



## Cross Culture

Is it blatant hypocrisy or mere blindness that would have us reach around the world but not across the tracks? Cross-cultural ministry is mandated by the Great Commission. The new reality is the nations have come to us.

It's Old Testament — “and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee” (Psalm 22:27); “the LORD’S house shall be established ... and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isaiah 2:2); “many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people” (Zechariah 2:11).

It's New Testament — “this is

sity of the city has become the multicultural character of American society. Many white Christians fled the cities during the last half of the 20th century. They fled, in part, due to the reality that is now ubiquitous — the Indian motel owner in the small Midwestern town, the Spanish-speaking migrant workers in vast sections of rural America, and Middle-Easterners behind gas station and quick-mart counters. As of 2005, Anglos are no longer the majority in Texas. Our church in Chicago, with its 40 plus nationalities, is not an oddity. We reflect our environment. But now our environment belongs to most

Antioch indicates at least four distinct cultural groups represented in the leadership alone. Paul's brief efforts in Thessalonica produced a baby church that was anything but monocultural. This seems to be the New Testament pattern rather than an occasional fluke or oddity.

Our family was on vacation. In those days, with five children, tents were our only option. We washed up, put on our best camping clothes and went to church. We stood in the lobby of a midsized church with nicely dressed people hustling and bustling all around us. People in the foyer gave us nothing but their backs. I was more conscious that our attire didn't meet code. The church was not so large that people did not know we were strangers. Most of the cars in the parking lot were nicer than our older van. I confess — I got an attitude. I didn't hear much of the sermon. Nobody said “boo” to us the whole time we were there.

After church I thought, is this whole community upper-middle-class? Is everybody driving new Buicks and Chryslers? (This was before the days of Lexus and the variety of fancy SUVs.) I decided to drive around the neighborhood. Well, I didn't have to drive far. Within a block of the church building, I was in a neighborhood where the screen doors swung on one hinge, cars were up on blocks in the front yard, and broken toys were the landscape objects of choice. Why weren't any of THESE people in THAT church? They were the same color — they didn't appear to be the same culture. Did they live too close to the church to be loved and reached by the church's vigorous missions program indicated by the large world map with many twinkling lights in faraway lands?

New Testament churches do things Scripture teaches, models, and commands — right?

## Christ is the quintessential cross-cultural traveler and communicator

that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ... I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:16-17); “they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews ... And some of them believed ... and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few” (Acts 17:1, 4); “and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9).

You want to talk cross-cultural? Christ is the quintessential cross-cultural traveler and communicator. Try heavenly to earthly, holy to sinful, spiritual to physical, eternal to temporal. Luke's record of Jesus' expectation for his nascent church indicates Jesus outlined a balance of outreach and evangelism that was local, regional, cross-cultural and international (Acts 1:8).

Once again, the city foretold the reality for the rest of society. The diver-

of America. The gospel is supra-cultural. Our outreach is cross-cultural. The result: Our church is multicultural.

We should not think of different cultures merely in terms of color, language or distance. Who will deny there is something called youth culture — or probably more accurately, a number of different youth cultures? How about the culture that exists in the mobile home park? Bikers have their own culture. Various socioeconomic groups have their own unique cultural distinctives. So why are most of our churches monocultural?

Even a cursory reading of Acts 2 would alert one to the multicultural fruit of the Holy Spirit's work on the day of Pentecost. The church of 120 Palestinian Jews become Jewish and Gentile with numerous nations, and surely a variety of cultures represented. The listing of church leaders in