**WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CHURCH PLANTING?**

The basis of multicultural church planting can legitimately start where the Scriptures start. God has displayed His creativity not only in the creation of the heavens and the earth, but in ethnic diversity, in redeeming the world, and in building His church. In a fast-forward way, we can see God’s plan through other key biblical passages. “The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. . . . I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’ ” (Gen. 12:1-3).

To this man of faith who would go on a great pilgrimage, God unveiled a plan to reach the world. Through this one man who left his people, all peoples on earth will be blessed. “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age’” (Matt. 28: 18-20).

Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus commanded His followers “to make disciples of all nations.” This key command echoes in different ways throughout the New Testament (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

In *Let The Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions,* John Piper declares, “God’s great goal in all history is to uphold and display the glory of His name for the enjoyment of His people from all the nations.” In step with “God’s great goal” described by Piper, the Lord has allowed world migration today to bring many different peoples to the major cities. In the major metropolitan areas around the globe, multicultural churches are microcosms that simultaneously reflect a fulfillment of the Great Commission (see Matt. 28:18-20) and foreshadow the reality of heaven (see Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9-10; 14:6-7; 15:4; 21:3).

The goal of this guide is to serve as an introduction to multicultural church planting by answering these questions:

1. What is a multicultural church?
2. Why are more multicultural churches needed?
3. Where are new multicultural churches needed?
4. Who is well suited to lead a multicultural church planting team?
5. How are multicultural churches started?
6. When should we consider starting a new multicultural church?

**WHAT IS A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH?**

There is a growing discussion of the definition of a multicultural, or multiethnic, church. At a basic level, there is a key distinction between a multi-congregational church and a multicultural church. The multi-congregational church has separate groups of believers working under a common purpose and perhaps in a common building. Often, language is a key factor that keeps the congregations as separate units, though working together.

We will be working from a definition drawn by the Multicultural Church Network, SBC: “The multicultural church is a biblical community of believers: (1) who have as a current reality or hold as a core value the inclusion of culturally diverse people, and (2) who come together and serve as a single body to live out God’s call to be a New Testament church."

Furthermore, this guide’s emphasis is on multicultural church planting rather than on transitioning a monocultural church to become multicultural. The multi-congregational and transitioning multicultural church models have special issues that will be dealt with in other publications.

**WHY ARE MORE MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES NEEDED?**

First, more multicultural churches are needed, simply because more churches are needed in the United States. At first, one may question the appeal for more churches in the United States.

However, consider the following:

1. George Gallup estimates the American unchurched population to be 195 million (making the United States the third-largest unchurched nation in the world).
2. No county in America has a greater percentage of churched people today than a decade ago.
3. Half of all churches, within the past year, did not add one new member through conversion growth.
4. North America is the only continent where Christianity is not growing!

Second, more multiethnic churches are needed, because more varieties of churches are needed in the United States. Charles Chaney, a Southern Baptist missiologist and writer states, “America will not be won to Christ by establishing more churches like the vast majority of those we now have.” Consequently, more and different churches are needed. Many people are falling through the cracks of existing churches. In an increasingly multicultural, urban society, there are groups of people who do not fit into the traditional categories of churches.

* Interracial couples and families
* Ethnic people who prefer speaking English
* Urban and suburban people in major metropolitan areas who appreciate living, working, and ministering in the midst of ethnic diversity

Let’s consider the perspective of one group that is falling through the cracks, Generation-X. Tim Celek, Dieter Zander, and Patrick Kampert speak to how Generation-Xers see God and the church in their book *Inside the Soul of a New Generation: Insight and Strategies for Reaching Busters:* “Busters are not resistant to spiritual matters. They’re not resistant to the concept of God. But they view the church as being separatist, segregated, institutional, irrelevant, judgmental, holier-than-thou, controlling, authoritarian. And to some degree, they’re right.”

The irony is that the impression some people have of church is not what God calls us to be. The people of God are not to be barrier builders, but barrier breakers through Jesus who makes us one (Eph. 2:14-15, 19). In the face of negative church perceptions, a multicultural church can serve as a gracious apology to the unbelieving world.

**WHERE ARE NEW MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES NEEDED?**

New multicultural churches are needed in the cities or sprawling metropolitan areas. In the late 1800s,D.L.Moody stated: “Reach the big cities and you reach the nation." Today, Moody’s statement could be adapted, “Reach the big cities and you reach the world." In *A Theology As Big As the City,* Ray Bakke and Raymond Bakke comment about the incredible urban growth in the past 100 years: “The spectacular growth of large cities on this planet represents an awesome challenge to the church of Jesus Christ on all six continents. In 1900, 8 percent of the world’s population lived in cities. By the year 2000, that number will be nearly 50 percent.” As believers, the “go” part of the Great Commission command is still in force. However, we are now also responsible before God on another level. The very people to whom we once had to “go” many miles to reach have come to us. This is changing the face of urban

America. U.S. Population Diversity Year  1960  2000 2040

White (non-Hispanic)  85% 71% 55%

Black 11% 13% 15%

Hispanic 4% 11% 22%

Asian 0% 4% 8%

American Indian 1% 1% 1%

In *The Urban Christian: Effective Ministry in Today’s Urban World,* Ray Bakke, Jim Hart, and Raymond Bakke described the heart of multicultural urban ministry: “When I began to look seriously at the problems of cities, I realized that the Lord is doing something very unusual in this generation. He seems to be shaking up the world. ‘Go and make disciples of all nations.’ We know where all the nations are—in the big cities. God has brought all the nations here—to wherever your big city is.”

What have been principal receiving areas in the United States? This list includes, but is not limited to: Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, Anaheim, Houston, San Diego, Boston, and Washington, D.C.

**WHO CAN LEAD A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH PLANTING TEAM?**

In most ministry settings, any available, faithful, and teachable believer can be used greatly of God. In a multicultural church, the challenge level increases, especially for the lead pastor. Therefore, the following background and qualities are valuable for anyone in a leadership role in any church, but especially for the lead pastor of a multicultural church. One well suited for multicultural church leadership has:

* A commitment to the authority of Scripture; especially principles of reconciliation and unity
* A commitment to missions
* A commitment to include people of all ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds
* A commitment to prayer
* A servant’s heart
* A sense of humor
* An ability to enjoy and compromise with different cultural preferences
* An ability to handle criticism and rejection
* A strong leadership and pastoral gifts
* A strong training in theology and in the social sciences (informally or formally)

**HOW ARE MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES STARTED?**

Multicultural churches can be started through a variety of church planting strategies. In *The Church Planter’s Toolkit,* Logan and Ogne list several possible options:

1. Pioneering: A church planter begins gathering a core group through evangelistic efforts and other contacts. This is the most common strategy employed.
2. Branching: A core group hives off from the parent church and stays in the same general vicinity.
3. Colonizing: A core group intentionally relocates from the mother church to plant a new church. Berkland Baptist Church illustrated this strategy when it sent out church planting teams around the world.
4. Seeding: When key lay leaders move and core groups form in the new community.
5. Adopting: Core groups and/or churches who approach a partnering church for help are embraced. Uptown Baptist Church in Chicago has facilitated the starting of a number of congregations using this method.
6. Partnering: Several churches work in a cooperative venture to start a new church.
7. Revitalizing: A flickering church work is taken over and restarted at the same site. Armitage Baptist Church in Chicago is an example of this.
8. Transplanting: This method is when a church building is sold and the congregation relocates to several new starts.
9. Catalyzing: An apostolic leader sparks multitudes of new churches.

Regardless of the strategy chosen for each church start, there are some common steps that should be followed. These steps often overlap, and the order of the steps may vary.