

**GOLDEN GATE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
CANADIAN TRACK**

**RAISING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN LEADERS
FOR THE URBAN MULTICULTURAL CHURCH**

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APPROVAL SHEET

RAISING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN LEADERS
FOR THE URBAN MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Raising cross-cultural competence in Christian leadership is an urgent challenge for urban multicultural churches in North America and particularly in Canada.¹ The spiritual formation of new believers and the realization of the church's unity in Christ require that members be equipped to lead cross-culturally.² Multicultural congregations function by evolving a shared church culture informed by Scripture and by acceptable cultural values or norms adopted from the urban context. However, cultural dynamics still have the potential to disrupt spiritual growth and effective ministry.³ The members

¹ Harvey Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 79. Conn suggests that the world is becoming a "global city." He argues that urbanization is a process that pushes the urban context out of downtown cores and even into the "suburbs." He expected the urbanization of Canada to reach 90% of the population by 2000 (78).

"Outreach Canada, reports in 1998 that "eight of ten Canadians live in cities rather than in rural areas. Sixty-two percent of the residents live in only 25 metropolitan areas, each over 100,000 in size and each still growing. Thirty-four percent of all Canadians live in three cities—Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. By itself Toronto makes up 16% of Canada's total population. The narrow strip of developed urban corridor from Windsor to Quebec City is home to well over half of all Canadians." Gerald C. Kraft and R. Murray A. Jarman, "How Current Trends Impact the Church," *Transforming Our Nation*, Murray Moerman, editor (Richmond B.C.: Church Leadership Library, 1998), 342.

² Reginald W. Bibby, *Mosaic Madness: The Poverty and Potential of Life in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1990), 7. Discipleship in Canada is challenged by the multicultural values at play in the country's evolution. Bibby notes that like the United States, Canada has had an emphasis on individualism and freedom. But Canada also had a third value at play—pluralism. In other words, diversity was legitimized. Thus where there may have been a melting pot in the US, Canada became a mosaic. "In this country, there will be no pressure, as there is in some other countries—notably the United States—to discard one's cultural past, and conform to the dominant culture. The name of the Canadian cultural game is not melting but mosaic." Bibby notes that a fourth value has further contributed to the Canadian mosaic and that is "relativism." "Truth and best are not listed in the pluralism dictionary. The only truth is that everything is relative . . . ; those who dare assert that their culture is best are dubbed ethnocentric; those who dare to assert that they have the truth are labeled bigots. Truth has been replaced by personal viewpoint" (2).

³ For the purposes of this paper and project, the multicultural church is one that has determined to function for the most part in one predominate language and culture, and as one heterogeneous congregation. This definition stands in contrast to what I consider to be multi-ethnic churches—a collection of language specific or culture specific congregations sharing resources, buildings, materials, etc.

come to the table with deep-rooted expectations about life inherited from the cultural context of their family and friends.⁴ These cultural expectations must be understood and crossed by leaders if a multicultural church is going to be healthy. The hyper-cultural mix created by the Gospel's embrace of diverse people under Jesus Christ as His church and the urban realities of stratification, immigration, and acculturation create the need for spiritual leadership that is augmented with cultural sensitivity.

The multi-ethnic church may be served by a multi-ethnic leadership team; however each pastor is responsible primarily for their own congregation. The Multicultural Church Network of the Southern Baptist Convention shares my sense of a multicultural church. At a think-tank held April 23-24, 1999, at First Baptist Church, Palatine, Illinois, we drew up a working definition: "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." More on the Multicultural Church Network is available at the North American Mission Board's web site: www.namb.net/lightupthenation/body_cpt_11_multicultural.asp and www.multiculturalchurch.net; Internet.

⁴ "Culture" is the "integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of the society." Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, ninth reprint (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), 25.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

The leadership challenge of a multicultural church in Canada is heightened by the diversity of the urban context and the cross-cultural dynamics at play within a single congregation.⁵ Effective cross-cultural leadership in the church requires both ministry skills and character. On a large scale this project is an attempt to contribute to the creation of a cross-cultural leadership development strategy for Cityview Baptist Church in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. On a more narrow view this project is an attempt to raise cross-cultural competence in leaders at Cityview Baptist Church.⁶ Raising cross-cultural competence in leaders for the church means that this project will have to grapple with: the immediate context of Vancouver and Cityview Baptist Church, the general challenges of raising urban multicultural leaders, and the learning needs of emerging cross-cultural leaders.

⁵ My observation regarding the difficulty of leadership development in the multicultural church is supported by Craig W. Garriott, "Leadership Development in the Multiethnic Church," *Urban Mission* 13, no. 4 (June 1996) : 34-35.

⁶ Generally, cross-cultural competence is understood as a continuum, encompassing knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable a person to relate or to serve across cultural lines effectively. George Washington University has developed a training module for health care providers on cross-cultural competence. They define "cultural competence" as "the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and protocols that allow an individual or system to render services across cultural lines in an optimal manner . . . [it] permits individuals to respond with respect and empathy to people of all cultures, classes, individuals, families, and communities. It has been characterized as a continuum . . ." <http://learn.gwumc.edu/iscope/Cultcomp.htm> accessed 13 February 2002; Internet.

The Context

In March 1994 I was called to pastor Cityview Baptist Church in the thriving West-coast city of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Vancouver is a city of immigrants. Before the 1986 World Expo, Vancouver had been marked by large waves of immigration from Europe. Asian immigration, however, exploded after the fair. Vancouver's immigration patterns are marked by large percentages of residents from Asian, Indian, Latin, and Persian cultures.⁷ These immigrants have been able to preserve and enjoy their own cultures and languages while adding on language and cultural perspectives that assist them in the dominant culture of the Canadian context.

Cityview has its roots in the vision of a small group of people who began a congregation that would reflect the diversity of the city. In 1983 their vision of being intentionally multicultural compelled them to begin ministries to meet specific needs of people within their East Vancouver community. Over a period of ten years they began several language specific works that became ethnic congregations. When I was introduced to Cityview, then known as Gladstone Baptist Church, they met in a rented United Church building near Main Street in a circle of eight people.⁸ Though a small group, I was astonished by the vitality of their faith, vision, and scope of ministry. They were running an English-as-a-Second-Language ministry with 120 students and a drop-in

⁷ From 1994-1996, 124,701 immigrants settled in the Vancouver area. According to the 1996 census, 56 % of the immigrant population was Asian born and 30 % European born. The top ten mother tongues of immigrants from 1990 –1999 in British Columbia, from greatest to least are Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, English, Tagalog, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Persian, and Vietnamese. This information was drawn from two articles, "A Tale of Three Immigrant Cities" and "Mother Tongue of Recent Immigrants to British Columbia" located at www.bcestats.gov.bc.ca/pubs/pr_immigration accessed 11 February 2002; Internet.

⁸ The Church changed its name in 1995 from Gladstone Baptist Church, which reflected the geographic area in which the church began to Cityview Baptist Church, which reflects the vision to love the city of Vancouver.

ministry centre with a thrift store. They had recently released a Spanish-speaking congregation of about 300 people to be independent. As well, they were continuing to develop congregations for Cambodian immigrants and for First Nations people.⁹

In December 1993 Gladstone Baptist Church called my wife and me to join them in ministry. On our first Sunday in March 1994, the group of 16 included Canadian-born Anglos, an African from Nigeria, a single-mom of First Nations descent, a family of immigrants from Hong Kong, an immigrant father from China, people with physical disabilities and mental illness, a divorced woman, an immigrant from Holland, a Canadian-born Chinese man and his Canadian-born Anglo wife, immigrants from the United States, and a young man of First Nations descent. Over the past eight years Cityview has expanded its ministry impact to about 700 people, its international scope to include 28 nationalities, and it averages about 135 in the weekend worship service. Also, in this same period, Cityview has been a part of launching congregations overseas in Cambodia and Nigeria, and locally, in Vancouver and in Victoria.

The congregation is comprised of people from three regions of the world: 55% from Asia, 30% from the American Continents, and 15% from Africa. As the congregation has grown, I have developed a pastoral team that includes people from each of these regions. The pastoral team is constantly faced with the challenge of equipping members to become mature in Christ and fully functioning in the Body of Christ. Although Cityview is a multicultural congregation, we have not yet developed a strategy

⁹ First Nations, is the Canadian way of referring to aboriginal or Native American peoples.

for helping believers become cross-cultural leaders—competent to lead “other-cultured” people to grow in Christ and to work together to accomplish the ministry of Cityview.¹⁰

Four Aspects of the Leadership Challenge at Cityview

The Types of Leaders Available

There are four aspects to the leadership challenge of Cityview Baptist Church. First, the context requires leaders who are committed to evangelize and to disciple the city. Only five to nine percent of Vancouver is estimated to attend church.¹¹ Leaders are not just sitting in the pews; they are in the harvest. Harvey Conn and Manuel Ortiz believe churches in an urban context will benefit from three different kinds of leaders: relocated leaders, indigenous leaders, and multi-ethnic leaders.¹² The relocated leader is one who has moved into the city

¹⁰ I had been reluctant to develop a direct strategy of cross-cultural leader development, in part because I felt that emphasizing culture while such a small group would have inhibited the development of a strong congregational identity. I choose to emphasize our oneness in Christ without significant discussion of our differences as people from many backgrounds. As will be discussed later, I have had a shift in my thinking and philosophy of ministry.

I am using “other-culture person” to describe the cross-cultural relationship. I am of one culture and the person across from me is of another culture. Marvin K. Mayers describes the phenomenon of experiencing “otherness”: “In most societies and communities, a person grows up in a ‘one-culture’ world... as a result, ‘different’ becomes ‘odd’.... However much any given individual or society is able to adapt to others who are different, there is always a degree of self-orientation and ethnocentrism that closes out the other. There is a sense that ‘we are the real people.’” Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Crosscultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1987), xii.

¹¹ Arnell Motz, “The Condition of the Canadian Church,” *Reclaiming a Nation: The Challenge of Re-evangelizing Canada by the Year 2000*, Arnell Motz, editor (Richmond, B.C.: Church Leadership Library, 1990), 17.

¹² Conn and Ortiz, 380.

from a distinctly different environment and culture such as a rural or suburban context. The urban scene is unfamiliar and foreign to these leaders' way of living and doing ministry. They come from homogeneous communities that usually represent a different socioeconomic stratum. To them the city is awkward and at times oppressive. They have become aware of the needs in the city and have been drawn into the city due to what they sense is a call from the Lord. They need time and training to orient themselves to the new context.¹³

My wife and I are relocated leaders, but we have sought to develop an indigenous perspective.

Conn and Ortiz use "indigenous leader" to describe the leader who is at home in a particular urban context in large part because they were born into it. They do not have "ties to another context that might draw them to return to it, or that they have to overcome to remain" in the particular setting.¹⁴ They are thoroughly urban and tied into their particular community, finding "all their resources of life in the streets and blocks of the area" and enjoying the city's music, culture, and language as their own.¹⁵ The indigenous leader has perspectives and expectations about property, space, privacy, transportation, shopping, recreation, and cost of living that do not have to be overcome.

The third kind of leader is focused on a particular people or language group in the city but serves on a multi-ethnic leadership team. The leader may have moved to the city with the purpose of reaching his or her own people. His or her commitment to the team and church may only be "to have access to the church's ministries for their own ethnic group."¹⁶ However, when the members of the team share a common philosophy of

¹³ Ibid., 379-380.

¹⁴ Ibid., 381.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 385.

ministry and a commitment to the cross-cultural dimensions of the church, they can lead the church and their congregations to uphold the authority of God's Word and break down barriers between people.¹⁷

Cityview has benefited from each type of urban leader. Over the past eight years some members of the pastoral team relocated to serve with us, some have been indigenous, and some have had a multi-ethnic approach and assignment. Our mission is to create communities of devoted followers of The Way here and around the world. Our vision is to reproduce Christians, small groups, and congregations throughout the city. These multicultural groups and congregations are going to require leaders, some of which will be relocated or will come with a multi-ethnic perspective. Our vision, though, depends on raising up indigenous leadership for a multicultural church. Conn and Ortiz highlight the importance of this commitment.

Leaders who do emerge from an indigenous upbringing are extremely valuable assets to a long-term ministry in that part of the city. They will eventually become the contextualist walking in the community filled with the Spirit of God. They are able to contextualize the gospel and bring to the neighborhood a Messiah who speaks the language of the people and who understands their needs. We believe that this kind of urban leadership is living and surviving in those pockets of the city. Finding and developing indigenous leaders is the most important thing we can do to grow the church in our urban centers.¹⁸

The Lengthy Development Process

A second component to Cityview's leadership challenge is the lengthy spiritual and leader formation process. The development of spiritual leadership indigenous to our urban multicultural context is taking longer than I expected. New believers among

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Conn and Ortiz., 382.

immigrants and the second generation rework their worldview and develop their spiritual disciplines across several contexts. The new immigrants are first generation not only to Christ but also to the city. They experience cross-cultural discomfort every time they leave the comforts of their home. Yet, even in the home they do not have a cultural refuge. The second generation, acculturating more rapidly than the first generation, infiltrates the home with new expectations and new ways. They are all caught between cultures and must learn to negotiate life between two or three cultural contexts.

The second generation and some immigrants are becoming bi-cultural or tri-cultural people; the formation of their self-identity is constantly in flux.¹⁹ This flux in self-identity creates a vacuum into which the cross-cultural leader needs to step. I believe it will take leaders who understand their calling as cross-cultural to create space for people in flux to find belonging and thus the grace for believing and becoming. Although this indigenous leadership may have multicultural values that help them navigate life in the city, our experience at Cityview seems to indicate that they still need assistance in developing greater levels of cross-cultural competence.

In seeking out indigenous leadership for the multicultural church I am suggesting that “multicultural” is an indigenous experience for an unreached population of Vancouver. The “intentionally multicultural church” has as its focus on people who will hold shared “multicultural values.” The expectation has been set into the lives of many

¹⁹ By the terms bi- and tri- cultural, I mean that they are not only becoming adept at living within those cultures, but that their identity is actually becoming those cultures. Yet they are sometimes conflicted within themselves as they negotiate “who they are going to be.” Jaime M. Kang describes the journey of a “third culture child; “Each child must take the culture of her heritage and the culture of her present living situation and create a third culture in which she can find her identity. This new and blended culture is created as a result of the child’s conscious and unconscious interactions and intercultural borrowing between diverse cultures and her daily life.” Jaime M. Kang, *Caught Between Cultures: A Third-culture Parenting Book* (Birmingham, Alabama: Women’s Missionary Union, 1996), 13.

urban youth that their school experience of diversity will also be found in the rest of their public ventures. When they visit a church, they expect diversity not apparent homogeneity.²⁰ It has been the intent of the Canadian experiment that multiculturalism will become an indigenous experience. For many people however, the experience has been marked by tolerance not love. Though an official policy of the government, multiculturalism alone will not broadly produce deep cross-cultural relationships and power sharing.²¹ The church has the opportunity to give Canadians a taste of genuine love.

The Formation of A Multicultural Church Philosophy

This brings me to a third aspect of Cityview's leadership challenge: to develop a clear approach to multicultural church formation. The intentional multicultural approach has not been fully appreciated in church growth literature for sociological and theological reasons. The church growth movement has been heavily influenced by the homogeneous unit principle as developed by Donald McGavran. McGavran asserts that, "A homogeneous unit of society may be said to have 'people consciousness' when its

²⁰ This is not a unique position for Canadian teens and is reflective of a generational position among urban youth and young adults. Tim Celek and Deiter Zander write, "Busters are not resistant to spiritual matters. They're not resistant to the concept of God. But they are resistant to the Christian Church. They view the church as being separatist, segregated, institutional, irrelevant, judgmental, holier-than-thou, controlling, and authoritarian. And to some degree, they're right." Tim Celek and Deiter Zander, *Inside the Soul of A New Generation: Insights and Strategies for Reaching Busters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 88.

²¹ Reginald Bibby, *Canada's Teens: Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2001), 131. Bibby expresses concern that the multicultural position of Canada is not producing positive things; he notes the negative views of a large percentage toward other ethnic groups. However, he notes that his most recent survey offers hope that "we actually might be starting to convince young people that there is something to the notion of Canadian culture. . . . Nationally, acceptance of cultural diversity is extensive... Perhaps it's time to re-focus the mandate of multiculturalism, so that rather than merely celebrating our differences, we pursue ways of tapping those differences so that they have life-enriching net effects for all of us."

members think of themselves as a separate tribe, caste, or class.”²² He believes that the “great obstacles to conversion are social, not theological,” and that people “like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.”²³ He writes that the

degree of people consciousness is an aspect of social structure which greatly influences when, how, and to what extent the Gospel will flow through that segment of the social order. Castes or tribes with high people consciousness will resist the Gospel primarily because to them becoming a Christian means “joining another people.” They refuse Christ not for religious reasons, not because they love their sins, but precisely because they love their brethren.²⁴

McGavran desires that people meet Jesus and that the church do all it can to remove artificial barriers.

The multicultural church is not necessarily a contradiction of the homogeneous unit principle. The principle is too narrow and confined to ethnicity and people consciousness and therefore has difficulty taking into consideration the complex social dynamics of the city.²⁵ Another model for church growth is needed. The church-community congruence model developed by David Britt includes homogeneity as a

²² Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, fully revised (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980), 214.

²³ *Ibid.*, 215, 223.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁵ McGavran did not ignore the challenges of applying the homogenous unit principle in the city, particularly the North American city. Several authors have explored his movement into a pragmatic and rural-centered application of HUP. McGavran’s concerns for the theological position of oneness in Christ were overridden by his pressing concern that people meet Jesus first. David Britt, “From Homogeneity to Congruence: A Church-Community Model” in *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality* edited by Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1997), 135-149. Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1993), 254-262.

variable influencing growth but does not rely on it.²⁶ In this approach, congruence between the church and community is the major predictor of growth not the ethnic or cultural homogeneity of the congregation. Congruence is an attempt to measure the similarities or dissimilarities in the demography, ideology, relationships, and narrative between the community and the church. “Congruence is similar to homogeneity in that congruence also assumes that most of us are attracted to others who share like values. Congruence differs, however, from homogeneity in that it refers not only to a characteristic of the congregation, but to a relationship between the congregation and its community context.”²⁷ When multiculturalism is a value held by a population, then the failure to be multicultural is the construction of a barrier that must be crossed. In the pursuit of congruence from a missiological perspective, we must ask, “Are there populations within the city that value a multicultural expression of community?” Linda Berquist, a church planter catalyst for the San Francisco Baptist Association, has suggested that there are eight different audiences in an urban population for an intentionally multicultural congregation.²⁸

1. People who are multiracial or of mixed parentage
2. “Third culture kids” who have been raised in several cultures and therefore do not feel like they belong in a single culture setting, examples: military kids or missionary kids
3. Blended families/mixed marriages
4. Postmoderns who *value* multiculturalism

²⁶ David Britt, “From Homogeneity to Congruence: A Church-Community Model,” *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality* edited by Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1997), 142.

²⁷ Ibid., 142-143.

²⁸ Linda Berquist provided this list in her evaluation of my paper, “Exploring Church Growth At Cityview Baptist Church,” submitted to Dr. Sam Williams in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the course DMIN 423, of the Golden Gate Theological Seminary, 14 November 2000.

5. 1.5 generation North Americans—overseas born but North American raised
6. Altruists who value a multi-socio-economic opportunity to serve
7. Peoples who belong to groups that are too scarce for their own linguistic group to have a church
8. Short term internationals, students, and business people

Consideration of acculturation patterns suggests that there is also a ninth group that is “indigenous” to the urban context.²⁹ Immigrants who are early adopters may become cultural pioneers in their efforts to assimilate with the dominant culture. Most immigrants to Vancouver can find large gatherings and networks for functioning within the culture and language of their origin. However, immigrants whose drive to learn English and whose appreciation of values within the dominant English-speaking culture is high will find a multicultural English-speaking congregation attractive.

Although Cityview has been committed to reflect the diversity of the city, I have not always been comfortable labeling our church culture as multicultural or our “target” as multicultural. We have been multicultural because of a simple commitment: to include people in our fellowship by crossing boundaries to share the Gospel. Behind that commitment though, is a call from God to relate to the urban multicultural populations described earlier. We must create community that allows people with these values to mature in their journey with Jesus. To do so, we will need cross-cultural leaders. The cross-cultural leader will recognize that although members and participants in the multicultural congregation share values and mission individually and corporately, there are still significant cultural differences to understand and cross.

²⁹ Acculturation describes the degree to which a person is receptive to cultural elements in their “adopted” place. It is also used to describe immigrant populations and their movement toward assimilation within the dominant culture; Acculturation studies attempt to understand the external and internal influencers on cultural integration. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 422.

The Pastoral Ministry Needs of Cityview as a Growing Congregation

The fourth aspect of Cityview's leadership challenge is informed by Cityview's numerical growth. As Cityview has grown both in size and diversity, the levels of engagement across cultures have increased. Our need for cross-cultural leadership training is derived not only from our urban community but also from within our congregation. I am noticing that cross-cultural engagement has increased in intensity as both English ability and Christian maturity broadens within the congregation.³⁰ The opportunity for conflict and misunderstanding is expanding exponentially.

Another indicator of our need is that Cityview has arrived at a well-documented growth barrier. At the 135-175 mark in congregational life one of the major challenges is expanding the delivery of pastoral care beyond the pastoral team.³¹ Cityview has used a variety of small groups and ministry teams to address this challenge. However, at this point the primary and most effective cross-cultural leaders at Cityview have been members of the pastoral team. To nurture both the spiritual and numeric growth, new leaders within the congregation must become effective cross-cultural leaders, able to give pastoral care and leadership to a multicultural church.

³⁰ Kriengsak, Chareonwongsak, "Megachurches for Christian Minorities: Hope of Bangkok," *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality*, ed. Harvie M. Conn (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1997), 216. Chareonwongsak writes about his observations related to Christian maturity and multicultural interactions. "We have found that people are more responsive to small group fellowship when they are being cared for in a homogeneous setting. As they mature spiritually and learn to accept other ethnic groups in Christ, they can be transferred into cell group leadership in their geographical settings and become actively involved in shepherding others. They know that in Christ there is no room for segregation."

³¹ Carl George, *How To Break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House), 135-136.

CHAPTER 2

THE PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to equip at least ten select Cityview Baptist Church members to lead cross-culturally in an urban multicultural ministry setting; I want to raise their cross-cultural competence. Several concepts and ideas inform this purpose statement.

First, this project is designed to assist Cityview in the creation of an intentional cross-cultural leadership development strategy by piloting a teaching and mentoring module. The project is one component in the development of a Cityview ethos conducive to the incubation of cross-cultural leaders. Previous to this project, as noted earlier, I have not made a big deal with the congregation about our multicultural status. Rather, I have emphasized the theological aspects of God's people-making activity. I have emphasized our unity in Christ. I have not led us to be public and forthright about cultural differences. "Multicultural" is simply who we are because we are "seeking to reflect the diversity of our community." I fear that we could fall prey to a romantization of multiculturalism instead of being honest about the hard work that it requires. We can no longer afford to do this for the reasons noted earlier. It is time to pass on what I and others at Cityview have been learning in the past eight years.

Second, I am designing this project with a philosophy of ministry that views all believers as ministers but not necessarily as leaders. Cityview has sought to demonstrate that ministry is every believer's calling and responsibility. Ministry is service that meets

needs. Leadership is service that assists believers in working together to accomplish God's purposes.³² Ideally, the responsibilities of leadership are granted to people according to maturity and their calling. I believe all believers can become leaders at some level of responsibility. However, the selection of participants for this project will be largely directed toward those who are trying to help others grow and minister together.

Third, I desire that the participants grow in their ability to lead *and* to be led by other-culture people. Not only do we need grace to give spiritual leadership but we also need grace to receive it from people who are not *like us*. In the multicultural church the question of trust may create some barriers to relationships if some of the members come from cultures of distrust.³³ Through the course I hope to raise their responsiveness to other-culture leaders. Leadership in a multicultural church is at its best when it has high levels of mutuality.

Fourth, leaders who maintain a "becoming" perspective toward growth and leadership provide effective equipping in the church.³⁴ I expect that a measure of cross-cultural leadership will reveal that participants in this project are on a continuum. Some

³² Robert J. Clinton, *Leadership Emergence Theory: A Self-Study Manual For Analyzing the Development of a Christian Leader* (Altadena, California: Barnabas Resources 1989), 97. Clinton writes that "a leader, in the biblical context, is a person: 1) With God-given capacity, and 2) With God-given responsibility, 3) Who is influencing, 4) A specific group of God's people, 5) Toward God's purposes for the group.

³³ Lawrence E. Harrison, *Under-Development Is A State Of Mind: The Latin American Case* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1985), 7. Harrison explores the impact of worldview on relationships and progress. He holds trust as an essential component to creative and cooperative social development. He cites Samuel Huntington on the social consequences of "widespread mistrust." "Those societies deficient in stable and effective government are also deficient in mutual trust among their citizens, in national and public loyalties, and in organization skills and capacity. Their political cultures are often said to be marked by suspicion, jealousy, and latent or actual hostility toward everyone who is not a member of the family, the village, or, perhaps, the tribe." Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New York: Yale University Press, 1968), 28.

³⁴ Doug Muren, *Churches that Heal: Becoming a Church That Mends Broken Hearts and Restores Shattered Lives* (West Monore, Louisiana: Howard Publishing, 1999), 91-100.

participants will be more active and effective cross-culturally than other participants.

However, all participants are in the process of becoming cross-cultural leaders. I, by no means, have arrived as a cross-cultural leader. Those in our congregation who already have more experience leading cross-culturally will benefit from this project by gaining tools for passing on to others what they have learned. It is my expectation that all participants in the project will have a multicultural leadership context in which to apply what they learn.

Finally, this project is firmly set in the urban, multicultural context of Vancouver and Cityview Baptist Church. The design approach and the material have been crafted with Cityview leaders in mind as the audience. I have made an attempt to be sensitive to the diverse levels of English ability, biblical knowledge, and cultural expectations that my project participants will have. However, much of my Western pedagogical bent is inescapable because of the nature of the Doctorate of Ministry and my own culture in the Western context.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

Three theological presuppositions have influenced the formation of this project. Each theological presupposition provides a handle on God's activity in the formation of cross-cultural leaders. The first presupposition sets cross-cultural leadership inside the call of God. The second presupposition identifies God's formation of the cross-cultural leader as a transformational process from ethno-centricism to Christo-centricism. The third presupposition describes God's empowerment of the cross-cultural leader for the ministry of reconciliation.

God calls leaders to fulfill His purposes cross-culturally.

God raises up leaders and commissions them to fulfill His purposes by crossing the barriers of culture. The biblical testimony of this act of God is largely expressed around the concept of blessing. God desires to bless the nations and restore people into a relationship with himself. "Blessing," or Hebrew *berakah*, indicates that God is going to provide benefit or prosperity as a generous and abundant gift.³⁵ Throughout Scripture, God testifies of His desire to bless the nations. Often that blessing is delivered through people that He has set aside for Himself. His call to lead across cultures is evident in the lives of Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Joseph, and Paul.

³⁵ *Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*, "blessing" [CD-ROM] (Nashville: Biblesoft International Translators, Inc., 1994).

God declared to Abraham the future blessing for which he was called out. “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 and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”³⁶

The blessing was not only for Abram, it was for “all peoples on earth.” The *mishpachah*, that is “the families, or circle of relatives,” the tribes or peoples of the earth, will experience immense benefit through Abraham and the nation that God will raise up from him.³⁷ This promise of blessing to the nations extends from Abraham to the nation of Israel and ultimately to Jesus Christ, who was born in the context of God’s choice nation.

In consideration of the extent of the blessing and God’s heart, one can argue that Abraham had to do very little as a leader to cause fulfillment of God’s purposes. Herein is the beauty and mystery of God’s choice of men and women as cross-cultural leaders. Their influence toward the fulfillment of God's purposes for the nations rests in one simple word: obedience. After the testing of Abraham in regards to the possession of his son Isaac, God again announced His pleasure with Abraham and promised blessings because of Abraham’s obedience toward Him. “The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, ‘I swear by myself, declares the LORD,

³⁶ Gen. 12:1-3. Unless otherwise noted all biblical quotations will be from the *New International Version*.

³⁷ *Biblesoft's Strong's*, “peoples.”

that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”³⁸ The blessing will come to the nations through obedience to God. Like Abraham, cross-cultural leaders may have to leave the comfort of familiar places, people, and ways in response to the voice of God. The leader will likely face occasions in which God clarifies that his or her prized values, possessions, or plans are not the source of the blessings; instead, He is.

Another example of God’s call upon a person for cross-cultural leadership is Moses. The stages of Moses’ life reveal the providential planning of God for the shaping of a man who could lead across cultures. By the time God spoke to Moses from the burning bush in the desert surrounding the Mountain of Horeb, Moses had been significantly influenced by at least three cultures. Born to a Hebrew family in Egypt, he came of age in the household of Pharaoh. Having observed the oppression of the Hebrews, whom he recognized as his own people, he killed an Egyptian guard and fled for his life. He settled among a desert people, the Midianites, for forty years. There Moses made a new life, complete with family and occupation; he married Zipporah, a daughter of the priest, Jethro, and took responsibility of Jethro’s flocks.

Moses, who grew up as a bi-cultural youth, became fully ensconced as an adult in a third culture that became a refuge for him. And like many bi- and tri- cultural people,

³⁸ Gen. 22:15-18.

Moses had great difficulty viewing himself as a leader. Notice a portion of his conversation with God.

"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"³⁹

Moses was an unwilling candidate for God's assignment. His objections climaxed with the self-deprecating declaration that he could not speak well and the plea that God should send someone else. However, God's call was persistent and His provisions were graceful to Moses. Moses returned to Egypt familiar with the people of his ethnic heritage, aware of the ways of the Egyptian ruling family, and at home with the people and ways of the wilderness "on the other side" of the Red Sea. God providentially raised up this tri-cultural person and called him into His redemptive purposes. Moses was more ready than he knew; God had been shaping him culturally. As well, God had been shaping Moses' character by teaching him to listen to the voice of God, and not only his passions.

Throughout Scripture bi- and tri- cultural people are often found at the turning points of God's redemptive work. Like Moses, they seem to have been providentially shaped by God for the *kairos* moment of His call. Joseph became fully acculturated in the Egyptian culture after years of service there. He was able to declare that what his brothers meant for evil, God meant for good; and so, the Israelites were saved from the destructive seven year famine in the region. Daniel came into adulthood in the courts of

³⁹ Exod. 3:10-14.

Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon while Israel was in exile there. His effectiveness as a leader was seen in his unwavering devotion to God and in his ability to function as a dual cultured person—both Hebrew and Persian.⁴⁰ God used him to declare that the sovereignty of God encompassed not only Israel but also all the nations of the world. God was not bound by their experience of days, weeks, years, and even borders. Daniel's influence secured the well being of the Israelites as a people who worshipped God in a foreign land.

In the New Testament the most influential bi-cultural person is the apostle Paul. God called him from being an oppressor of the gospel to being a promoter of the gospel and the church. From the beginning of Paul's walk with Christ, God's intended to direct him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. The confirmation of that call came through Ananias; God instructed him to go and see Paul just a few days after the Damascus Road encounter because, "this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kinds and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15).⁴¹ Later Paul identified himself as "the apostle to the Gentiles."⁴² Like Moses, the bi-cultural background of Paul seems to be providential in light of his calling from God. Paul grew up in Tarsus and became, multilingual, bi-cultural, and urban. His mother was Jewish and his father was a Roman citizen. In fact, Paul was first known to the Jewish

⁴⁰ Bakke, *Theology*, 87. Bakke writes of Daniel, that "this kid (the text indicates that he and his friends were *naharim*, or teenagers) sorted out faith and culture issues at an early age. He mastered the Babylonian wisdom tradition, while rejecting some Babylonian values."

⁴¹ Bruce, *Acts*, 187-189. Bruce discusses the role of Ananias in the calling of Paul.

⁴² Rom. 11:13, Gal. 2:8.

community as Saul. However as he began the mission to the Greek-speaking Gentiles he took on his Roman name, Paul.⁴³

Throughout his ministry, Paul served as a bridge person between the Gospel and people and between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. In each city he “varied his message, the meeting place and the methodology to better reach the different audiences of those cities.”⁴⁴ He became the advocate for the Gentiles before the Jerusalem Council pleading the case that the gospel of Jesus Christ did not require Gentiles to become Jewish.⁴⁵ He rebuked Jewish-Christian leaders for drawing back from Gentiles and thereby compromising the gospel.⁴⁶ He used his status as a Roman citizen to secure the well being of the new church in Philippi.⁴⁷ He mediated the cultural discomfort between Jewish believers and Gentile believers by unpacking the implications of the gospel for behaviour and life together as the church.⁴⁸ Paul used his training in the Jewish Law to draw out the theological history of God’s desire to bless the nations in Christ.⁴⁹ He managed the movement of team members in his circle of leaders to enable them to effectively cross between the culture groups.⁵⁰ He served as a mentor to

⁴³ Bruce, *Acts*, 249. Bruce notes that as a Roman citizen, Paul would have had three names. However two of those have not been preserved. “Paulus” would have been his common or regular name among the Romans.

⁴⁴ Bakke, *Theology*, 154.

⁴⁵ Acts 15.

⁴⁶ Gal. 2.

⁴⁷ Acts 16.

⁴⁸ Rom. 14-15.

⁴⁹ Rom. 3-5, 9-11.

⁵⁰ Acts 16:1-5. Timothy, an emerging cross-cultural leader had a bicultural background; his mother was Jewish and his father was Greek. Paul wanted to take Timothy on his next missionary journey,

emerging leaders and consistently gathered around himself a diverse team of leaders in order to penetrate the complex relational structures of cities with the Gospel.⁵¹ The apostle Paul is the consummate example of an effective cross-cultural leader.

However, Paul would not have identified his dual heritage, skills, and knowledge as the reason for his fruitfulness. Instead, he would have pointed to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He downplayed his skills and his heritage in favor of the call of God on his life.⁵² Over and over Paul affirmed, “It is God who called me.” Yet he continued to recognize that emerging leaders needed help for their own calling, so he offered his life in Christ as a model worthy of imitation.⁵³ Likewise, cross-cultural leaders in the service of Jesus Christ must not disregard the necessity of gaining competence in a variety of areas even as they depend on God. Nor should they abandon the riches to be gained from their cultural backgrounds. Rather they should turn these cultural trappings into advantages to help others become mature in Christ. In this way, cross-cultural leaders called by God take the blessing granted by God through Christ to its destination—the nations.

so he “circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”

⁵¹ Bakke, *Theology*, 157. “Acts 28 tells us that Paul rented a house in Rome at his own expense for two years while under house arrest. During this time his six associates—Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Aristarchus, Lukas, Demas and Marcus—worked the streets. All six colleagues have Greek or Asian names. Apparently Paul moved into South/Asian Rome rather than Latin Rome. The city by this time had become the “catch basin” for the empire’s many people, and Paul evangelized them with a “reach out” team strategy.”

⁵² In Philippians 3:3-7, Paul downplays his heritage. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, he downplays his abilities. In 1 Timothy 1:15, he calls himself the “chief of sinners.”

⁵³ 2 Tim. 1:11-14. “And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

God transforms leaders to a Christocentric worldview.

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.⁵⁴

While it is clear from Jesus' commission that the nations are the object of God's affection, the disciples required the transforming work of the Spirit before they would share God's passion.⁵⁵ The scope of Jesus' authority and presence was still limited in their minds to the "lost sheep of Israel."⁵⁶ Jesus, for them, was still bound up in nationality, ethnicity, culture, and law because they were still bound up in these constructs. In fact, their worldview was still captivated by these natural constructs and not the person of Christ. The book of Acts is the story of the Spirit's transformation of an ethnocentric group into a multicultural family. It is the story of a movement that began in the hearts of leaders called out by God as He transformed them into effective cross-cultural leaders. Luke highlights the Spirit's transforming work in his account of Pentecost, the widows' conflict, the scope of Paul's mission, and the second conversion of Peter. As well, Luke shows how the leadership of Stephen and the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem hastened the disciples' transformation.

⁵⁴ Matt. 28:18-20.

⁵⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 22, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992), 431. The Greek word for "nations" is *ethne*. Many regard the term to convey more than nation-states, but also people groups. Its use here need not be read as an absolute rejection of Israel.

⁵⁶ Matt. 10:5-6. Jesus must have been aware of the ethnocentric boundaries internal to the disciples. They were not yet ready for the world mission.

Jesus told Nicodemus that “the wind blows wherever it pleases.”⁵⁷ Like the wind, God is not constrained by borders. God is going to act for the spiritual rebirth of those he chooses. No one is going to tell him where to blow. And so, when “the wind” blew on the day of Pentecost, 120 disciples were dispersed from their meeting place in the power of the Holy Spirit to speak to people gathered from the corners of the world. Luke records for Theophilus what it was like when the disciples poured into the streets of Jerusalem.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”⁵⁸

Luke makes it clear to Theophilus what the Holy Spirit is up to in the world: the gospel of Jesus Christ is going to go “to the ends of the earth.”⁵⁹ Galileans, who could have spoken the common Aramaic with ease, instead, on this occasion, proclaim the “wonders of God” in the native tongues of the multicultural population of Jerusalem.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ John 3:7-8 “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁵⁸ Acts 2:4-11.

⁵⁹ Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁶⁰ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 135. Witherington argues that though one might rightfully make an allusion between Pentecost and Babel, i.e. a reversal of Babel, Luke does not. Luke’s concern seems to be the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Witherington further notes that this was

Pentecost served as a sign to Luke and to the disciples that the gospel is for people from all “nations under heaven.” However at this point in their understanding, it was for the “devout Jews” among the nations.⁶¹

In spite of the miracle of Pentecost, the church seems to have begun without overt awareness of her multicultural nature or the extent of her cross-cultural calling. Luke’s record of their realization of the multicultural reality is a “tortuous journey” that begins with a unity threatening conflict between two groups of women.⁶² In Acts 6 the Grecian Jews complained about perceived discrimination in regard to the distribution of food; the Hebraic Jews were perceived to have more food after the daily distribution. Now the apostles could not ignore the “multi” nature of the Jerusalem congregation: the “haves” and the “have-nots,” the Jews and the Greeks. The solution offered by the Twelve reformed the structure of the church by developing a Greek-speaking ministry team of men to wait on the women and to serve them through the food distribution. It was a radical realignment of values.⁶³ The successful resolution of this challenge was so

not a reversal of Babel, since the people were not given one language to share; rather, they were given one Lord to share. One of the problems of viewing cultural and linguistic diversity only from the standpoint of Babel is that it is viewed as a curse. However, Stephen A. Rhodes argues that “God’s intention has always been a multicultural world” He references Genesis 10:5 and the Noahic genealogy as a “verbal map” of the world, whereby “linguistic, familial and national diversity are not curses of divine wrath but fulfillment of the blessing of creation.” Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsityPress, 1998), 24.

⁶¹ Acts 2:11.

⁶² Ray Bakke, *A Theology*, 140.

⁶³ Ibid., 140-141. Bakke writes, “It is highly instructive to notice that the ‘great’ Stephen and Philip began their apostolic careers doing what people today sometimes call ‘women’s work.’” Luke is documenting the cultural shifts and bridges that must be crossed if our churches are to detribalize and include the whole city.”

striking to the people of Jerusalem that a “large number of priests” also “became obedient to the faith” and joined the growing church.⁶⁴

The advent of bi-cultural disciples, mixed Jews, into leadership within the Jerusalem church seems to have been part of God’s plan to hasten the transformation of leadership into their cross-cultural calling. As God moved them toward the fulfillment of His commission, He helped them gain new understandings. Ray Bakke notes that the Greek disciples, as new leadership in the Jerusalem Church, had different understandings of Jewish history and of the activity of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus. One of the longest points in Stephen’s four-point sermon in Acts 7, emphasizes “that all the greatest acts of God happened outside Palestine, off the map of Israel, including the Red Sea Deliverance. Even the sacred Torah came not from Jerusalem but from the Sinai Desert. Israel’s ethnocentrism and geographical patriotism were being called into question.”⁶⁵ Stephen who had been providing effective cross-cultural leadership to the church now confronted the Jew’s comfortable nationalistic worldview. He identified them as resisters to the activity of God. Stephen’s audience became enraged; they killed him and began a systematic search for the believers. The disciples began to scatter from the confines of Jerusalem.

The Grecian disciples that were scattered by the persecution preached the gospel wherever they went, and they began making disciples of any who responded to the message of Jesus. Perhaps, these bi-cultural disciples of Jesus functioned as effective cross-cultural leaders sooner than the Jewish disciples because their identity was not as

⁶⁴ Acts 6:7.

⁶⁵ Bakke, *A Theology*, 141.

captivated by their ethnicity. They were able to more readily grasp the availability of the Gospel for all people.

However, for those disciples who had a more mono-cultural experience and, therefore, more ethnocentric perspective, joining God in His cross-cultural mission was more difficult. Each time there was a new movement of God geographically, the Jewish apostles who had remained in Jerusalem went to check it out.⁶⁶ God was warming them up to the full scope of His disciple-making mission to the nations. But it would take pigs from heaven to convince them that God really intended for all people to be drawn into a life saving relationship with Jesus, to be a disciple. To change the church, God radically confronted the ethnocentric worldview of Peter.

God created an intersection between Peter and Cornelius's household in order to save Cornelius and convert Peter; the Spirit was blowing in Cornelius' house. Cornelius, a Roman army officer, oversaw a Gentile household that feared God and was known in the community as generous and devout. Luke recorded that an angel of God instructed Cornelius to send for Peter and assured him that his prayers and his gifts to the poor had come before God as "a memorial offering."⁶⁷ Cornelius sent three men to invite Peter to his home as he had been instructed. In perfect sequence with their lunchtime arrival, God prepared Peter to go to the home of the uncircumcised and preach the

⁶⁶ Acts 8:4-25; Philip to Samaria; Peter and John followed up. Acts 11:12-30; men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch; Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to check it out.

⁶⁷ Acts 10:4. The significance of this statement designating Cornelius's prayers and actions as a memorial offering should not be overlooked. Witherington notes that P.F. Esler may be correct when he asserts that, "Luke is suggesting that the prayers and the alms of this Gentile were accepted by God in lieu of the sacrifices which he was not allowed to enter the Temple to offer himself. In other words, God had acted to break down barriers between Jew and Gentile by treating the prayers and alms of a Gentile as equivalent to the sacrifice of a Jew." P.F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 162.

Gospel. Three times Peter was confronted with a vision of animals, both clean and unclean, lowered from heaven on a tablecloth, and he was instructed to “kill and eat.” Three times Peter says no, that he had never eaten anything “impure or unclean.” Three times the voice from heaven instructed him, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”⁶⁸

Peter’s refusal to eat, even of the clean or acceptable animals on the tablecloth, can be understood as an underlying sense of “defilement by association.”⁶⁹ Likewise, his inability to enter the mission to the Gentiles was informed by religious and cultural inhibitions warning him of defilement from entering the homes of the uncircumcised. “It is simply not possible to fully accept someone with whom you are unwilling to share in the intimacy of table fellowship.”⁷⁰ Later, it became evident that both Peter and the leadership team in the Jerusalem Church possessed this disciple-making barrier.⁷¹ Peter, on this occasion, had been prepared by God to receive Gentile guests, to be a guest in a Gentile house, to preach the Gospel to Gentiles, and then to receive them as fellow disciples of Jesus—bearers of repentance and of the Holy Spirit.⁷² When Peter addressed

⁶⁸ Acts 10:1-16.

⁶⁹ Witherington, 350. In Acts 10:14, Peter refers to common (*koinon*) and unclean (*akatharton*). “The former probably refers to something that could be defiled by association with something unclean, and the latter to something inherently unclean.” Later when Peter defends his actions before the critical gathering of circumcised believers in Jerusalem, their point of concern was that he had gone “into the house of uncircumcised men” and had eaten “with them.” Their concern was over defilement by association. Witherington has gained some of his insights from C. House, “*Defilement by Association: Some Insights from the Use of Koinos/Koinoo in Acts 10-11*” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21 (1983), 143-53.

⁷⁰ John B. Polhill, “Acts,” in *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 26 (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1992), 256.

⁷¹ Acts 11:2.

⁷² One must wonder how Peter and the Disciples now considered Jesus’ encounters with the non-devout and non-Jewish world. The Gospels record many cross-cultural views in the life of Jesus; inclusion of non-Jews in his lineage—Matt. 1:1-16; shepherds at the birth of Christ—Luke 2:15; Simeon’s prophetic

the crowd gathered at Cornelius' house, he began by calling attention to the obvious significance of the occasion. "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"⁷³

After hearing of Cornelius' vision, Peter declared what he has learned and begins to preach the Gospel. He has two themes; first, God shows no favoritism between people; and second, everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins. God astonished Peter and the group of circumcised believers by bringing salvation to this Gentile household. Even while Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon the household of Gentiles as evidenced by tongues and praises to God. Peter could not resist this work of God; he ordered that they "be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Later he would defend himself saying, "So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?"⁷⁴

William Pannell calls this the "second conversion of Peter" and the Jerusalem church. Their problem in cross-cultural relations was not "technique but principle."⁷⁵

word—Luke 2:32; beginning to preach in Galilee of the Gentiles, Matthew 4:15; the healing of the Centurion's daughter—Luke 7:9-10; the thankful leper—Luke 17:11-19; the Samaritan women—John 4; the clearing of the Temple—the healing of the Gerasenes Demoniac—Mark 5:1-20; his teaching on the source of uncleanness—Mark 7:1-23; the Syrophoenician women asking for her daughter's healing—Mark 7:24-30; discussion on paying taxes to Caesar—Mark 12:13; the parable of the Good Samaritan—Luke 10:25-37.

⁷³ Acts 10:29.

⁷⁴ Acts 11:17.

⁷⁵ William Pannell, *Evangelism From the Bottom Up: What is the meaning of salvation in a world gone urban?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 70.

They could not yet see the Gentile world in the heart of God. They did not lack Scripture, a view of the sovereignty of God, the Holy Spirit, or even love for each other. They simply needed to be converted; they needed a radical realignment of their worldview to God's view of the world. And God's view was bigger than Israel. It was bigger than just blessing the nations through Israel. It was the creation of a new humanity that would "unite Jew and Gentile" as partners in salvation.⁷⁶ Later the bi-cultural Apostle Paul called by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles would flesh this out in the idea of reconciliation.⁷⁷ Cornelius and his household became the experiential turning point for Peter and the Jerusalem leadership. Disciples of Jesus could be Gentile.

In the North American church today it is almost taken for granted that disciples will come from a variety of cultures, not just the Jewish identity. Often, however, a strong sense of "people consciousness" or a cultural sense of what is right, good, or acceptable offends believers in cross-cultural relations and produces a sense of alienation or "defilement by association." Like Peter and the Jerusalem Church, emerging cross-cultural leaders may need a conversion experience, whereby their worldview is expanded, and their core identity is transformed. The person called by God to cross cultures with the gospel or to be the church together with other-culture people will need to experience some kind of realignment with the Jesus who is Lord of all. They will need to have an adjustment of their own identity, so that their personal sense of well being is not derived from their ethnic heritage but from their Lord. The degree of psychological discomfort

⁷⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁷ I will explore the idea of reconciliation further in the third section of the theological rationale.

experienced in the transition will likely be influenced by factors of their own cultural background and their previous history with other-culture people. As we have seen in the life of Paul, his bi-cultural background was providential for his alignment with Jesus and the mission to the nations. With Peter though, his mono-cultural identity and high degree of people consciousness symbolized in circumcision and dietary laws, provided him with a more violent transition. In fact, in Acts 15, it required the whole church to adjust their view of *what* a disciple of Jesus looks like.⁷⁸ Leaders intent on assisting emerging cross-cultural leaders will need to be aware that cooperation with the Spirit of God in the formation of a Christocentric identity will require time, prayer, theological teaching, and shared experiences.

God empowers cross-cultural leaders to be agents of reconciliation.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.⁷⁹

Cross-cultural leaders are empowered by God to be agents of reconciliation. He enables them to cooperate with the Spirit so gatherings of diverse disciples of Jesus make His grace observable. Leaders, who have been given a new, spiritually induced motive, message, and ministry by the gospel, carry out His work. Their ministry yields a people who are unified in love, ministry, and the proclamation of the gospel. In the New Testament, God's empowerment of leaders as agents of reconciliation is illustrated by the history of the church in Antioch and by Paul's theology of reconciliation as expressed in

⁷⁸ See Appendix A, Developing a Christocentric View of the Disciple, for a discussion of this question of what a disciple looks like from a Christ-centered view rather than an ethno-centered view.

⁷⁹ 2 Cor. 5:16-18.

2 Corinthians. The evidence of His empowerment is seen in Paul's ministry with the people of Corinth. Thus, I am using Paul's ministry with the Corinthians as a model of God-empowered, cross-cultural motion.

In Antioch, Barnabas saw "the evidence of the grace of God" when he saw Jew and Gentile gathered in one name, the name of Christ (Acts 11:23). He was astonished that people so different, so separate could meet together under one roof! It was truly miraculous. They had been reconciled by the message of Jesus Christ. God drew Barnabas, the encourager, to these new believers. Barnabas called Paul to join his team, and they began to invest their lives into the new church. The Antioch church became the birthplace of the name "Christian" as they loved each other, formed a multicultural leadership team, testified of the risen Christ, responded to world needs, and sent out a missionary team. Here, I believe, Paul was able to grapple first-hand with the reconciling message and potential of the gospel. Here, he and Barnabas experienced God's empowerment for heightened cross-cultural effectiveness.

Jesus intended for the church to be a sign to the world. He prayed, "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). In Jesus' mind, the church will be known as His not by the sign at the door, but by the love between disciples.⁸⁰ God uses cross-cultural leaders to help the church become great in love, a display of God's "manifold wisdom" to the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 3:10). Unity wrought by reconciliation, not military might, hate for a common enemy, or psychological seduction is refreshing to the world. Because the

⁸⁰ John 13:34-35.

church is not yet all she is to become, cross-cultural leaders must have their every move informed by the gospel of reconciliation.

In 2 Corinthians Paul unpacks the implications of reconciliation. What happened at the cross of Christ has dramatic implications for all humanity. He writes, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Cor. 5:19). This ministry of reconciliation by God for humanity means that those who receive Christ, receive a new reality and relationship with Him; “they are a new creation” (5:17). Being a new creation means that their lives are governed or compelled by a new love, Christ’s love (5:14). It means that they have a new motive for living—an ambition to live for God (5:15). It means that they no longer see Christ and people from a worldly point of view (5:16); rather they see people who know Jesus as new creations (5:17), and they see people who do not know Jesus as ones for whom He died (5:14).

In fact, Paul says that the impact of God’s ministry of reconciliation is that believers have a new awareness about themselves. “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Cor. 5:20). God has given believers a new identity and a new ministry. He has appointed them as ambassadors, not to represent themselves—their achievement, their family, their culture—but to represent Christ—His work, His family, and His way. This is “the new creation.” And God empowers His people for a new work.⁸¹ “Paul is not interested in

⁸¹ An interesting case-study into how God empowers His people for the ministry of reconciliation is seen in the book of Philemon. There, Paul urges Philemon to treat Onesimous, a run-away slave, gracefully, as a brother in Christ. In verse 6, Paul seems to believe that Philemon will come to a greater understanding of the Gospel by doing its work: “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.” My interest in exploring God’s empowerment of His people as agents of reconciliation is not so much in explaining how He does it, but in the outcomes His empowerment yields.

the *abstract doctrine* of reconciliation but in the *concrete task* of reconciliation. The church not only is to preserve sound doctrine but also is called by God to be, as apostles were, a reconciling force. That means it must adopt the status of a servant and must be active in a ministry of helping and healing.”⁸²

Paul’s ministry with the Corinthians models a practical theology of reconciliation. Such a theology directs the cross-cultural leader and the church into three types of activity; each demonstrates God’s empowerment as His agent of reconciliation: proclaiming the gospel message, stimulating a transformational fellowship, and ministering to the diverse community.

Paul proclaimed the gospel to diverse communities to stimulate faith. He shared the *message* of reconciliation because of new motives—a right love of God and a right fear of God. These motives create a new vision for the church, whereby, people can no longer see others or themselves the same way. They live as citizens of another kingdom, so their ethnicity must take a back seat to Christ. The *ethos* nurtured by cross-cultural leaders in the church is that everyone is a candidate for Christ. The church conceptually and, then, literally raises people up to the level ground at the foot of the cross.⁸³ The cross-cultural leader in this context must become stranger friendly; she or he will cross boundaries to share the gospel. Jesus said, “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your

⁸² David E. Garland, “2 Corinthians,” in *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 29 (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999), 300. The italics are the author’s emphasis.

⁸³ Gal. 3:26-28.

brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” (Matt. 5:46-47). With a new point of view, there is the anticipation that a stranger could become a friend of Jesus and, therefore, a brother or a sister.⁸⁴ Paul notes this empowered work of God among the Corinthians when he writes, “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him” (1 Cor 1:26-29).

Second, a practical theology of reconciliation will direct cross-cultural leaders into the ministry of transformational fellowship. Sanctification of individuals is something that God intends to do in the context of other people. God gives leaders to the church in order that the church may fulfill God’s Word together. God then uses the fellowship to shape believers to be like Christ. “Becoming” is something that God intends to do *in* fellowship. Cross-cultural leaders interested in life change will become sensitive to the worldviews and values informing behaviours and attitudes in the fellowship.

For example, Corinth in the first century was characterized by a fractiousness and schismatic culture. People within the city were quite politicized and sought to develop group identity by way of personality. In the church the local culture of relationships and

⁸⁴ Garland, 295-296. Garland notes that historical records for ambassadors during the New Testament period indicate that “envoys were usually sent to others as a sign of friendship and good will, to establish a relationship, to renew friendly relations, or to make an alliance. . . . God’s purpose in sending Christ and his envoys has the same end—to put an end to hostilities and to bring about a reconciliation. God sends out envoys to continue to announce that now is the day of salvation and reconciliation.”

power contributed to one of many problems.⁸⁵ In 1 Corinthians Paul had to confront their divisive behaviour and their underlying cultural assumptions with the new worldview brought by the Spirit.⁸⁶ He writes, “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought... One of you says, ‘I follow Paul;’ another, ‘I follow Apollos;’ another, I follow Cephas;’ still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided” (1 Cor. 1:10-13)?

It seems that Paul still had their conflicted nature in mind when he wrote 2 Corinthians. Addressing the Corinthian believers, Paul tells them to be reconciled to God and urges them “not to receive God’s grace in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1). It is possible for a people to frustrate the grace of God and His reconciling work if they maintain attitudes and actions that hinder their unity with Him or with each other.⁸⁷ Their fellowship with each other and the Lord was to yield the Spirit’s transformation. Transformational fellowship believes that the reconciling work of God is continually going on. The church has not yet arrived. The need for change and the opportunity for growth in Christ come about because the Spirit engages people in interaction with each other and His Word. Some culturally informed attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours may be assimilated, while

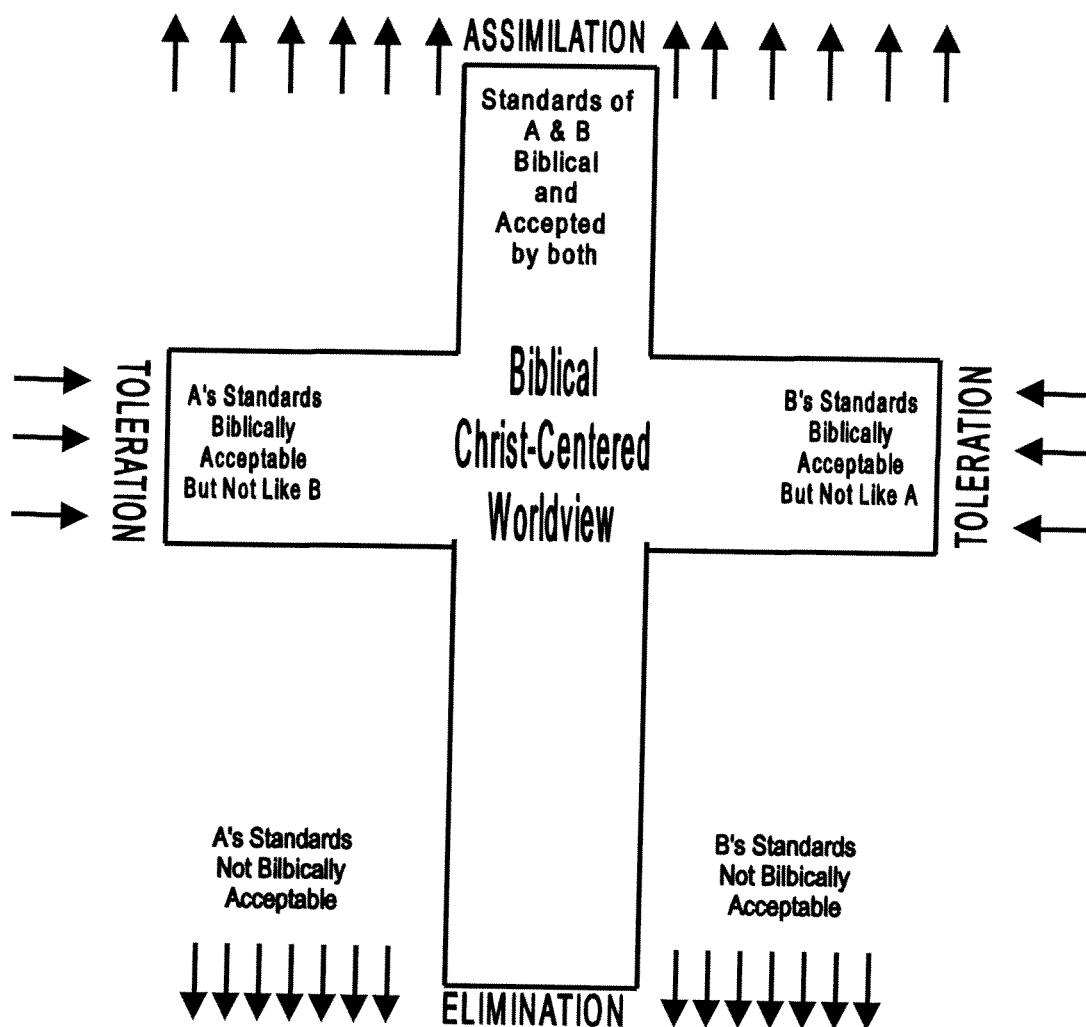
⁸⁵ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, in *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 24.

⁸⁶ Paul identifies their “parties,” and then directs them into the unity of Christ (2 Cor. 1:13), the mode of God’s choosing in regard to people (2 Cor. 1:26-27), the unity of the servants under Christ (2 Cor. 3:1-9), the unity of the church, and the diversity of gifts and service.

⁸⁷ Jesus indicated that to nurture disunity with a brother is to nurture disunity with God. (Matt. 18:15-35).

others must be eliminated. Figure 1 provides a model for a transformational fellowship in a multicultural church.⁸⁸

Figure 1.



This model illustrates why cross-cultural leaders must be radically dependent upon the Holy Spirit to nurture change; they serve in a conflicted community. They face the sometimes-explosive possibility of alienating families and communities over cultural preferences rather than biblical principles. Reconciliation, however, does not mean that

⁸⁸ I have adapted a toleration, assimilation, elimination model developed by Dan Pantoja and presented at Vision 2000, Sept 1995, Willingdon Church, Vancouver, BC, "Training Our People to Be An Effective Witness for Christ in A Multicultural Society."

leaders simply smooth over sin. As the congregation serves Christ together, the leaders must have a wisdom that comes from God. Such wisdom will allow new believers to develop personal convictions in their journey with Jesus, but will also compel the leader to call for behaviour and belief that resonates with God's Word and His Spirit. Effective cross-cultural leaders will have the wisdom to identify the difference between culturally informed preferences and sin. Some cultural preferences may be assimilated into a "Christian" worldview, while other aspects will have to be thrown out. Some cultural aspects within the fellowship may be tolerated, while others must be confronted—all the while maintaining love and truth with grace.⁸⁹

An ambassador's duty is not to herself but to the one who sent her. Thus Paul could say, "We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). However, transformational fellowship requires great humility. "Everything in spiritual community is reversed from the world's order. It is our weakness, not our competence, that moves others; our sorrows, not our blessings, that break down the barriers of fear and shame that keep us apart; our admitted failures, not our paraded successes, that bind us together in hope."⁹⁰ Paul pleaded with the Corinthians to adjust their way to God's way. He was aware that they were in danger of remaining too much like the dominant culture in Corinth.⁹¹ But even as he wrote to them with a firm hand, he reminded them of his

⁸⁹ Paul illustrates this balance in the Corinthian church when he confronts the church's lax and even celebratory attitude toward sexual sin (1 Cor. 5). However he called them to a more tolerant attitude toward the question of eating or not eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8).

⁹⁰ Larry Crabb, *Safest Place on Earth*, 145.

⁹¹ A tension exists between the call for reconciled people "to be in the world but not of it" (John 17:15-16) and to "come out and be separate" (2 Cor 6:17). The mix of God's way with God's creation in a local context is in a sense a new culture; it has a worldview, a value system, and behaviour patterns. The multicultural church and perhaps any church faces two dangers in its formation. First, is a danger of insulation; the church could become insulated from the local context and the lost world so that they have a

manner with them. “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power...” (1 Cor. 2:3-4). In light of the conflicted community, reconciliation may mean that cross-cultural leaders become disillusioned with ideals so that they are dependent on Christ, not themselves, for love in the fellowship.⁹²

Finally, a practical reconciliation theology will thrust the cross-cultural leader and the *ekklesia* into its community. The transformational fellowship of the church must not be self-contained or quarantined. To take the ministry of reconciliation seriously, the church will infiltrate the city like light or become snuffed out by the weight of its own puffed-up importance. It will wither away under the weight of trivial pursuits and squander its birthright. Cross-cultural leaders equip the church for cross-cultural service to people so that their needs are met, and they are enabled to meet Jesus.⁹³ In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul encouraged the church to be hospitable to its guests (1 Cor. 14:23-25), conscientious in its service toward all people (1 Cor. 10:32-11:1), and

difficult time being heard by the unbelieving world; they are culturally and linguistically distant. Second, there is the danger of identification; the church could become so attached to the culture of its context that it has nothing prophetic to say. George Hunter explores how the “West was lost” by examining several historical movements and the church’s responses to them. In each, the church has either over or under identified with the cultural realities of their day. Commenting on North American Christianity in the 21st century he writes, “In the twentieth century, Christianity is widely equated with the religiosity of *Readers Digest*, and some churches with large attendance reinforce this heretical equation, rather than liberate people from their cultural idolatry into biblical faith.” George Hunter, *How To Reach Secular People* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1992), 32.

⁹² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1954), 26-27.

⁹³ Robert C. Linthicum, “Four Great Commissions: A Call to the Urban Church,” *Urban Mission* 14, no. 3 (March 1997) : 6-18. Linthicum provides a study of commissions from each of the four Gospels and concludes, “If the urban church is not to unintentionally slip into heresy, it must seek to create such a balance. We will not be a whole church proclaiming a whole gospel to the city until liberation, empowerment of people, spiritual formation, and the healing of souls reclaim their rightful places alongside our commitments to evangelism, education, and discipleship.”

generous to those in need (1 Cor 16:1-4, 2 Cor 8-9). Paul called for and modeled a life that was both pastoral—nurturing believers, and missionary—evangelizing unbelievers. He knew that God would empower the Corinthians for such a life as well. He wrote, “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8).

The presence of a God-powered church as a loving body and not just a tolerating body is eye-opening when people get the unexpected shock of being served graciously by an other-culture person. “Why would you love me?” could become a common question.⁹⁴ This movement into cross-cultural service is not easy. William Pannell writes:

It took the disciples a while to realize that their priority was to become a new people, a new humanity. What they were to be had to overshadow what they were to do. Indeed what they did in his name would be validated or questioned on the basis of their behavior. These disparate people from different regions and walks of life in a tiny, no-account country had to become brothers and sisters. They had to surrender their passions for power and learn to wash one another’s feet. Their personal ambitions had to be reigned in and subordinated to something larger. They learned to celebrate the new ambition that was constrained by being in the service of Jesus Christ. But they were not to behave as if answering the call to follow Jesus put them into an exclusive society... Passing the baton, for Jesus, had to do with dying. Without the cross there would be no baton. Thus the cross became the centerpiece of the movement, the symbol that change, however passionately desired, would always prove costly. Old habits, old ways of thinking long associated with the old guard, had to be subjected to the light of Scripture and courageous leadership.⁹⁵

Shared servanthood is the motion of reconciliation in Christ. Effective cross-cultural leaders learn how to help diverse people—diverse by culture and gifting—to work together to fulfill Christ’s mission. God empowers them for this movement by

⁹⁴ This question can be asked in a variety of ways. While hosting a baptism party for a new member of Cityview Baptist Church, my wife and I were told by a second-generation Asian-Canadian, “This is weird. Why would you have a bunch of strangers into your home?”

⁹⁵ Pannell, 85.

giving greater insight into the gospel of reconciliation. Having clear statements of organizational purpose and values assist diverse people who need to have some kind of *opus miranda*.⁹⁶ As well, cross-cultural sensitivity in decision making and delegation roles is a helpful attribute for the cross-cultural leader. However, it is God who empowers the cross-cultural leader for servanthood and boundary-crossing ministry through His Gospel. He gives them and the churches they lead the motive, the message, and the way to be agents of reconciliation in their communities. Diverse, yet unified, the presence and the voice of the *ekklesia* will shout and sometimes whisper, “Be reconciled to God. . . Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ See the Cityview Baptist Church Mission statement and values in Appendix B.

⁹⁷ 2 Cor. 5:20, 6:2.