or language. Instant messaging and shared posts, however, cannot be the only means of communication. Believers can meet unbelievers where they are on social media, but the impact would be so much better if they could and would make their way to the church, where they would receive more personalized attention and opportunities to worship and fellowship with like minds.

For the church to reach people of diverse cultures, church leaders and congregants must be willing to come out of their comfort zones and love others enough to admit limited or no knowledge about their culture or ethnicity. When the love of God dwells in us, we will be compelled to make a difference. That difference can be made when we reach out to others of

different cultures and ethnicities. We must put fear and ignorance aside and give the peace and love of God an opportunity. The world is waiting to hear the sweet sound and message of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

America is a highly diverse and multicultural country, and unchurched individuals are observing the church to see if racial and cultural lines have been crossed and unity in worship and service is apparent. They are looking to see if Americans produce churches that allow residents of the same community to worship together. They are looking to see if the church truly lives up to its creed of including *all* people. Some individuals, church members included, are willing to embrace multiculturalism and others are not. Until the church proclaims the *truth* of Jesus Christ as all-inclusive and exhibits this proclamation, then and only then can the multicultural movement be effective.

The church—God's product—should be the foundation on which order in modern day society rests. Starting and growing churches to advance the kingdom of God is of the utmost importance. For the Word of God to be spread, there must be new avenues and approaches to reach the unsaved. Planting or starting new churches is kingdom work, which is mostly basic in nature. The first underlying belief in the church planting process is to demonstrate

the need for multicultural worship and its effectiveness.

Churches of this generation will not grow if they are not willing to embrace the multicultural concept. America has been undergoing rapid population changes during the past several years. This trend is expected to continue at an alarming rate into the next millennium, which means that most communities will be multicultural. Therefore, churches must focus within the community where they are located. They must first pray for God's guidance in reaching out to the residents, then devise a plan of action and conduct surveys to determine the physical and spiritual needs, interests, customs, and desires of the multicultural church community.

In establishing a multicultural church, balance is the key. In all areas of kingdom work, which includes evangelism, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and ministry, there must be balance. These areas are focal points. They are all needed. Therefore, church leaders and laity must be adept in all facets. If they are serious about fulfilling the Great Commission, they must be willing and ready to apply their skills when necessary.