

Copyright © 2020 Rashard Quinn-Acie Barnes

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLICAL CALL
FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY AT MERCY CHURCH
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Ministry

by
Rashard Quinn-Acie Barnes
December 2020

APPROVAL SHEET

INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLICAL CALL
FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY AT MERCY CHURCH
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Rashard Quinn-Acie Barnes

Read and Approved by:

William Beau Hughes (Faculty Supervisor)

Matthew J. Hall

Date _____

To my father, Leonard Barnes, who dreamed of such a reality.

May you rest in peace.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	vii
PREFACE	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	2
Rationale	6
Purpose	10
Goals	10
Research Methodology	10
Limitations/Delimitations	12
Definitions	12
Conclusion	14
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY IN THE CHURCH	15
Diversity in Creation	16
Sin and Unity	22
The Promise and Unity	26
Jesus and Unity	29
Unity Clarified in the Book of Ephesians	31
Cross-Cultural Unity in the Book of Galatians	36

Chapter	Page
3. THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL PRACTICES AT MERCY CHURCH	40
Introduction	40
Colorblindness	41
Lack of Ethnic Awareness	47
The Lack of Understanding of Racism	54
Misunderstanding of Biblical Justice	59
Conclusion	64
4. PROJECT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION	65
Project Planning	65
Implementation	72
Evaluation	74
Conclusion	82
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	83
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose	83
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals	84
Strengths of the Project	85
Weaknesses of the Project	86
What I Would Do Differently	87
Theological Reflections	88
Personal Reflections	89
Conclusion	90
 Appendix	
1. RUBRIC FOR THE CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY CLASS	92
2. CROSS-CULTURAL SURVEY	93
3. PIVOT POST-SURVEY QUESTIONS 32 AND 34	106
4. RUBRIC FOR EXPERT PANEL: RATING THE QUALITY OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY CLASS	107

Appendix	Page
5. BEYOND THE COLOR BARRIER: SYLLABUS	108
6. BEYOND THE COLOR BARRIER: FACILITATOR GUIDE	112
7. SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY	114

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table	Page
1. Expert panel rubric results	75
2. Demographic information	77
3. Pre-test results for biblical principles related to race/ethnic relations	78
4. Pre-test results for concepts to race/ethnic relations	78
5. Cross-cultural survey results	79
6. Questions 32 and 34 post-average mean and standard deviation	80
A1. Pivot table post-survey questions 32 and 34	106
Figure	
A1. Age breakdown of class participants	113
A2. Ethnicity breakdown of class participants	113

PREFACE

Credit for this project goes to many friends and family who have been involved in making it happen. First, I want to thank my beautiful wife, Meghan, for allowing me to pursue my doctorate. Her encouragement and perseverance in this season of life allowed me to complete this project. Having two kids at home and working part-time, she never complained. I love you more than you know and I am happy we are creating a legacy for our family.

Second, I want to thank our children, Malachi and Eden. My time away from home was a sacrifice for you. Thank you for behaving for Mommy while Daddy was absent, working on school.

Third, I want to thank my parents, Leonard and Cheryl Barnes, and my in-laws, Tom and Paula Hess. Dad, I miss you every day. You and Mom taught me how to love all kinds of people. You gave me the gospel at an early age, and I am grateful for your example of laboring in gospel ministry. Tom and Paula, thank you for your support and your help with my children while I was away. I am grateful that God gave me you as my in-laws.

Fourth, this project would not be completed apart from the help and encouragement of Dan Dumas, my program director, Beau Hughes, my faculty supervisor, and Kaitlyn Stickley, my editor. Dan, there is none like you. Thank you for allowing me to participate in this program and for believing in me. To Beau, you are a gift to me as man and a pastor. Thank you for being patient with me and faithfully guiding me in this project. Kaitlyn, thank you for all of your grammatical assistance.

Fifth, I would like to thank my church, Mercy Church, for the joy of being one of your pastors. I pray that Mercy will have a lasting impact on the kingdom of God. May the Lord Jesus be glorified forever among our body.

Finally, I would like to thank my cohort, Blake Maxwell, Connor Bales, Michael Thompson, and Brandon Reed. These past two years have been a blast. You all have sharpened me and made me a better man. I am forever thankful for your friendships and brotherhood.

Rashard Barnes

Charlotte, North Carolina

December 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In heaven, in glory, the global church is a multicultural, multiethnic group of people united around the throne of Jesus singing praises to the Father (Rev 7:9). On earth presently, the global church demonstrates that unity when believers pursue unity in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3).

When Jesus gave his final command to the disciples, he told them to “go make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:18-20).¹ The phrase “of all nations” in Greek is *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*, which means every tribe, every race, every culture. As the gospel penetrates ethnic and racial barriers and crosses distinctive cultural geopolitical boundaries, Christians throughout the world from every tribe, race, and culture must strive to carry Jesus’ commission of making disciples of *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* and participate in blessing the diverse people of the world through the messianic seed of Abraham.²

The outcome of the Great Commission is for Christ to redeem people from every ethnic group in unity, giving praise to him in glory (Rev 7:9). R. T. France comments, “Jesus’ universal Lordship now demands a universal mission. The restriction of the disciples’ mission to Israel alone in Matthew 10:5-6 has been lifted, for the kingdom of the Son of man as described in Daniel 7:14 requires disciples of all nations.”³

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

² Jarvis J. Williams and Trey Moss, “Focus on ‘All Nations’ as Integral Component of World Mission Strategy,” in *World Mission: Theology, Strategy, and Current Issues*, ed. Scott N. Callahan and Will Brooks (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 147-48.

³ R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 89.

Jesus' command to the church to reach all nations displays God's intention for creation (Gen 12:2-3; Gal 3:13-14; Rev 7:9). Specifically, God's intention for the church remains to be one race with multiple cultures and ethnicities. From creation to new creation, God recommences to redeem a people to himself. The church's pursuit of cross-cultural unity demonstrates the Scriptures' description of the kingdom. Notably, the church pursues cross-cultural unity because the gospel calls for it. Jesus died to reconcile the church to God and one another (2 Cor 5:18 -19). The church then exists to live in light of that reconciliation on earth and in glory.

Mercy Church desires to live in light of that unity. Over the last five years, it stands undeniable that God has gifted Mercy Church with influence in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. To have a continuing impact in Charlotte, North Carolina, Mercy Church needs to educate its body on cross-cultural unity, which gives reasons for this project.

Context

A few contributing realities about Mercy Church are essential to provide background for this project. First, the Summit Church, in partnership with the Summit Network, planted Mercy Church in 2015. Spence Shelton, formerly an associate pastor at the Summit Church, serves as the lead and founding pastor of Mercy Church. The vision of Mercy Church stands to see a gospel awakening in Charlotte, North Carolina, to the ends of the earth. Mercy launched with 80 individual team members. Currently, Mercy Church constitutes as one church in two locations in the Charlotte, North Carolina Metro area. The average attendance comprises around 600 adults and 100 children each Sunday between those two campuses.

Mercy Church struggles to reflect the city's cultural diversity and the neighborhoods of both locations. The church's racial demographic stands 95 percent white, despite Charlotte, North Carolina, being one of the more racially diverse cities in

the United States.⁴ According to the US Census Bureau, Charlotte’s racial and ethnic makeup is 42 percent white, 35 percent black, 14 percent Hispanic, 6.2 percent Asian, and 3 percent are of two or more races.⁵ Although Mercy Church desires to reach the whole city with the gospel, the church continues reaching a core demographic of whites in their 20s and 50s who are middle-class and college-educated.⁶

Within a fifteen-mile radius of both campuses, whites represent 51.7 percent, and all other ethnic groups make up 48.3 percent, with African-American being the largest of the group with 26.9 percent.⁷ In 2024, studies project Asian Americans will comprise 25.3 percent of Charlotte’s population, making it the fastest-growing ethnic group in the area.⁸ Concluding from research, there is a prime opportunity for Mercy to fulfill its vision, which exists to see a gospel awakening in Charlotte, North Carolina, to the ends of the earth. A gospel awakening in a city requires the whole city, not just sections of it.

A fundamental misunderstanding when discussing cross-cultural unity is that many in Mercy’s congregation would say that race does not matter because there subsists only one human race. Biologically speaking, there exists only one race. However, one cannot accept the overall conclusion that race does not matter. Genetically, race remains

⁴ Among the non-white within Mercy Church, a number are born outside of America. The indication of this statement reveals that ethnic minorities who are not familiar with the race problem within America trust white leadership while the ethnic minorities who are familiar with the race problem in America are cautious about becoming members at Mercy Church.

⁵ United State Census Bureau, “QuickFacts Charlotte, North Carolina,” July 1, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/charlottecitynorthcarolina/POP060210>.

⁶ Percept Group, “Ministry Area Profile 2019,” June 7, 2019, <http://www.ministryarea.com/Reports/ReportViewer.aspx?id=564ecc8f-b38b-4f6d-8df0-a6453b987333>. This study is a survey of both Mercy locations within a fifteen-mile radius.

⁷ Percept Group, “Ministry Area Profile 2019.”

⁸ Percept Group, “Ministry Area Profile 2019.”

only skin deep, but sociologically speaking, race has substantial implications.⁹ Race affects housing, neighborhoods, healthcare, the criminal justice system, and religious practice.¹⁰ So, when the church does not challenge the pretense that race does not matter, it passively supports the acceptance of the colorblindness.

The church does not support this idea publicly, but privately many congregants seem to subscribe to colorblindness.¹¹ In her book *Disunity in Christ*, Christiana Cleveland writes that colorblindness stands as “the idea of a common ingroup identity that trumps all subordinate identities, it might seem to suggest that we should all relinquish our cultural identities and ignore our cultural differences.”¹² Colorblindness disregards God’s unique stamp on each eikon who reflects his image. Therefore, when a church body like Mercy Church does not challenge notions such as colorblindness, it creates a divisive church culture, making colorblindness a chasm in achieving cross-cultural unity.

Mercy’s teaching often misses the cultural dynamics within the Scriptures and struggles to fully conceptualize how to faithfully pursue scriptural matters, such as cross-cultural unity and biblical justice.¹³ The righteousness of Christ and holy living are the main components of the teachings, which do not give proper attention to cultural dynamics. When the teaching at Mercy misses the cultural dynamics within the

⁹ Alvin Sanders, *Bridging the Diversity Gap: Leading toward God Multi-Ethnic Kingdom* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2013), 64.

¹⁰ See Jamar Tisby, *Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

¹¹ For example, the following comments have been made recently, “I do not see color,” “We are all the same, why are talking about this?” It seems that many repeat comments like this without recognizing the full import of what they are saying.

¹² Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 187, Kindle.

¹³ Historically, there has been a pre-sermon interview about race and culture on Martin Luther King Day, January 20, 2019, but other than that, there has been a lack of discussion around this issue publicly.

Scriptures, particularly with matters of cross-cultural unity and biblical justice, the members of Mercy are not getting a complete view of Jesus who fully embodied culture (Luke 3:23-38; Mark 11:17; Gal 3:28), righteousness (Rom 3:22; Mic 6:8; Ps 89:14), and justice (Ps 89:14; Isa 1:17; Mic 6:8; Luke 11:42). Consequently, if Mercy only preaches about Christ's righteousness and rarely engages matters of culture and justice, the people of Mercy will not fully comprehend God's heart for humanity and his plan for the world.

Failure to address the cultural dynamics within the Scriptures does not just neglect the full character of Jesus; it also negatively affects the church's community life. Those who are not from the primary culture within the church feel isolated.¹⁴ The minorities within the church feel that their experience is not valued and that they do not matter.¹⁵ It stands as a demonstration that one can be against racism and even desire diversity but at the same time undermine reconciliation and unity.¹⁶

Historically in Charlotte, North Carolina, black people and white people have been known to be at odds with one another.¹⁷ Although the challenges that these two demographics have with one another prevail necessary, it tends to dominate and limit the scope of Mercy's reach because the conversation is centered primarily on race over differences in cultures within ethnicities. Since these two people groups historically and

¹⁴ Over the last four years, Mercy has lost ten members due to the lack of cultural sensitivity, particularly the preaching. It has also struggled to retain ethnic minorities that visit. The elder team has met with people that left to explain their reasoning.

¹⁵ As a minority and elder I have had conversations with people of color who feel isolated. These individuals are at Mercy because they love the church but leave due to a lack of reciprocity. See Bryan Loritts, *Insider/Outsider: My Journey as a Stranger in White Evangelicalism and My Hope for Us All* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

¹⁶ William Castro, "Deconstructing the Racialist Framework," in *Heal Us Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church*, ed. Doug Serven (Oklahoma City, OK: White Blackbird Books, 2016), 195.

¹⁷ Ophelia Garman-Brown et al., "The Charlotte Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force Report," *Leader on Opportunity*, March 2017, <https://www.leadingonopportunity.org/report/chapter-2>.

presently do not interact beyond the necessary dealings of human activity, the need for discussion among one another stands crucial. Though, for the church to pursue cross-cultural unity, there must be a proper understanding and technical definition of race, culture, and ethnicity.¹⁸

For example, conventional wisdom would put forward that there are many cultures within cultures when in actuality there are many ethnicities within a culture. Mercy Church needs language to understand the complexities of being a cross-cultural church. When Mercy Church grows in its knowledge of God's beauty of cross-cultural unity cultures, it will reject ungodly cultural idols, and starts seeing all people as distinct individuals who make up one body called the church. The consequence stands that Mercy Church will increase its reach to all kinds of people because all people are treated as co-laborers for God's mission.

Rationale

The New Testament presents the church as a diverse church. In Mark 11:17, while Jesus is teaching in the temple, he quotes the prophet Isaiah: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?'" (Isa 56:7). In this passage, Jesus clears the temple of corruption and establishing his house as a place for all nations. The apostle Paul similarly writes about his experience with the early church in Acts 11:19-26. The early church brought about the unity of Jews and Gentiles to create a unified group of Christians.

From the beginning, multicultural gathering occurred as the Christian experience. Subsequently, in 1 Corinthians, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their social elitism. The Jews in Corinth were demonstrating superiority over the Gentiles regarding the Lord's Supper. Paul challenges them not to humiliate those who have nothing, but

¹⁸ See Sarah Shin, *Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), Kindle.

instead to pursue unity at the Lord's table (1 Cor 11:22).¹⁹ In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells his disciples to go make disciples of all nations; essentially, to make Jesus known to all people in all places. Subsequently, the unfolding of this command is to take the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Derwin Gray summarizes these texts in his book *The High-Definition Leader*: "The gospel is about God's being faithful in Jesus to Abraham to colonize earth with this multiethnic [multicultural], Jew-Gentile family, and this multiethnic [multicultural] family would be a living temple, God's dwelling place on earth."²⁰ Gray reveals that it has always been God's plan to redeem all people to himself. As Abraham's offspring, Christians are proof that God stands faithful to completing his promise to Abraham to create a vast, beautiful, multicultural family of unity and reconciliation.²¹ At the end of days, all people from all nations with multiple languages will worship at the throne of Christ (Rev 7:9).

Nonetheless, cross-cultural unity remains not only supported by Scripture, it also displays a true understanding of God's grace. The goal of cross-cultural unity transpires breaking down the barrier impartiality in the life of the church for the glory of God. In his book *Oneness Embraces*, Tony Evans explains,

For too often, we have tried to achieve oneness through marginalizing racial distinctions rather than embrace it. This is because the church has made reconciliation its own goal. . . . Reconciliation is not an end in itself. It is a mean toward the greater end of bringing glory to God through seeking to advance the kingdom in a lost world.²²

¹⁹ Trillia J. Newbell, *United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 129.

²⁰ Derwin Gray, *The High-Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 55.

²¹ Gray, *The High-Definition Leader*, 60.

²² Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation: The Kingdom and How We Are Stronger Together* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 19.

Therefore, cross-cultural unity occurs only when the glory of God becomes the goal, not accomplishing a diversity initiative.²³ Essentially, becoming a multicultural church is more than having multicolored services; it subsists about teaching people to honor God by living cross-cultural lives. A church that pursues cross-cultural unity is where both ethnic groups can influence both major and minor decisions of the church. Where there is no sense of “us” and “them” according to race, but it more “us” as a congregation and “them” outside the congregation.²⁴ Mercy Church must be a place where redemptive cultural expressions are not just tolerated but embraced; a place where all members and leadership have a sense of ownership.²⁵ When this happens, outsiders will see the love that God’s people have for one another, despite their differences, the result is that God gets the glory (John 13:35).

Ultimately, cross-cultural unity remains important to the mission of God in Charlotte, and the discipleship and health of the church. Charlotte, North Carolina, continues to grow into one of the most racially and culturally diverse cities in the nation and the location of Mercy Church within Charlotte reflects that same diversity.²⁶ It subsists not only the church’s responsibility but a mandate to reach the surrounding community (Matt 28:18-20). If not observed, the lack of diversity negatively affects the

²³ The glory of God is the manifestation on his presence among humanity and all of creation. According to John Piper, the best way to describe his glory is beauty. God’s glory is in a class of itself because it is perfect, infinite, and holy. Therefore, to pursue the glory of God is to pursue the beauty that he always intended for humanity to experiences. See John Piper’s response on his podcast “Ask Pastor John,” accessed April 16, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory--2>.

²⁴ Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 168.

²⁵ DeYoung et al., *United by Faith*, 168.

²⁶ Simone Jasper, “North Carolina’s Biggest Cities Are Becoming More Diverse. How Do They Compare to U.S.,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 22, 2020. <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article239524083.html>.

church's health, discipleship, and mission.²⁷ Therefore, cross-cultural unity is vital for the sanctification and discipleship of the people of Mercy Church. People can *meet* with God in a cultural context, but to *follow* God they must cross into other people's cultures.²⁸ Jesus modeled this when he crossed into another culture in the incarnation. For any church to be healthy and faithful, cross-cultural discipleship is necessary.

As the people of Mercy Church grow in their understanding of cross-cultural unity, then it will fulfill the Great Commandment (Luke 10:25-29) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). Nevertheless, if transformation does not happen at Mercy, then it will lose its voice and its potential to enact real change in the community. Sociologists forecast that by the year 2050 "the majority of people living in the United States will be nonwhite."²⁹ America continues to become the land of genuine diversity, filled with ethnic minorities and immigrant communities.³⁰ This project gives direction to strengthen Mercy Church's understanding of cross-cultural unity so that the church can fulfill its vision and mission.³¹

²⁷ Many millennials and Gen-Z lack diverse expressions to worship. See Aaron Earis, "America's Churches Are Becoming More Diverse," Lifeway, June 27, 2018, <https://factsand Trends.net/2018/06/27/americas-churches-are-becoming-more-diverse/>.

²⁸ Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ*, 21.

²⁹ Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "Immigration to Play Lead Role in Future U.S. Growth," Pew Research Center, July 1, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/>.

³⁰ Andrés Tapia, "¡Vivan Los Evangelicos! Hispanics Are Not Only Spicing Up U.S. Culture, They Are Fueling the Greatest Growth in the North American Church," *Christianity Today*, August 9, 2013, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/august-web-only/vivan-los-evangelicos-ct-classic.html>. Globalization has brought the nations to every American church's doorstep, which proves that cross-cultural unity within local churches is essential for the mission of the church.

³¹ Mercy Church's vision is to see a gospel awakening in Charlotte that is carried to the ends of the earth. Its mission is to make disciples who love God, love each other, and love our world.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to establish a class to increase the biblical knowledge of cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church.

Goals

The following four goals served as objectives to ensure the success of the purpose of the project. Each goal builds on the previous one and must happen in sequential order.

1. The first goal was to create a survey to assess Mercy Church's understanding of cross-cultural unity.
2. The second goal was to develop a curriculum based on the results from the survey.
3. The third goal was to teach the curriculum through a four-week class at Mercy Church to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural unity.
4. The fourth goal was to evaluate the results from the class to assess the impact on the attendees.

The success of each goal was measured by the defined benchmark within the research methodology. The research methodology and instruments used to quantify the success of each goal are specified in the succeeding section.

Research Methodology

The research for this project primarily focused on the membership of Mercy Church: evaluating the current racial and cultural situation in alignment with the project's goals.

The first goal was to create a survey to assess Mercy Church's understanding of cross-cultural unity. This goal was measured by administering a Cross-Cultural Survey of the members of Mercy Church to assess Mercy's cross-cultural comprehension and to interpret their level of understanding of culture, race, unity, and ethnicity.³² Membership

³² See appendix 2 for Cross-Cultural Survey. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in this ministry project.

longevity did not matter when surveying the congregation of Mercy. The purpose was to get a broad understanding of the congregational experience when it comes to cross-cultural comprehension. This goal was considered successfully met when twenty-five members (representing male, female, black, white, Asian, and Hispanic) completed the survey, and the results were analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the current cross-cultural comprehension and understanding of race, ethnicity, unity, and culture among the Mercy Church body.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum from the results of the survey. Once the class was created, it was first vetted by an expert panel to assess the strength of the class. The selection of the panel was intentionally a diverse collection of experts to give a broad perspective on the class. The panel used a rubric to evaluate the class.³³ After the expert panel evaluated the class, adjustments were made based on their suggestions. This goal was considered successful when the class was approved by the expert panel.

The third goal was to increase Mercy Church's knowledge of cross-cultural unity through teaching a four-week class. The class met over a consecutive four-week period. The series covered the biblical perspective of race and ethnicity, racial unity, personal understanding of race, and cross-cultural practices. Participants within the class varied depending upon the participants who signed up. This goal was considered successful when the course was complete.

The fourth goal was to evaluate the results from the class and assess the impact on the attendees. This goal was measured by re-administering the Cross-Cultural Survey previously taken by the participants. This goal was considered successfully met when dependent samples demonstrate a positive, statistically significant difference in their understanding of cross-cultural unity.

³³ See appendix 1 for rubric.

Limitations/Delimitations

The scope of this project focused narrowly on cross-cultural unity. There are other potential forms of disunity within a church, such as age, gender, social class, and physical or mental disabilities, but these issues were not addressed through this project.

Another delimitation was that this project mainly addressed examples from a black/white paradigm. Other cultures matter, but the writing of this project came from a biased perspective from personal life experience. While the black/white paradigm is the main vantage point, the arguments made in this project stand true across all cultures.

The last delimitation was that the project focused on achieving cross-cultural unity in a predominately white church. The white church was the situational context of the project. To write on achieving unity in the black church or any other church that has a majority ethnic group would require a different set of strategies and it is not the context of the writer.

Definitions

Throughout this project, some key terms are used. Clarity for these terms are established in this section.

Biblical justice. *Biblical justice* starts with the *imago Dei* and expresses the kingdom of heaven on earth. Theologically, God executed his justice relationally with humanity to make them right with himself, each other, and all of creation. From a practical perspective, justice transpires to love all people as Christ has loved us. Justice expresses the character and nature of God upon all of humanity.

Cross-cultural unity. *Cross-cultural unity* is not uniformity nor sameness. Unity according to Tony Evans is “cultural differences combined towards a common goal,” which is the kingdom of God.³⁴ Christian unity is an expression of the “already not

³⁴ Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 44. Evans uses the term *oneness*, though I prefer the phrase *cross-cultural unity*. Evans states that one of the elements of God’s rule and business is his heart for oneness, which he says is also known as unity.

yet.” According to Ephesians 4:3, unity is not created, but to be preserved as already been accomplished by Jesus.

Culture. *Culture*, according to Marvin Newell, is the distinctive “beliefs, values, and customs of a particular group of people that determine how they think, feel, and behave.”³⁵

Ethnicity. *Ethnicity* is largely about claims of shared culture, history, or common descent.³⁶ Both race and ethnicity are moving targets and have failed racial science to some extent.³⁷ Therefore, for this project *race* and *ethnicity* are used interchangeably.

Race. *Race* is a social system that hierarchically organizes people in a society based upon physical characteristics.³⁸ *Race* serves as a central identifier in contemporary American society, focusing on skin color and other physical characteristics.³⁹ This project uses race as a category because it is socially understood as such.⁴⁰

The glory of God. *The glory of God* is his greatness, beauty, justice, knowledge, and excellence among creation.⁴¹

³⁵ Marvin Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 17, Kindle.

³⁶ Korie Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.

³⁷ Sanders, *Bridging the Diversity Gap*, 59-60.

³⁸ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 8.

³⁹ Soo Chang Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 65.

⁴⁰ Brenda Salter McNeil and Rick Richardson, *The Heart of Racial Justice: How Soul Change Leads to Social Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 161.

⁴¹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 278.

Conclusion

The following chapters examine the theology, methodology, and a framework to increase the knowledge for the biblical call to achieve cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church. I desire that this project encourages churches within the United States with a faithful model on how to pursue cross-cultural unity to the glory of Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY IN THE CHURCH

In the act of creating, an artist transfers vision and imagination onto a canvas. The canvas that was once blank is now vibrant with the artist's handiwork. Similarly, God is an artist and the earth is his canvas. When he created, his fingers brushed every fine detail of the world into existence. At the beginning of Genesis, the canvas of the earth was blank; however, in Revelation 7:9 is seen the completed portrait of God's intention: a chorus of voices as his multicultural, multiethnic bride sings praise to King Jesus.¹

The design of Jesus' multicultural, multiethnic church is interwoven into every page of Scripture, with the primary purpose worship God through the Son by the power of the Spirit (1 Cor 15). Jesus prayed in Matthew 6:10 that the kingdom would manifest

¹ Rev 7:9 is an apocalyptic vision from the apostle John. Here John is describing in recreation that the redeemed will proceed from every people group wearing white robes with palm branches in their hands, giving praises to Christ. The redeemed robe will be dipped in the lamb's blood, which is a figurative way of declaring that those of faith will receive the propitiation of Christ (Rom 3:35; 10:9; Heb 10:9; 1 John 1:9). The redeemed wearing the white robes with palms branches in their hands alludes to the Feast of Booths (Lev 23:40). The Feasts of Booths celebrates the protection and provision of God for Israel during their sojourn from the wilderness into the Promised Land (Lev 23:40). This imagery of the wilderness/booths is invoked in Rev 7:15-17 using the language of Isa 4:5-6. The booths built at the feast were reminders of the tents/tabernacles in the wilderness. There remains more parallel to explore, for instance, Christ sitting on the throne indicates the tabernacles with his people (John 1:14). Nevertheless, the point subsists that those redeemed by the blood of the lamb (Passover) will be protected and provided (feasts of booths) for by the good Shepherd. He will guide them from the wilderness into the new heavens and earth (the fulfillment of the feasts of weeks) celebrated as God's goodness in the Promised Land. The importance here for cross-cultural unity is that in all of Israel's history, God made it a point to make the distinction that people from every language and tribe is part of his plan. It persists crucial to distinguish that genuine cultural unity transpires in the light of the church's eschatology.

itself on earth as it is in heaven, and cross-cultural unity leads to a picturesque actuality of reaching the nations in Jesus' name.

Accordingly, this chapter will look at the biblical foundation for cross-cultural unity in the church. All of Scripture speaks to certain aspects this unity; however, this project emphasizes six sections of Scripture that express God's intention of cross-cultural unity: Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 3-12; John 17:20-23; Ephesians 2:14-18, 4:1-6; and Galatians 3:23-29.

Diversity in Creation

A theology of unity, as with any viewpoint of the theology of humanity, must start with the creation of mankind in God's "image" and after his "likeness" (Gen 1:26-31).² The image of God began not with a particular race of people, but in one person: Adam.³ The word אָדָם means "humankind," which shows that Adam and Eve were created to be the father and mother of all peoples.⁴ The Bible does not distinguish Adam's or Eve's race or ethnic background; instead, God identifies them as his people: created in his image, unified yet different. God reveals his intention for humanity to reflect his image, rule over creation, and multiply godly offspring.

For that reason, this passage substantiates the claim that God created humanity to reflect his image of diversity as having harmony in distinctiveness. The full revelation

² Derek Kidner distinguishes that there is no "and" between the phrases, and the text does not use these terms as distinct expressions. Theologians have attempted to distinguish the two, but only for human comprehension. They would define "image" as "man: a rational, moral, and responsible being," while defining "likeness" as "the spiritual accord to God's will." When defining mankind made both in the image of God and after his likeness, one cannot separate the mind and spirit from the body. Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 55.

³ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every Tribe and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 47.

⁴ Hays, *From Every Tribe and Nation*, 48. The Hebrew translation comes from the Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible.

of cultural unity will unfold later in Scripture. The purpose of this section is to lay the foundation of oneness and to reveal that God is not opposed to distinction.⁵

God Gave Humanity a Command

In Genesis 1:26-27, on the sixth day of creation, God declares, “Let us make man in our image.” This plural declaration is different from the rest of creation. The creation of humanity took place on the same day as land animals, but mankind is the climax and crown of all creation.⁶ Up until the sixth day, God declares, “Let there be” in third person. Yet when he creates humanity, he uniquely declares in the first person for humanity to reflect his image. K. A. Mathews explains further on this idea: “Our passage describes the result of God’s creative act by both plural and singular pronouns: the plural possessive ‘our image’ in v. 26 and the singular pronoun ‘his image’ in v. 27.”⁷ Mathews’ point is that both the singular and plural pronouns in the passage explain the Godhead contains unity in diversity—Trinity.⁸

Then in Genesis 1:27, for a third time, the passage states God created man in his image, but this time God clarifies what that means: “He created them male and female.” There is a parallel to explore here, and to gain clarity on this parallelism Milliard Erickson writes,

Some would argue that what we have here is a parallelism not merely in the first two, but in all three lines. Thus, “male and female he created them” is equivalent to “So God created man in his own image” and to “in the image of God he created him.” On this basis, the image of God in man (generic) is to be found in the fact that

⁵ The argument made here is to reveal that God blesses diversity. Gender diversity is on display in this text. The purpose is to expose the parallelism.

⁶ Herbert Edward Ryle, *The Early Narratives of Genesis: A Brief Introduction to The Study of Genesis* (London: McMillian and Co., 1892), 18.

⁷ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1b (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 18.

⁸ Readers of the passage would not have understood Gen 1 to be talking about multiple persons in the Godhead until after the ascension of Christ. Given the New Testament revelation in Christ, the church affirms that God is Triune.

man has been created male and female (i.e., plural). This means that the image of God must consist in a unity in plurality, a characteristic of both the ectype and the archetype.⁹

The creation of humanity, male and female, mirrors the trinity, who is unified yet distinct. God created Eve from Adam, yet they are called humanity. What is captured here is that different genders came out of one human. They are not the same, but they have uniqueness, yet they are one.

Examining further in Genesis 2:24, God said that the man and woman are to be one (אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה) which details unity from two distinct beings. To be clear, the correlation here is not to say that culturally unity and creation of mankind are equivalent, rather, analogous. The point to comprehend is that God created humanity in harmony but with distinctiveness to reflect his image.

The Trinity as a theological concept declares there is one God yet three persons (1 John 5:7; Gen 1:26; Matt 3:16-17, 28:19; Luke 1:35; Isa 9:6; Heb 3:7-11). All are co-equal, co-eternal, and unified, but all three persons are distinct (John 14:28; Phil 2:5-8). Erickson says, “The doctrine of the Trinity is crucial for Christianity. It is concerned with who God is, what he is like, how he works, and how he is to be approached.”¹⁰ The Trinity displays unity in diversity, and God made man in his image to be unified yet diverse.

Consequently, diversity at Mercy Church cannot be achieved outside of the character of God because it details as the nature of God. The conversation around Mercy

⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 299, Kindle. Genesis offers the first glimmering of this Trinitarian revelation through reference to God the Father (Gen 1:1) and God the Spirit (Gen 1:2), although there is no mention of God the Son. The lack of reference in this passage, however, does not diminish his presence in creation. Likewise, Christ presence in the New Testament does not diminish his active role in the Old Testament. To reduce Christ to only being active in the New Testament is heretical and denies the functionality of the trinity. The New Testament provides a clearer picture of the participation of Christ in creation (cf. John 1:1-3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-18; Heb 1:1-3; Rev 4:11). The entire New Testament gives witness that Christ came from heaven, born of a virgin and was made human (Matt 1:18). Christ dwelt among humanity, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit and live a sinless life to redeem to the Father’s glory that was lost at the fall of mankind (John 1:1,14, 20:28; 1 Tim 3:16; Isa 9:6; Phil 2:5-6; 1 Tim 2:5).

¹⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 292.

remains to determine how to make Mercy Church more diverse. The answer to this is rooted in Scripture. When the church pursues unity as the character of God, it pursues diversity. The result of pursuing God occurs to be more like God. Since the image of God is unified and diverse, diversity is a biblical and theological objective over sociological primarily (Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4; Gal 3:28).

God Gave Humanity a Job

The situation occurs not only essential to understand why humanity was created but likewise imperative to understand what they are to achieve. In Genesis 1:26, God's declaration, "Let them have dominion," is a direct culmination of God's declaration, "Let us make man in our image." The task given to humanity exists to rule over all of creation, in the likeness of God (Gen 1:28; 2:19-20; 2:15).¹¹

God as Creator made humanity in his image; therefore, when he commissions humanity to have dominion over the earth, he is giving them freedom to cultivate creation within his boundaries that involve stewardship and thoughtfulness. According to Derek Kidner, "The dominion over all creatures is 'not the content but the consequence' of the divine image."¹² The fundamental meaning of being made in God's image is to manifest God's glory on earth as his representatives, which is to express God-like qualities of skill, moral virtue, justice, and excellence among creation.¹³

¹¹ The word "culture" derives from the Latin word *colore*, which means to "cultivate." Therefore, the command to rule the earth in Gen 2:15 is interwoven with the cultural mandate, which is that all humans made in the image of God are to fill the earth with God's glory by ruling over and subduing the earth for the flourishing of creation (Gen 1:26, 28). Online Etymology Dictionary, "culture (n)," November 20, 2019, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/culture>.

¹² Kidner, *Genesis*, 56.

¹³ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 278.

A helpful approach to define the job title God gave humanity is called the “cultural mandate,” which is a responsibility to emulate God by cultivating creation.¹⁴ To put it succinctly, the cultural mandate discloses the instinctive desire for humanity to express themselves distinctively in art, music, science, agriculture, entertainment, government, philosophy, medicine, sports, and education, all as a natural extension of being image bearers of God.

Due to God endowing humanity to have “dominion” and “subdue the earth,” he gave them the ability to cultivate. With the rest of creation, God declared that all he made was good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), but when he created humanity, he said it was “very good” (Gen 1:31). The importance here is that God ordains and blesses what he created—a people made in his image, with the ability to cultivate.

Moreover, in the Garden of Eden, God elected not to stipulate the admissible trees they are to eat from neither did God regulate the naming of the animals upon humanity (Gen 2:16-17;19). Therefore, this affirms that God takes delight in humanity expressing themselves for the good all of creation. As time progresses, the endowment and diversity of choice God gave to humanity would lead to solving problems, such as approaches to medicine, art, work, and recreation. Due to this reality, is it probable that humanity would remain homogeneous eternally, or would cultural diversity naturally happen? The inclination is to affirm the latter due to God’s dealings with the tower of Babel and more specifically his dealing with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3).

God Made Humanity to Reproduce His Image

Humanity is not only told to have dominion over the earth, but to fill the earth

¹⁴ Robert E. Webber, *The Secular Saint: A Case for Evangelical Social Responsibility* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 36-38. God gave Adam and Eve the command in Gen 1:26-31 to cultivate the land or to create culture. Therefore, when the fall of man occurred, it produced critical cultural consequences.

with godly offspring (Gen 1:28).¹⁵ As image-bearers or vice-regents, they are to fill the earth with godly descendants. God’s command for mankind as image bearers is to rule and fill the earth that brings about human flourishing to the glory of God. Habakkuk 2:14 clarifies God’s intent: “For the earth will be filled with knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” By being fruitful and multiplying, humanity is fulfilling the call to fill the earth with God’s presence.

This command is then entrusted to Noah (Gen 9:1-7), Abraham (Gen 12:2-3), Isaac (Gen 26:4), and Jacob (Gen 28:3-4). In Exodus 1:7, the beginning of this command starts taking shape and then becomes fully developed in Acts 1:8. God’s command is for mankind as image bearers to rule and fill the earth by creating culture that brings about human flourishing to the glory of God. Tim Keller writes about this idea in *Every Good Endeavor*: “We are continuing God’s work of forming, filling, and subduing. Whenever we bring order out of chaos, whenever we draw out creative potential, whenever we elaborate and ‘unfold’ creation beyond where it was when we found it, we are following God’s pattern of creative cultural development.”¹⁶ Keller’s point is that cultural cultivation points to the glory of God. Humanity does not live in light of that glory unless they engage in culture. Fundamentally, God calls his people to multiply his image everywhere. Jesus restates the cultural mandate to multiply the image of God on the earth in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. The Great Commission is often appropriated as an evangelism-only text, but Jesus intended his people to fill the earth with redeemed images by making disciples in every culture.

¹⁵ This command from God is mutually physical and spiritual, with a shared blessing and responsibility. As a blessing and responsibility, God tells Adam and Eve to procreate, but the task is more than mere production: it is also to raise children in the Lord.

¹⁶ Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting your work to God’s Work* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 48.

Summary

Genesis 1:26-31 gives the direction of God affirming unity and diversity as something good. Unity without diversity is unbiblical just as diversity without unity; diversity in unity and unity in diversity expresses the nature of God.¹⁷ Furthermore, even though the diversity of people groups comes after the fall, there are indicators in Genesis 1 that there is nevertheless something beautiful regarding diversity, even though sin will affect every culture.

Sin and Unity

It stands significant to note that the creation of humanity, along with the cultural mandate, happens before the fall. This timing means that God sees humanity as one human race, yet it is unclear about God's intention of having one race of people with distinct cultures. According to Daniel Hays, the division of humankind does not appear until Genesis 10.¹⁸ Before then, Adam, Eve, and Noah were non-ethnic and non-national.

As the Scriptures advance in Genesis 3:1-24, it records the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Their choice to listen to the serpent over God brought about severe repercussions for all of humanity, particularly the consequence of sin. Sin delivered chaos and disorder upon the earth. It ruptured the unity that God had with his people and amongst themselves who once lived in harmony despite their obvious differences.

In the fall of humanity, God declared to Eve that her female offspring would forever struggle with Adam and his male offspring. Eve would likewise struggle in childbirth, while Adam would struggle with work. Everything that Adam and Eve touched would bring hardships, and eventually they were to die in separation from God.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 76.

¹⁸ Hays, *From Every Tribe and Nation*, 50.

Consequently, sin causes spiritual disunity among God toward humanity and humanity towards itself (Gen 3:1-24).

Cain and Abel

Shortly after the sin of Adam and Eve, the Bible records a conflict between Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-16). God created both brothers with distinct jobs: Abel was to tend the livestock, and Cain was to tend the ground. Both brothers brought a portion of the fruits of their labor to the Lord (Gen 4:4). The Lord accepted Abel's offering, but rejected Cain's (Gen 4:5). Cain became angry because of the sin within his heart, and he killed his brother. An experience intended for worship was turned into disorder because of disunity. Both their narrative lines up with the creation (Gen 1–2) and the curse (Gen 3). Cain struggles with the soil (Gen 4:2; cf. 3:17), while Abel seems to line up man's purpose (Gen 4:2; cf. 3:27). Abel went out of his way to please God, while Cain was acting in duty. Abel's action was righteous while Cain's were evil. Though Cain and Able did not have cultural, age, or gender distinctions, they were different from each other. When one does not understand the heart of God, differences turn to partiality.

Sin disparages human relationships, but it additionally severs humanity's relationship with God. God designed humanity to worship and honor him; he created them for union and harmony. When humanity refuses to accept the love of God, the likelihood of love for each other is improbable. Instead of turning from sins and trusting God, human depravity intensifies.

Noah

In Genesis 6:5-6, God was displeased by what he saw, and he had to act on this in accordance with his divine nature. Therefore, God decided to remove humanity from the face of the earth. Despite God's anger toward humanity, he found favor with one

man, Noah (Gen 6:8), who would come the line of Seth.¹⁹ God unveiled his plan to Noah; he would destroy the earth through a flood, but he would recreate a population of people through Noah's lineage. Noah obeyed God's instructions by building an ark to save his family and all the creatures of the earth from the flood.

Following the flood, in Genesis 9:1, God declared that all the nations of the world would emerge from Noah and his family, consequently fulfilling the command to multiply the earth Genesis 9:1. God then established a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:7-11, which provided a blessing for all nations.²⁰ God promised that he would never again destroy the earth by water, and that the sign of the covenant would be a rainbow. Though not dogmatically, the rainbow is a beautiful symbol to express his future purposes for humanity, unified but distinct.

Tower of Babel

In Genesis 10, God declared that all the nations of the world would emerge from Noah and his family, consequently fulfilling the command to multiply the earth. Genesis 10:32 says, "These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood." The word *בְּלָאֵם* does not mean geopolitical countries but instead signifies "clans." These nations are multiple people groups spread throughout the earth.

In Genesis 11, the Scriptures reveal the final transition from the early human history to the particular history of Israel. Many theologians debate the parallel of Genesis 10 (the Table of the Nations) and 11 (The Tower of Babel). Some side with Bruce Waltke, in that the two narratives should be read together,²¹ while others side with Gordan Wenham

¹⁹ According to Gen 4:25, Eve had another son Seth to replace Abel. Hundreds of the years later Noah would come from Seth lineage.

²⁰ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11*, 25.

²¹ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 161-93.

that the two stories have parallelism connected by certain words and expressions.²² However, each narrative has both distinctive with competing messages. The Table of Nations demonstrates division positively while the tower of Babel portrays it as God's judgment.

The story of Babel is a both God's blessing and judgment. It is God revealing to humanity his intentions for a diverse community.²³ God confusing his people's languages might seem as if God does not want his people to be in unity; conversely, their creative focus was not consistent with his desires. Their building of the tower was a demonstration of the effect of sin on humanity. Instead of using their one language to worship God, they used it to make a name for themselves.²⁴ God's decision to confuse human languages was an "act of deliverance" for a subjugated people.²⁵

God created humanity to reflect and further his image of spiritual unity and physical diversity among the earth; however, sin marred humanity's comprehension of God's commands and his design for them. Therefore, he curses their uniformity yet gifted humanity by scattering them among the earth. He acted through intervention rather than judgment. Thus far, God's design for cultural diversity stands unclear here, but the single detail that subsists sameness is not God's intentions.

Summary

Up to this point in Genesis 3-11, there are several connections to notice. The primary being humanity's ambition to be like God and to make a name for themselves

²² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 242-43.

²³ José Miquez-Bonino, "Genesis 11:1-9 A Latin American Perspective," in *Return to Babel Global Perspectives on the Bible*, ed. Priscilla Pope-Levison and John R. Levison (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 13-15.

²⁴ Jarvis Williams, *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), chap. 2, Kindle.

²⁵ Miquez-Bonino, "Genesis 11:1-9," 14.

(Gen 3:5-6; 11:4).²⁶ The fall of humanity (Gen 3:1-7), the Cain and Abel narrative (Gen 4:1-16) and The Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9) all demonstrate mankind's inability to comprehend God's purposes for them.

Another connection to grasp is that each significant narrative in Genesis 3–11 transitions into another story with a genealogy. Genesis 5:1-31 genealogy traces Adam to Noah, which is the narratives from creation to the flood. While the genealogy in Genesis 11:10-26 traces Noah to Abraham, which is the flood narrative to the Abraham narrative (Gen 12-25). The primary connection to comprehend in these genealogies is that the Genesis 5 genealogy emphasizes death, while the Genesis 11:10-26 genealogy emphasizes God's promise. The genealogy in Genesis 5:1-31 concludes each genealogy with "he died." Genesis 5:1-31 contrasts with the genealogy in Genesis 11:10-26, which does not include the phrase "he died."²⁷ Genesis 11:10-26 starts with Shem, who received the blessing from his father Noah (Gen 9:26), and it ends with Abram, who has received the blessing from God for the nations to be bless through him (Gen 12:1-3). The blessing of Abraham is the turning point in Scripture. Thus far, God's people have struggled to conceptualize his desire to manifest his beauty and love within all people worldwide due to sin. The blessing of Abraham gives clarity to God's intention.

The Promise and Unity

As noted, in Genesis 12:1-3 there occurs a significant transition in the Scripture. Genesis 10 details the separation of the world through language, tribes, and territories. In Genesis 12:1-3, God makes a covenant or a promise with Abram that through him, God will build a great nation, and through that nation, they will bless all other nations. The promises that God gave Abraham connect back to Genesis 10.

²⁶ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11*, 25.

²⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 249-55.

Additionally, God calls Abram a descendant of Eber as a direct response to humanity's sin problem in Genesis 3-11.²⁸ The calling of Abraham from the nations meets God's concern for the nations.

In this promise, God has the diverse peoples of the world in mind.²⁹ God chooses Abraham not because he was special, but to reveal that he can use one individual and his offspring to bless and rescue the world from their brokenness. Jesus Christ is that offspring that fulfills God's plan to rescue humanity from their sin and restore them into a relationship with God. Those who put their faith in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, will receive the spiritual blessing of Abraham. Therefore, the calling of Abraham did not just include the forming of Israel, but also the re-forming of creation and transforming of the nations.³⁰ Sin scattered humanity throughout the world but through the promise of Abraham, God plans to reunite them.

The theme of promise and blessing run throughout Scripture and becomes primary and reiterated in the patriarchal narratives (Gen 12–50). Specifically, despite humanity's sinfulness, God chooses to bless them based upon a righteousness they could not earn (Gen 12-36). Moreover, as the story unfolds, the prophets and the apostles will paint a fuller picture of humanity uniting together to worship God, which will be reversal of Genesis 10–11 and fulfill the promise in Genesis 12:1-3.³¹

A further reality of that unity transpires in Acts 2:1-21 at Pentecost.³² As an annual festival, Jews from around the world with different ethnicities, languages, and

²⁸ Hays, *From Every Tribe and Nation*, 61.

²⁹ Hays, *From Every Tribe and Nation*, 61.

³⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 105.

³¹ Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 234.

³² Pentecost is the Greek name for a festival called the Feast of Harvest in Jerusalem, which all Jews around the world were required to attend (Exod 23-24; Lev 16; Num 28; Deut 16). It was a celebration of the beginning of the early harvest, likely in

cultures gathered in Jerusalem. Though, unlike any other Pentecost experience, the Holy Spirit descended among the people and they all are speaking in each other's languages. The significance here is that Pentecost is the reversal of Genesis 10–11. Despite their diversity, the true oneness they found is the presence of the Holy Spirit.³³ The prophet Joel spoke about this day in Joel 2:28-29, he declared, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days, I will pour out my Spirit.”

Therefore, Pentecost is the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-29, but more importantly, it fulfills the promise by the sending of the Holy Spirit, who would seal God's people's heart with the promise. Pentecost reveals God's desire of cross-cultural unity, as God displayed his plan for his people to be unified and yet distinct. As the first worship service among the church, God's introduction to the world is that his church is a multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual people.

While Pentecost is only the beginning; the ultimate picture of the promise made to Abraham is revealed in Revelation 7:9. At the end of days, God's people will worship him in unity, yet there are distinctions in languages, cultures, and ethnicities. Therefore, Genesis 12:1-3 reveals that eradicating diversity in unity and unity in diversity was never in God's plan. Instead, by the work of the Cross and the sending of the Holy Spirit, God revealed his plan to destroy the cause of disunity among his people—human sin.

Mercy Church desires for that type of oneness, yet many matters, such as colorblindness, keep the church from pursuing unity. These matters are a movement back in Genesis 10–12 rather than moving to fulfill Genesis 12:1-3. Consequently, it remains

May. It was also an observance to dedicate their first fruits to the Lord. However, for the Christian, Pentecost has additional meaning. Pentecost, although not a literal celebration of the Feast of Harvest, is a celebration of the harvest spiritually.

³³ Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together* (Chicago: Moody, 2015), 46.

imperative that Mercy Church increase the knowledge of the biblical call of cross-cultural unity to be faithful to the promise of Abraham that is fulfilled in Christ.

Jesus and Unity

In John 17:20-23, Jesus concluded one of the most exhilarating sermons found in Scripture and then concludes with an unparalleled prayer—The High Priestly Prayer, which can also be referred to as the Shepherd’s prayer.³⁴ In this captivating prayer, Jesus prays to the Father with a mixture of petition and concern for his disciples, himself, and future followers. Andres Köstenberger comments on this passage: “Jesus’ concern for his followers’ unity is the greatest burden as his earthly mission draws to a close, and it pervades this entire section.”³⁵ Scripture refers to the unity of heart, or a spiritual unity. It presumes a call to surrender to Christ, to be one in Spirit.

Structurally, the prayer has four major phases in which Jesus’ primary concern is that his disciples and followers would accomplish the mission that he laid out and was about to finish.³⁶ Fittingly, in this third phase of his prayer, John 17:20-23, Jesus wants his future followers to have the type of relationship that he has with the Father and the Spirit, which is the oneness that exposes the riches of God’s glory. Jesus’ intention for the church is to be one for his sake, for the sake of others and for the sake of the nations through one nation, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.³⁷

³⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 373.

³⁵ Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2007), 9.

³⁶ First, Jesus prays for himself to finish the mission (17:1-5). Second, he prays for his disciples to continue the mission (17:6-19). Third, Jesus prays for his future followers and their unity to fulfill the mission (17:20-23). Last, he reiterates the purpose of the mission and his intent for those who believe.

³⁷ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church*, 9.

In John 17:20-21, Jesus identified that God's people's greatest challenge was to live spiritually unified. He recognized that the greatest threat to the expansion of his kingdom is a divided people. Jesus views the unity of his followers and his mission as inseparable. Therefore, he prays that they would express the spiritual unity that he has with the Father so that the world would know that the Father sent him. For human comprehension, there is a mystery within the Trinitarian unity. However, for application, the Trinity is a model of spiritual unity that Jesus prayed for in this section (John 17:20-21). Although, theologically, the basis of Christian unity is union with Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28; Col 1:27; Rom 8:10).

Then, in John 17:22-23, Jesus prays that his future followers attain such a unity that they pursue the same goal as the Godhead: the glory of God. The glory of God is the beauty of his character express in creation (Isa 43:7; 2 Cor 4:7; Ps 1:1-4). God's glory provides believers the motivation to seek a more magnificent and everlasting glory beyond themselves.³⁸ When the church stands unified, it can bear witness to the character and sacrifices of Jesus as the one sent by God. According to Jarvis Williams, "Unity is the persistent pursuit of harmony among his disciples for the good of the church, for the glory of the Father and the Son, and the salvation of sinners, even as the church might disagree over certain important matters."³⁹

Christian unity stands as a testimony of Christ to the world. It demonstrates the kingdom agenda of expressing Christ's mission of love, compassion, and justice. Consequently, the church operating in disunity limits its effectiveness on the surrounding society, thereby impairing the mission. Unity is often is misinterpreted at Mercy Church, often being understand that everyone must be the same. Though unintentional, such a

³⁸ Andres Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 497.

³⁹ Jarvis Williams, "Jesus Prayed for Unity," *The Witness*, January 7, 2016, <https://thewitnessbcc.com/jesus-prayed-for-the-unity/>.

concept is not biblical unity, but uniformity, where there is no cultural, ethnic, or racial distinction in God's people. As a false concept, uniformity does not display the multidimensional and captivating image of God. Therefore, the high priestly prayer transpires not for God's people to give up their race, ethnicity, or cultural background to be one. Instead, Jesus prays that his future church subsists to step over social segregation that keeps them separate and to walk over the bridge of unity manufactured by the cross.

When believers from different cultures, races, and ethnicities at Mercy church are united in Christ, the city of Charlotte will take notice. As they note the beauty of Christ's church in unity, they will then look to Christ himself. Therefore, Jesus' prayer for unity is not out of context within his ministry, but is one of the primary purposes of his ministry (Ps 133:1; Isa 2:2-3; Isa 49:6; 1 Cor 1:10; Col 3:13-14; Rom 6:5). Unity is more than people trying to manage their differences; unity results in exalting Christ and making him known to the world, singing praise (Ps 16). Increasing the knowledge of the biblical call for cross-cultural unity will result in Christ-exalting proclamation among the city of Charlotte and beyond.

Unity Clarified in the Book of Ephesians

The Saving Life of Christ Creating One New People

Paul's primary message in Ephesians emphasizes unity (Acts 20:31). Now, under the banner of Christ, the church stands united for the fame of Christ's glory. The church occurs united by the Spirit, in Christ. The church does not establish unity, that has already happened; its role is to honor God by living in light of unity. Since the church, the New Israel, now possesses the Holy Spirit, God's people can serve one another and fulfill the kingdom agenda for unity among all peoples (Eph 2:22; 6:10-18).

Distinct from other letters written by Paul, Ephesians does not address any particular erroneousness or heresy. Paul repeatedly states that God's people are united as one race, the redeemed in Christ, and they are to live as such (Eph 2:10; 3:6; 5:1-6:23).

Through Christ, God brought both Jews and Gentiles together, according to his original purpose for humanity (Eph 2:14). The death and resurrection of Christ, Paul explains, is the reason God's people are now uniting a people who were once hostile to one another (Eph 1:22-23). Ephesians speaks about cultural and ethnic perplexities more than racial propositions. The division between Jews and Gentiles differs in contrast to the racial division in the United States.⁴⁰ The cause of the division in the text exists because of the covenantal promise declaring that the Jews were God's people.

While the Jews were correct to see themselves as God's people, they misunderstood that all that live according to the promise of Abraham are children of God (Gen 12:1-3; Rom 4:1-25). Conversely, the Jews saw themselves as superior to the Gentiles because they were Jews of the flesh. Conversely, the Gentiles had a difficult time with humility toward the Jews. Paul highlights the importance and special status of the Jewish people in Romans 9–11. The Gentiles needed to recognize what God had done through the Jews.

As a result of the Jews' special status and the Gentiles invitation into the promise, Paul is striving to make both parties understand that Gentiles and Jews of faith are now children of the promise. Both groups had a difficult time accepting this revelation, thus intensifying hostility. The Jews and Gentiles lacked a proper understanding of unity in the Scriptures. Paul tells them that, according to God's plan, God created them for good works (Eph 2:10). According to Ephesians 2:11-14, Christ creates peace between Jew and Gentile to make them one people, the church. Since Christ

⁴⁰ Anthony Bradley writes that the church should see racial reconciliation as a step in achieving racial solidarity. Within the church, racial reconciliation conversations are merely philosophical conversations that do not invoke action or speak to the church's identity. Although the conversations are helpful, it often identifies problems with no solutions. Anthony Bradley, *Aliens in the Promise Land: Why Minority Leadership Is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 151-52.

became “peace” for the church through his death and resurrection, both groups, as the church, can do good works (Eph 2:14-15).

Paul subsequently emphasizes that by the sacrifice of Christ’s flesh, both literal and spiritual, he tore down the wall of hostility that initially divided all cultures. Both Jew and Gentile understand Paul’s meaning because in the temple in Jerusalem a physical wall separated Jews and Gentiles. Spiritually, the law was the dividing wall that Christ abolished and rendered powerless; he satisfied the law and removed the condemnation that came along with it. Christ fulfilled his purpose by creating a new man, the new people of God, distinct culturally but unified spiritually. Christ created peace in heaven and peace on earth (Matt 6:10).⁴¹

Subsequently, in Ephesians 2:16-17 Paul tells the church to be reconciled in Christ. Readers can misunderstand what Paul meant when he wrote that Christ reconciles both Jews and Gentiles together in his body. The text does not say that Christ came to reconcile Jews and Gentiles, and thus Gentiles must sacrifice their cultural traditions. Alternatively, the text says that Christ sacrificed his body on the cross, killing the hostility or the divisiveness of the law between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:17).

Cultural divisiveness remains the cause of disunity, not cultural distinctiveness. Through Christ’s redemption, God’s people can appreciate each other’s redemptive uniqueness without being divisive. In every culture there are unbiblical expressions, but the redemptive components of each culture should be catalyzed for the flourishing of the church. Therefore, cultural distinctions should never be the cause of disunity within the church; instead, they are an opportunity to exalt the work of Christ. The point of being Christian is to exalt Christ and make him known.

Christ defeats human sin, which is the original cause of ethnic and cultural divisions (Gen 3; Rom 5:12-21), thereby enabling the Spirit to unite God’s people, far

⁴¹ Williams, *One New Man*, chap. 4.

and near, to one another and to God (Eph 2:18; Isa 57:19; Hos 1:10). When humanity does draw near to God, it is not a singular cultural experience, but rather a multicultural experience (Rev 7:9; 13:7-8). Marvin Newell suggests that when the church experiences the cross-cultural phenomenon that God designs, it will never again feel at home in a monocultural environment.⁴² The new community of believers, both Jews and Gentiles, is now called a family (Eph 2:19). They are no longer slaves to the law, but sons and daughters in Christ with a divine inheritance.⁴³

The Practices of Unity

In the first half of Ephesians, chapters 1–3, Paul establishes a theological foundation for unity. Now in the latter half, chapters 4–6, Paul teaches them how they should fight for unity amid these disagreements in various situations.⁴⁴ In Ephesians 4:1-3, he tells them to live “worthy” of their calling in Christ, which is to live united as God’s people. W. Curtis Vaughn writes, “The inference is that the high calling which the Christian has experienced carries with it very weighty responsibilities.”⁴⁵ The weighty responsibility is attempting to maintain the unity of the Spirit, who empowers the church to operate as God’s people (Eph 4:1-3).

The Spirit enables the church to serve the needs of each other and to overlook differences because he reminds them of what Christ accomplished for them. Christ

⁴² Marvin Newell, *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 29, Kindle.

⁴³ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), 303.

⁴⁴ In Eph 4:1, Paul begins the section with “οὖν.” According to Benjamin Merkle, “the inferential conj. οὖν [therefore] signifies that Paul’s forthcoming exhortations are based on the foundation of what he has stated in chaps. 1–3, particularly the importance of believers’ unity in Christ.” Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 111.

⁴⁵ W. Curtis Vaughn, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1963), 83.

canceled their record of debt, not holding their sins against them, and united them to the Father by the Spirit. The Spirit then holds the church together because of the bond of peace established in Ephesians 4:3. Moreover, the Spirit holds the church together and enables them to look past differences, but he also enables the church to be “eager” to maintain the bond of peace (Eph 4:3).

The term “eager” means to do something with readiness; to expend energy and effort. Therefore, the state of unity is not only a spiritual reality for the church, but a spiritual necessity. It is a calling to harmony for the welfare and progression of the church. When the unity of the Spirit is maintained (Eph 4:3), the church can then accomplish its goal, which is to attain the “unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph 4:13).

When the church has a mixture of cultures, there will be conflict. Paul’s “high calling” for the church is for everyone to walk in humility and to have a humble posture of self-forgetfulness. Self-forgetfulness is not thinking less of oneself, but it is thinking of oneself less.⁴⁶ God tells his church that those celebrated in the kingdom will be last (Matt 20:16). Christ first modeled humility to his church by denying his desire to live by dying on the cross, and he now calls his church into that same humility—self-denial (Heb 2:7-9). Paul then calls the church toward patience and forgiveness, which are both forms of self-denial. Patience and forgiveness are crucial in maintaining the unity of the Spirit, especially when there are cultural differences.

Mercy Church Needs to Pursue a Ministry of Peace

Mercy members must live at peace with all men. Christ gifted his church with the ability to pursue peace, which means actively fighting against hostility. Due to the lack of visual hostility at Mercy Church, it is assumed that the church is working in unity.

⁴⁶ Timothy Keller, *The Freedom of Self Forgetfulness* (Chorley, England: 10 Publishing, 2012), chap. 2, Kindle.

However, in reality, Mercy Church is maintaining apathy by avoiding conflict. Though there is a desire for unity, there is a fear that members will leave Mercy if the discussion gets too tense. Therefore, to maintain peace, there is little discussion about the cultural matters that keep the church divided. With marginal conversation unity is an ideal rather than a lifestyle of sacrifice. In the end, divided minds make divided lives. When there is apathy, there is no peace.

Cross-Cultural Unity in the Book of Galatians

The apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to address false teaching spreading throughout Galatia. These false teachers, called Judiazers, taught that God's acceptance of his people was based on their performance of the Jewish Torah (Law) rather than the promise of Abraham.⁴⁷ They avowed that individuals must become Jewish culturally to find acceptance from God. In response, Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to clarify the application of the gospel—God accepts believers, both Jew and Gentile, in Christ by grace through faith, empowered by the Spirit.

In Galatians 3, Paul explains the purposes of the law, such as how it temporarily dealt with human transgressions (Gal 3:19-20). The law did not enable Israel to have

⁴⁷ According to Gen 12:1-3, God's mission is to bless all the earth's families. God made a promise to Abraham that his children would take his glory to all nations. The establishment of the promise happened before the law of Moses. Paul addresses the superiority of God's promise to Abraham as fulfilled by Jesus, as well as the temporary role of the law as it correlates to the promise. In Gen 15:6, after the promise, God tells Abraham that his descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky. Abraham believes what God promises, and his belief is counted to him as righteousness. Then, in Gen 12:3 and 22:18, God promises Abraham that all the nations will be blessed through him. Paul argues that these foundational texts prove that God had always planned to justify all people by faith when the gospel was announced to Abraham beforehand. Therefore, those who believe in Christ are justified with Abraham (Gal 3:6). Both the law and promise are legal, both are binding, and both involved works. The difference is that in the promise, God did the work in establishing righteousness, while in the law, God obligated Israel to do the work of righteousness. Furthermore, the Mosaic Law comprised part of the temporary covenant, while the promise to Abraham remains permanent. The law stands not in contradiction with the promise to Israel; it was a guide until the promise was fulfilled in Christ. The law could never uphold God's intention for humanity, which is to have newness of life, exposing humanity's need for the promise (Rom 8:13).

access to the promise, but to administer a single offspring, Christ, who would receive the blessing. For believers, the blessing is to be obtained by allegiance to Christ, not to the law. Israel was unable to obey the law, and God knew that (Deut 31:24-29). Therefore, the law confirmed the promise to Abraham that justification would be by faith (Gal 3:6-9, 14,18). Christ, the faithful, came to rescue the faithless. For humanity, the law stood as a disciplinarian until Christ came. He justified believers by faith to receive the status of sonship (Gal 3:23-24).

How to Love Each Other

In the climax of Paul's argument in Galatians 3:23-29, he describes how humanity's new relationship with God should have implications for how they dealt with each other. Paul points out that their cultural and ethnic differences can no longer define how they relate to each other. They are already one in Christ, which ensues what the gospel proclaims. Paul admonishes them to live out this oneness and walk by the Spirit in love, despite their differences.

Thereby, humanity could not understand their privileges of unity, freedom, and purpose in Christ. When humanity does not operate in the promise, they reap the fruit of the law: condemnation and frustration. However, God endowed humanity with Christ, who liberated his people from the law and gave them the Spirit, enabling them to abide as brothers and sisters of the promise (Gal 3:25-26).

According to Douglas Moo's commentary on Galatians, "sonship" in the Greco-Roman word symbolized an individual status and right of inheritance.⁴⁸ Those of faith, both Jew and Gentile, get to experience the status of sonship. Douglas Moo writes, "The redemption of Christ permits all to enjoy the blessings of Abraham."⁴⁹ When people

⁴⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 250.

⁴⁹ Alvin Sanders, *Bridging the Diversity Gap: Leading toward God Multi-Ethnic Kingdom* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2013), 40.

know it is not their cultural status that allows them to be in God's presence, but it is by faith alone in Christ, it changes how they relate to one another. They now have the Spirit of the promise, which in turn creates a new spiritual community.

New Spiritual Community

Galatians 3:27 verifies this new spiritual community. Those baptized in Christ, a symbol of the new creation, are clothed in Christ. In Adam, the old garment is sinful and corrupt. The new garment is the clothes of the gospel. Fundamentally to put on the clothes of Christ transpires to walk in Christ's forgiveness of sins, righteousness, peace, consolation, the joy of Spirit, salvation, life, and Christ himself.⁵⁰ When the Spirit indwells believers, together they become the dwelling place of God (John 17:22). The filling of the Spirit allows for the uncircumcised Gentile to be in the family. Likewise, the Spirit revealed to the Jews that there is no partiality in the kingdom (Acts 10). All who place their faith in Jesus are baptized in the body of Christ and clothed with the righteousness of Christ, showing that the Spirit of God puts everyone on equal ground.

The indwelling of the Spirit makes Galatians 3:28-29 resound true: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul's emphasis is that cultural differences should not be eliminated any more than socioeconomic or gender differences. Jews can persist as Jews because of the seed of Abraham; they are heirs of the promise. Gentiles can continue as Gentiles and yet achieve equal status before God with the Jews by faith. Therefore, for cultural diversity to remain, Christ embodied culture. Paul calls the church to find their identity and value in Christ. When it comes to their own culture, he calls everyone to consider aspects that are good, beautiful, and neutral about their culture as well as renounce ungodly aspects.

⁵⁰ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, Luther Classic Commentaries, trans. Erasmus Middleton (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 115, Kindle.

Due to the works of Christ, the church now displays then fulfills the promise given to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). God provided the law to expose hearts and to remind his people of their familial identity, the church in one in him. Their distinctiveness should bring him praise over pride, love over strife, and unity over uniformity.

Consequently, for the Mercy Church to operate in disunity reveals a misplaced identity. Mercy Church as body is not operating as sons and daughters but as illegitimate children. The fruit of a divisive heart loses sight of God's relentless love and the adoption that he promises, which leaves one unable to find rest in the loving Father.

CHAPTER 3
THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL PRACTICES
AT MERCY CHURCH

Introduction

This chapter will examine biblically and socially the four barriers restraining Mercy Church from pursuing cross-cultural unity and provide potential solutions. Despite a desire to achieve the vision of biblical unity called for throughout Scripture, Mercy Church often has misunderstandings concerning unity. Mercy Church strives to conceptualize this practice; it tries to mitigate the disadvantages of ethnic minorities in the life of the local church but fails to look at the root problems causing disunity. The four barriers are (1) colorblindness; (2) the lack of ethnic awareness; (3) misunderstanding of racism; and (4) misunderstandings of biblical justice.

Conceptually, there demands a recognition that not all individuals ethnically align within their cultural majority, but for the sake of comprehension, overgeneralization holds as necessary. Additionally, my framework results preferentially toward the challenges between black and white racial/ethnic groups. Whites are the largest demographic at Mercy Church, with African Americans being the second largest. Nevertheless, this chapter anticipates that the concepts presented can transcend to all cultures.

The Vision of Cross-Cultural Unity

In Isaiah 11:6-9, the prophet Isaiah describes an image of the coming of the future kingdom of God where predators and prey are at peace with each other. The first metaphor presents a wolf dwelling with a lamb. Within the animal kingdom, these two animals are physiologically different; a wolf is vicious and territorial while a lamb is

innocent and defenseless. Yet, in this passage, they dwell together in peace. Isaiah 11:6-9 continues with additional contrasting imagery, such as a leopard dwelling with a young goat, a calf with a lion, a cow grazing with a bear as their babies lie down together, and a nursing child playing with a cobra. All of the animals will be led by “a little child,” who is none other than Jesus Christ. In the future kingdom, Christ stands as the one who will unite the wolf with the lamb. By the power of the Spirit of Christ, he will bring the nations together.

In his classic book *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, Eric Law says, “If we stretch this analogy of the ‘wolf and lamb’ scenario further, one might say the world’s cultures are as numerous as the kinds of animals inhabiting this earth.”¹ The inhabitation of humanity, distinct and unified, is within the framework of God’s intention for creation. Law describes Isaiah 11:6-9 as becoming “a vision of culturally diverse people living together in harmony.”² Tribes who were once at odds with one another are brought together in Christ at Zion, where those designated as prey will no longer cause hurt, pain, or division. All of the nations will be blessed, gather together, and fill the earth with Christ’s glories (Hab 2:14). In this act, the people are new creations in Christ, one in spirit, but distinct in cultures. For Mercy to understand that the church is one in spirit but distinct in cultures, it is necessary to look at the four challenges that keep it apart.

Colorblindness

Concerning the four challenges, the most considerable opposition for Mercy Church in pursuing unity is challenging the concept of colorblindness. Mercy members think colorblindness is the proper perspective to employ in striving not to be racist or prejudice. Conceptually, for them, colorblindness has two effects. First, it makes life

¹ Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), 3.

² Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, 3.

easier to deal with because race is a problem to ignore. Second, some Mercy Church members think subscribing to colorblindness will achieve equality and justice for all.³ However, both of those approaches cause more disunity than unity.

The colorblind ideology declares that there is no distinction in race; it asserts that all are the same in God's eyes and compresses out the germane differences between individuals and people groups.⁴ Its ambition is to find what is familiar with God's people rather than what is different. Although this idea has good intentions, it does not reflect God's design for humanity because underneath this belief exists a decision to ignore one's color for unity. The members of Mercy Church fall prey to colorblindness, which causes disunity within the church. Furthermore, colorblindness stands as the world's way of dealing with race and culture.

In *Disunity in Christ*, Christiana Cleveland writes that, as the church succumbs to colorblindness, "it would violate the metaphor of the body of Christ in which each group expresses its unique perspective and function in coordination with other groups and in submission to the head, Jesus Christ."⁵ Alternately of functioning in cross-cultural unity, colorblindness is impartial because it prompts Mercy Church to ignore cultural distinctions in ordinary life and the Bible. In a theological understanding, the colorblind

³ In defining *colorblindness*, I am attempting to define the sin of partiality and its relation to colorblindness. I understand that, when using the term *colorblindness*, Mercy members are trying to achieve a complementary objective of fairness and justice for all. They see two standards of justice, and Mercy members want to be on the right side of history to see justice for all. Also, when some members are using the term *colorblindness*, they are trying to communicate an understanding of impartiality because of union with Christ. Nevertheless, *colorblindness* is the wrong application. To be truly impartial is to see all of God's people within their distinctive redeemed ethnicities. Because of Christians' union with Christ, Christians no longer have to operate with impartiality toward each other.

⁴ Jemar Tibsy, "Be Strong and Courageous: Principles and Pitfalls of Talking about Race in the Church," in *All Are Welcome: Toward a Multi-Everything Church*, ed. Leon Brown (Austin, TX: Storied Publishing, 2018), 234.

⁵ Christiana Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 187.

position is antithetical to the *imago Dei*, making it critical to teach what God has to say about cross-cultural unity from the Bible. When there remains a lack of education from Scripture, the members of Mercy are not functioning as one body yet distinct in cultures as God ordained.

Lamin Sanneh, an African professor at Yale Divinity who converted from Islam to Christianity, recognizes that culture is essential when teaching the Bible. He argues that Christianity does not replace one's culture with a sub-Christian culture; instead, it redeems it.⁶ Sanneh points out that most religions require one to suppress their own culture and instead accept the culture of religion. For example, in Islam one needs to learn Arabic to hear from God. It is an expectation in every religion besides Christianity that one should reject their cultural heritage. He states that Christianity helps Africans become renewed Africans, not remade Europeans.⁷ Christianity exposes the false hopes or the broken cracks each culture teaches and redeems those narratives with the gospel.

For Mercy Church, since there is an absence of teaching about race and ethnicity, the church members do not possess the knowledge necessary to engage in conversations regarding race, ethnicity, and justice, as Sanneh proposes. Therefore, when Mercy Church teaches about the beauty of ethnicity within the kingdom, ideas such as colorblindness will be challenged. The church will begin to operate in cross-cultural unity as God has intended.

Colorblindness and the Mission of God

Moreover, not only does colorblindness create problems within Mercy Church, but it creates missional difficulties outside of it. For the person who is far from Christ and is struggling with their ethnic identity, the message that colorblindness declares to them is

⁶ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 42-45.

⁷ Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, 42-45.

that Jesus is not powerful enough to help them with their struggle. Colorblindness declares that the gospel does not possess the power that it should and keeps ethnic minorities in following Christ. Additionally, as Mercy tries to reach the diverse community in Charlotte, colorblindness causes distrust among minorities who visit Mercy.

Sarah Shin writes, “Racially and culturally unaware witness and involvement in our communities caused distrust; we sometimes did more harm than good and pushed people away from us—away from opportunities to hear the gospel and away from trusting Jesus.”⁸ While many people of color visit Mercy, few return. Upon being asked why not, at first, visitors are gracious and say Mercy is not their style. When diving deeper into the conversation, however, they admit to not feeling welcomed. Many people of Mercy are afraid to come across as racist. Therefore, in an effort to be welcoming, people of Mercy declare, “We are glad you are here! At Mercy we love everyone. It does not matter what your race is, we just love everyone as Jesus followers.” This statement is well-intended but comes off as offensive.

The choice not to focus on someone’s race may not matter to the person speaking, but it profoundly matters to the individual being spoken to, and it matters to God. Galatians 3:28 describes a oneness in spirit, rather than oneness in culture. God loves diversity because, according to Genesis 1:26-31, diversity reflects his image. Shin writes, “Colorblindness mutes Christian voice and thought from speaking into ethnic brokenness.”⁹ She explains that everyone has scars and experiences in their culture, and failure to distinguish cultures within the walls of Mercy stops the gospel from bringing healing to souls.

⁸ Sarah Shin, *Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey* (Downers Groves, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 7, Kindle.

⁹ Shin, *Beyond Colorblind*, 7. Kindle.

Jesus and the Samaritan Women

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman presents a helpful framework for putting ethnic awareness into practice. John 4:1-26 recalls the story of Jesus and the Samaritan women at the well. Jesus, a law-abiding Jewish man, intentionally passes through Samaria to get to Galilee from Judea. Travelers would frequently pass through Samaria to get to Galilee, but strict law-abiding Jewish people avoided Samaria to avert defilement. Therefore, they would choose the longer route, which meant crossing the Jordan to avoid the Samaritans.¹⁰ There was already conflict between the Southern Kingdom and the Northern Kingdoms of Israel, but the problems had intensified.¹¹ Therefore, in John 4:1-6, Jesus deliberately travels through Samaria to make a statement to both Jews and the Gentiles. However, the plot gets better: Jesus, during midday, approaches a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. This well was a shaded and natural place for men to stop by to rest, and women would typically come to draw water during the early mornings and late evenings. Only immoral women came to the well during midday because no one else was there. Nevertheless, on this specific day and time, Jesus meets the Samaritan women at the well.

Jesus looks at the woman and takes the initiative to speak to her. In this act, Jesus rejects the cultural norms and practices of his contemporaries to demonstrate love and dignity to this woman. Jesus asks her to give him a drink. The woman, shocked at this request, asks him why he would speak to her, a Samaritan woman, since he is a Jewish rabbi. Therefore, his request for a cup of water is much more than a nicety, which is why

¹⁰ Samaria was the capital city of the Northern Kingdom before the exile. The Assyrians took over the land and the kingdom, but let some Jews remain in the land (1 Kgs 16:23-24). During those times, those Jews intermarried with other nations, making the Samaritans racially mixed: both Jewish and Gentile.

¹¹ See Josephus, *Jewish War*, rev. ed., trans. G. A. Williamson, rev. E. Mary Smallwood (1970; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1959), 232-46. The Jews began to disdain the Samaritans because they had a mixture of worship practices. Instead of gently calling them back into repentance, the Southern Kingdom distanced themselves. In turn, the Jews and Samaritans abhorred each other (John 4:9; 8:48). Furthermore, Jews disdained Gentiles (Luke 10:33).

the woman is shocked. There is only one cup, and Jesus wants to put his lips on the same cup she puts on her lips (John 4:11). Jesus' request is an intimate act of fellowship and acceptance.¹²

However, as a Jewish man, Jesus does not just want to drink water, but he signifies value to her by engaging in conversation. He gives value to her because he, a Jewish rabbi, had a need, and she could help him. There is more to learn from this story, but in this instance, the point is a depiction of love for another person from another culture by Jesus. He did not give up being Jewish, nor did Jesus allow his own culture to prevent him from meeting a spiritual need. Jesus was culturally competent and maintained his ethnic identity, while still doing the will of God. He did not let history or cultural differences get in the way of ministering to this woman. He saw her, and she saw him, respectively, a Jewish person and a Samaritan. Jesus was not colorblind but was culturally and ethnically aware.¹³

Practical Ideas for Being Color Rich

Accordingly, instead of being colorblind, Mercy needs to pursue a ministry of color-rich: exploring the richness of each other's backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities, leading to God-exalting unity and worship. In conversations about ethnicity and race, it can be hard to know where to start making changes. Below are some practical ways Mercy can begin moving in that direction by taken some practical steps.

First, include ethnic diversity in the vision, mission, and values of Mercy Church. When this happens, it sets the expectations and direction of Mercy church. Having ethnic diversity in the vision then will not be a surprise to the members or stand as reactionary; instead it will be a scriptural practice cultivated in the church's life.

¹² Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation: The Kingdom and How We Are Stronger Together* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 61.

¹³ Shin, *Beyond Colorblind*, 9.

Second, ensure that all ministries incorporate multicultural practices into their ministry area. There needs a thorough assessment of each ministry and its leaders to ensure they teach about the beauty of race, ethnicity, and culture. Furthermore, in America, society often gives a vision of a white Jesus. Mercy needs to distinguish between the Christ of the Bible, and the Christ made up in the West.

Lack of Ethnic Awareness

The second challenge toward cross-cultural unity at Mercy is that the majority population (whites) most often do not see themselves as an ethnic group. They do not understand the implications of their “whiteness,” which transpires socially, politically, economically, and more meaningful, spiritually.¹⁴ In conversations with individuals at Mercy, I often ask, “What does it mean to be white?” The response received is often, “I have not thought about the implications of being white.”

Moreover, ethnic minorities at Mercy tend to be the first person of color that the whites at Mercy talk to about race. After this disorienting experience, whites often become depressed, angry, and confused. The result is a double deficit: lack of cultural identity and negative racial identity.¹⁵ Those should not always be the responses.

In contrast to whites’ lack of ethnic awareness, ethnic minorities have developed a racial consciousness from birth.¹⁶ With a heightened sense of their cultural identity, they

¹⁴ When I define *whiteness*, I do not define it the same way that Critical Race Theory (CRT) proposes. CRT theorists demonize white people and white culture. In using this term within my context, North American whites are the majority culture, and thereby the majority, and are afforded advantages by being the majority within a culture.

¹⁵ Shin, *Beyond Colorblind*, 15.

¹⁶ W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, 1903), 1-2. As a collection of letters, DuBois originally coined this term in 1897 in an article titled “Strivings of the Negro People” in the *Atlantic Monthly*. It was then repurposed in this book in the chapter called “Of Our Spiritual Strivings.” DuBois discussed how African American have a “double consciousness,” which is psycho-social framework in which African Americans think about the world in both their culture and white culture.

often try to explain their plight and experience as a member of Mercy Church. In response, they get either pushback or pity. Neither are proper responses because they ignore them as a person. Therefore, in fighting for dignity, minorities tend to get labeled as angry, and due to their displeasure, they are accused of causing disunity at Mercy Church. As a result, whites in the church then become angrier and more annoyed by the conversation, so they use insults to fight back against their ethnic minority brothers and sisters.¹⁷ After fighting back, ethnic minorities at Mercy retreat from any majority white churches for the sake of their dignity and their mental health.¹⁸ The lack of ethnic awareness causes some major problem toward unity at Mercy Church. Thus, when Mercy helps its members understand their ethnicities, ethnic groups have the ability to challenge the sin in one another's cultures and challenge the systems that perpetuate sin, giving the reason for this project's necessity.

Contrasting race and ethnicity, Tanya K. Hernández, a legal scholar, writes about race and ethnicity in an opinion column in *The New York Times*, "The social experience of being consistently viewed as distinct is what informs a racial identity, not a shared culture."¹⁹ Those who share an ethnicity speak the same language, share the same culture, and come from a similar region of the world. In contrast, race is based on shared experience, especially when it comes to broad social interactions as a citizen of the United States.

¹⁷ Molly Worthen, "Can Black Evangelicals Save the Whole Movement?," *The New York Times*, April 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/20/opinion/sunday/black-evangelicals-diversity.html>.

¹⁸ Campbell Robertson, "A Quiet Exodus: Why Black Worshipers Are Leaving White Evangelical Churches," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/blacks-evangelical-churches.html>.

¹⁹ Tanya K. Hernández, "Race v. Ethnicity," *The New York Times*, July 12, 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/15/opinion/1-race-vs-ethnicity-136301.html>.

Race stands neither biologically nor genetically, but as an identity that possesses a set of meanings.²⁰ For example, being white goes beyond ethnicity because it lumps all Caucasian ethnic groups into one vast social class.²¹ These categories (White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Latino) persuade human susceptibility, which leads to social privilege. Therefore, there are fundamental differences between the race and ethnicity, and an accurate understanding of each generates different outcomes.²²

Jesus, the Model of Cross-Cultural Unity

Going back to the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus and the woman both recognized each other's ethnicity (John 14:9). Not only did Jesus see her ethnicity, but he saw her as a person. Jesus wanted to bring total restoration to this woman. He critiques both broken culture practices and embraces someone within their ethnicity. Jesus's disciples questioned his motives because he spoke to the Samaritan woman. Never before did they have a problem with Jesus talking to women.²³ He talked with Martha and Mary, and healed the woman with the blood issue, but his disciples, Jewish men, were bothered by Jesus' interaction with the *Samaritan* woman.

The problem here is that the disciples were obeying their cultural expectations rather than following God's will. Members of Mercy Church fall prey to this dilemma as well. In this passage, Jesus was trying to demonstrate his principle of oneness. Tony Evans says, "When Jesus Christ enters the situation and demonstrates the kingdom

²⁰ Korie Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.

²¹ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 10.

²² As a scientist, Joseph Graves presents that race is a social construct and not biological. However, he contends that racist attitudes are seemingly second nature. He argues that there needs to be a greater emphasis on cultural intelligence. See Joseph L. Graves, *The Race Myth: Why We Pretend Race Exists in America* (New York: Plummer, 2005), 1-40.

²³ James M. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible* (New Kingston, PA: Whitaker House, 1996), 515.

principle of oneness through kingdom people, he can turn things that are upside down and make them right side up overnight.”²⁴ If one takes notice, Jesus did not tell the Samaritan woman to become Jew; neither did he try to become Samaritan. Instead, he reveals the broken practices of her culture, yet embraces her a child of God. Mercy Church, too, needs to follow Jesus’ model of cross-cultural ministry.

Jesus did not erase his Jewishness; instead, he gave a model of how to do cross-cultural ministry. He intentionally pursued this woman, showed her value, esteemed her culture, respected her, and related to her. In contrast, the lack of ethnic awareness of the disciples unintentionally devalues her ethnicity and evaluated their cultural values over loving her. The reality is that whites as the majority also lack an awareness of their ethnicity, which causes minorities at Mercy church to feel devalued and not welcomed.

The White Transparency

Korie Edwards, in her masterful book *The Elusive Dream*, calls the dilemma of the lack of ethnic awareness for whites as cultural transparency, meaning that whites do not think about their culture, which involves norms, behaviors, experiences, and perspective.²⁵ Cultural transparency is not exclusive to whites, rather, to those in the majority in any society or organization. However, since whites are the majority at Mercy, they lack a consciousness of their culture. Consequently, cultural transparency denotes whites as unfamiliar with the problems ethnic minorities face because they are accustomed to being the majority due to white structural advantage.²⁶ This concept affords whites

²⁴ Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 67.

²⁵ Cultural transparency denotes that whites, as the majority, are unaware that race has consequences within their lives. Most whites perceive themselves to be cultureless and racial minority groups as to having “culture.” Thereby, it is hard for whites to explain what it means to be white and to understand their part in the problem of racial disunity. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 11; 84-100.

²⁶ White structural advantage is an important concept to understand in diverse settings. As compared to a caste system, Edwards demonstrates whites as having a racial hierarchy. Thus, in any culture, those at the top of the social system tend to have an

unearned benefits based on being white within social settings. Whites' structural advantage then leads to white normativity, which then reinforces those white cultural practices and ideologies as the standard of culture. It declares that white culture is normal while other cultures are different, and some members at Mercy would call others' redemptive cultural expressions wrong.

The lack of examination of white normativity and cultural transparency results in ethnocentrism, which occurs when a culture operates in isolation and thinks that their way is the right way, above any other culture.²⁷ Since the people of Mercy often practice their culture in isolation, they experience conflict when there is a blending of culture. For Mercy Church to pursue cross-cultural unity, it must be united in its similarities and respected in its differences.²⁸ However, pursuing cross-cultural engagement stands not the case at Mercy; instead, it pursues strategies such as tokenism and assimilation due to the lack of cultural awareness. Both of these strategies tend to unconsciously create adverse circumstances. Assimilation and tokenism communicate that the richness of minority culture is not necessary. Therefore, anything that remains not the norm is less than—and minorities then accept their culture as “less than.” Once ethnic minorities at Mercy became awakened to what happened, they ended up building more barriers toward their white brothers and sisters.

Consequently, to subscribe to tokenism and assimilation is counterintuitive to God's design for humanity. Tokenism contends that one wants to have people of color without having their culture. For example, minorities are recruited be part of Mercy's

advantage socially, economically, politically, and numerically. Due to those realities, whites control the political parties who then make policies and systems to give whites advantage. Though not intentional, anyone in the majority that lacks cultural awareness will make decisions based on what they think is right. People make decisions based on their experiences and exposure. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 10; 84-100.

²⁷ Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*, 4.

²⁸ Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 139.

mission to reach the city, but as these minorities join in, they quickly realize they are symbols for diversity. There remains no real strategy and little intentionality. Therefore, the people of color perceive Mercy's efforts as tokenism, which is motivated by trendy compassion toward those in the minority group at Mercy.

Assimilation, on the other hand, calls for those in minority groups to give up their culture and assimilate into the majority culture at Mercy. It calls minority groups to deny the redemptive parts of their culture, and to accept all the good and bad of the majority culture in the church.²⁹ The challenge for Mercy Church remains to embrace that all cultures are virtuous, due to Mercy's lack of valuing other cultures.

For example, the worship director at Mercy played its first Gospel song around November 2017. Many congregants emailed or personally spoke with Mercy's worship director to object that Gospel music is not as biblically sound as "the normal music" that Mercy plays. Here, the congregants are not rude or mean-spirited; they are speaking from their heart, but it is biased. As a recipient of those conversations, it is hurtful and makes those who are in the minority feel inferior.

As a result, those in the minority groups within Mercy Church either remain in discouragement or leave in frustration—fight or flight. The result is most often flight, and in an attempt to regain their dignity, ethnic minorities often turn to non-Christian organizations to find retreat and healing.³⁰ One might ask, why not return to their churches of origin? First, that stands as not the solution. Second, those who left their churches of origin are now ostracized because they committed treason for going to a "white church." People from other cultures are choosing to integrate because they love their brothers and sisters at Mercy and are choosing to stay. However, many are growing

²⁹ Unfortunately, this problem is not just an issue at Mercy but at a majority white churches. Jemar Tisby, "A Wilderness Wandering after the "Quiet Exodus," *The Witness*, April 23, 2018. <https://thewitnessbcc.com/after-the-quiet-exodus-a-wilderness-wandering/>.

³⁰ Robertson, "A Quiet Exodus."

weary, and in response, the minorities who attempt to strive for unity are hurt by the reaction of whites and respond by leaving.

There is an evident issue at hand. Both tokenism and assimilation call for uniformity, which is offensive to the gospel message. However, these can be destroyed when Mercy Church realizes that all people are worthy of dignity, and King Jesus has authority over the church. The biblical call to cross-cultural unity does not call for white people to stop being white; instead, it calls to stop making other people white. Cross-cultural unity is a call to examine the cultural beauties and cracks in each culture.

Practical Steps to Work toward Cross-Cultural Unity

Some practical steps may be taken to work toward cross-cultural unity. First, Mercy Church can provide tools for staff, the leaders, and the members to have ongoing learning in intercultural competency, including cultural competence training for all new hires. Mercy could make cultural awareness part of the membership class and its processes.

Second, Mercy is an elder-led church, but most decisions are made by the lead pastor and executive director of ministries. Both of these men are great men, but they are white men, and they make decisions without a minority presence. A suggestion is to invite a minority into this team, making an executive team that helps make decisions for the church. When decisions are made in cultural isolation, other experiences are not considered. Mercy Church is attempting to add the minority experience as an addition rather than create an experience that reflects God's kingdom.

Third, Mercy should invite unbiased experts to come and evaluate its practices and culture. Mercy could invite outside organizations and leaders who are experts to speak into transitioning into a multicultural church. Leaders frequently have a hard time hearing from those within their organization, so having someone with an objective evaluation of Mercy church will help move in the right direction.

The Lack of Understanding of Racism

The third challenge toward cross-cultural unity at Mercy is the lack of understanding of racism. When it comes to racism, most people at Mercy Church readily agree that racism is real and avow that the church should address those who are acting out in racism. However, the challenge for Mercy Church is that it does not see its complicities to racism. For whites, who are the majority, groups such as the alt-right movement and neo-Nazi organizations are seen as racists, but they fail to accept that they too are susceptible to racism. Whites at Mercy often stay distanced from minorities in fear of being misunderstood or being called a “racist.”

On the other hand, blacks and other ethnic minorities experience racism in the church, but there lacks a clear and concise way to articulate their experience. As a response, minorities tend to aspire toward a racial utopia to flee the stress regarding matters of race.³¹ The great divide at Mercy remains to understand racism and its effects.³² The result of a lack of understanding of racism is discord among the body. Therefore, Mercy Church must first define what racism is.

Defining Racism

As a definition, racism determines that certain groups of human beings are superior or inferior due to an uncontrollable genetic feature such as skin color, language, and cultural expressions.³³ The Bible speaks of the act of racism as the sin of partiality (Deut 10:17, 16:19; Prov 24:23; Rom 2:11; Jas 2). The sin of partiality demonstrates

³¹ See Alexis Freeman article concerning her feeling about her church. She is a Junior at Amherst College and is struggling with her thoughts about her white church. Alexis Freeman, “Is God Racist or Is It My Church,” *Embrace Race*, June 2020, <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/is-god-racist-or-is-it-my-church>.

³² See Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993). In this book, West talks through the importance of how race affected all matters in the United States.

³³ Matthew Clair and Jeffrey S. Denis, “Sociology of Racism,” *Scholars at Harvard*, 2015, accessed July 6, 2020, https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/matthewclair/files/sociology_of_racism_clairandenis_2015.pdf.

favoritism based on one's status, and in terms of racism, it positions skin color, social habits, and language as defining statuses. Showing partiality is incompatible to the kingdom of God. Like all sin, the sin of partiality does not just affect one person, it affects all of society.

Concerning life experiences, opportunities, and social relationships, race affects everything.³⁴ Race shapes where people live, where people send their children for schooling, how people make friends, access to health and wealth, who people marry, and people's cultural preferences.³⁵ Therefore, Mercy Church needs a deep understanding of the formation of race in America.

The Formation of Race in America

The history of the United States began with tyranny toward ethnic minorities, from the mistreatment of Native Americans to slavery shortly afterward. Race was formed during the seventeenth century, as the United States was repressive to those with non-European roots. The fact that the United States committed genocide twice within one century toward two major ethnic groups needs recognition.³⁶ This framework of subjugation became the foundation for how the country continues to operate today.

As history progressed, the subconscious of race was formed. Michael Omi and Howard Winant write in their book *Racial Formation*, "Everybody learns some combination, some version, of the rules of racial classification, and their own racial identity, often without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation."³⁷ Therefore, even

³⁴ Alvin Sanders, *Bridging the Diversity Gap: Leading toward God Multi-Ethnic Kingdom* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2013), 196.

³⁵ DeYoung, et al., *United by Faith*, 1-2.

³⁶ See Jim Wallis, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

³⁷ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 106.

though the terms “white,” “black,” and “Hispanic” were not concepts used in discussing one’s identity, there was an underlying sense of unspoken understanding of racial superiority. As the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emerged, racial terms took on a broader meaning, and the “melting pot theory” came into existence.³⁸ Due to this theory, various ethnic groups are lumped into broad racial categories.

After the Civil War ended and the Emancipation Proclamation was given in 1863, slavery as an institution of human chattel ended in the United States. Although slavery ended, its effects on the United States were significant. Those impacted by the institution of slavery tried to recover amidst a racial formation woven deep into the American fabric. Bryan Stevenson, in an interview concerning his memoir *Just Mercy*, writes about this experience: “So, this narrative of racial difference has done destructive things in our society. Lots of countries had slaves, but they were mostly societies with slaves. We became something different; we became a slave society. We created a narrative of racial difference to maintain slavery.”³⁹

Stevenson’s point remains that there are ingrained effects of slavery in the US; the concept has just evolved. In his book *Slavery by Another Name*, Douglas A. Blackmon writes that slavery took on new forms, which included convict leasing, peonage, and sharecropping.⁴⁰ During this time, nine amendments and eight civil acts were passed based on establishing human dignity. However, even as more laws were passed, the condition and harsh treatment of ethnic minorities remained.

³⁸ First coined by Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), reinterpreted in Neil Larry Shumsky, “Zangwill’s ‘The Melting Pot’: Ethnic Tensions on Stage,” *American Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (March 1975): 29-41.

³⁹ Bryan Stevenson, “We Need to Talk about an Injustice,” *TED*, March 2012, www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice?language=en.

⁴⁰ Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), 53.

From the Civil War and reconstruction, it was almost another century until the dawning of the Civil Rights Movement, when ethnic minorities finally got a chance at human dignity. When the Civil Rights Movements began around 1955, there were 24 amendments in the US Constitution attempting to give natural human rights to every human being. The laws kept evolving, but the hearts of the people remained callous. During the Civil Rights Movement, the South had Jim Crow laws to oppress ethnic minorities. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, led by the great Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., finally made it possible for those in minorities to have equal rights.⁴¹ Nevertheless, even with these laws passed, conditions for racial minorities remained hostile.

The experience of racial minorities in America continues to evolve. For example, the United States has allowed for a system that oppresses racial minorities from the inner-city school to prison. This pipeline leads to the mass incarceration of ethnic minorities. Michelle Alexander, in her book *The New Jim Crow*, describes the idea of mass incarceration as the new Jim Crow. She explains that in the purported age of colorblindness, there remain racial disparity and disadvantage after Jim Crow. The US justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control through the War on Drugs and by decimating communities of color.⁴²

The Solution

Given America's history with race, Mercy Church needs to talk about race and all of its implications on society. Due to the United States' decorated past of racism, Mercy cannot avoid having conversations about race. Defensive comments such as, "I am not a racist" and "I am not a bad person," still focus on character traits (the intent of the

⁴¹ For more, see Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2017).

⁴² Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012), 1-15.

individual), rather than on one's action (the impact).⁴³ To be clear, the intention, though not intentional, still has impactful ramifications; the impact is hurtful. It would be much better if the impact were understood so that a conversation and reconciliation could happen. Inversely, the intent does not always equal the impact. Ethnic minorities often wear their race on their shoulders; most of the time warranted, but not all the time. When ethnic minorities let the impact go further than the intent, their disposition as well leads to more conflict. Therefore, the people of Mercy must possess humility and self-awareness to accept that one has a bias toward other races.⁴⁴

When Mercy ignore the worldly power of racism, the church denies the supernatural power of the gospel. According to Scripture, when sin is brought into the light, it has power over darkness (Eph 5:13). Talking about race at Mercy Church brings the evil of racism into the light. Nevertheless, talking about race also comes at an expense for Mercy Church, both personal and organizational. Conversations about race confront one's own comfort and power, and will involve a social disturbance and cause financial ramifications at Mercy Church. Such a move requires Mercy to renovate a pre-existing culture that often chooses silence for the sake of peace. Christ's example of confronting hostility models how to deal with the disunity and cosmic realities that separate his church (Matt 5–7).

Some further ideas to consider in talking about race in the church include, first, addressing how race affects everything in sermons through a sermon series. Mercy members need the pastors to teach them how to think about race. Many terms, such as white fragility and critical race theory, confuse members. Mercy Church needs biblical categories and language to know how to talk about these matters.

⁴³ Alexander Jun, "Unintentional Racism," in *Heal Us Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church*, ed. Doug Serven (Oklahoma City, OK: White Blackbird Books, 2016), 26.

⁴⁴ Jun, "Unintentional Racism," 26.

Second, Mercy should create a diverse team of people at Mercy to help the church think and educate on race and racism concerns. This team could be called The Racial and Ethnicity Council (TREC). This team could examine both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors perpetuating racism at Mercy. Additionally, this team could help Mercy think through educating its members about race.

Misunderstanding of Biblical Justice

The last challenge for cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church, the lack of understanding about biblical justice. The biblical call to cross-cultural unity means that a matter of injustice anywhere should always cause the church to lament (Rom 12:3-21). Mercy members often justify the “ethnic minority” experience as an indictment on their culture. However, many injustices happen in Charlotte’s local communities, such as white on white crimes, black on black crimes, abortion, sex-trafficking, police brutality, abandoned children, homelessness, and mass shootings. and none of those issues are indictment on particular culture. Mercy Church needs to understand that the call of cross-cultural unity mourns all injustices in its community because when one person hurts, everyone is affected (1 Cor 12). Never does the Bible say to justify one’s weeping, nor does it call the church to ignore each other’s painful experiences. For Mercy Church to fully embrace the biblical call for cross-cultural unity, it must have a deep comprehension of biblical justice and its execution.

For example, on March 25, 2019, in a majority African American community, an innocent man was murdered by the police in West Charlotte. This shooting caused a great deal of upheaval in the city and produced an abundant amount of racial strife in Charlotte.⁴⁵ The Sunday following the shooting, Mercy Church publicly mentioned nothing of this shooting. Subsequently, two weeks later, at the University of North

⁴⁵ Fred Clasen-Kelly et al., “‘You Told Me to . . .’: Charlotte Man Appeared to Be Lowering Gun when Police Shot Him,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/crime/article229227114.html>.

Carolina at Charlotte, there was a shooting on campus where a few white students were murdered. After hearing about this tragic event, Mercy Church rallied around the community in support. Members and leaders of the church arranged prayer gatherings on the campus. The church had a moment of lamenting during the Sunday worship services.⁴⁶ Although the lack of response to the first event may seem to concern only a small group of people at Mercy, it should concern anyone who cares about unity in the church. Both events were horrifying and should demand the church's help and response; however, one event received the church's support, while the other did not.⁴⁷ These two examples demonstrate when there is a gap in understanding cross-cultural unity; justice at Mercy is for some but not for all.

Justice recently has become a heavily debated topic, and most individuals do not have a framework for it. In the process of learning, many members of Mercy Church confuse social justice with biblical justice. Mercy would affirm that the church must pursue justice, but there is a gap in their understanding. At Mercy Church, justice often prevails as a charity, such as executing food drives, or serving the poor and needy.⁴⁸ Those are worthy causes and should continue to be the heart of Mercy, but to be a church that expresses the unity of the Godhead, it must comprehend that justice is more than meeting needs; it comprises the entire soul and body.

Biblical justice ensures the execution of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, which declares that all people are created in the image of God and deserve dignity.

⁴⁶ Alzo Slade "Black South Rising Video, *Vice News*, June 7, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ErWlsnECTo>.

⁴⁷ According to research, racial and ethnic groups tend to struggle mourning each other experiences. Kiana Cox, "Most U.S. Adults Feel What Happens to Their Own Racial or Ethnic Group Affects Them Personally," *Pew Research*, July 11, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/11/linked-fate-connectedness-americans/>.

⁴⁸ See Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help, and How to Reverse It* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011).

Justice is not merely making a wrong right; it expresses all that is right, namely, God. In contrast, social justice, which most people at Mercy get caught up on, focuses on addressing injustices in society without considering how it brings someone dignity as an image-bearer. Social justice is immediate, whereas biblical justice is restorative. Its ambitions remain motivated by sympathy while biblical justice is motivated by compassion. Compassion declares, “I am going to suffer with you,” while sympathy says, “I am going to suffer at a distance.”⁴⁹ It often misses the heart of the gospel, which has the past, future, and present in mind.

For example, Mercy Church often hosts an event each year called Serve Week. During this week, the church serves the needs of the community. Although the efforts of the church are sacrificial, the problem is that Mercy’s service to the community is often divorced from a genuine relationship. The focus is on immediate needs, which needs addressing but rarely does any activity with the community continue past this week. Social justice at times can revive the body, but biblical justice revives both the soul and the body.

Jesus and Justice

Jesus models justice in feeding the four thousand (Matt 15:30), healing two blind men on his way to Jericho (Matt 20:34), and healing a widow’s son who was dead (Luke 7:12-13). The motivation for his compassion is to demonstrate the kingdom’s ethic of righteousness and justice. In all this, Jesus both announces and demonstrates the kingdom.

To express the mission of God fully, Mercy must have a ministry of justice. Jesus shows how restoring dignity is the goal of biblical justice in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). In this story, a Samaritan helped restore dignity to a man left

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 192.

for dead. Both a priest and a Levite pass by this man in their quest to do more “holy” activities. Nevertheless, the Samaritan, a half-Jew and a social outcast, forsakes the Jewish ritualistic laws to bandage up this man (Luke 10:33-35). The wounded man was likely a Jew since he came from Jerusalem, which thickens the plot. Jews hated Samaritans and were prejudice toward them, but the Samaritan laid down the racial animosity of his past to love this man. He saw this man and had compassion upon him.

The Samaritan inconvenienced himself and gave this man his best. Not only did he forsake some of his ritualistic values, but in Old Testament law, he put himself in danger by way of blood vengeance. If one is robbing or hurting someone, then they could hurt everyone else in their vicinity, including their family, according to law. So, when the Samaritan gets off his animal to help this man, it put him into a circle where the same men who jumped, robbed, and left this man for dead could attack him. Furthermore, he does not hide from this risk. He puts the wounded man on his animal, goes to the inn, checks him in with his own money, is seen with this man, and stays the night. The next day, he takes two denarii (two months’ pay) and pays for his stay. He tells the innkeeper to use the extra money to care for him. All of this took time, work, and money. The good Samaritan demonstrates biblical justice. Mercy Church needs to put this type of compassion into action.

This story demonstrates Jesus’ intentions for Mercy Church to love their brothers and sisters from other ethnicities. The heart of the gospel is to take the gospel to all nations. Moreover, the gospel does not just come in words but in power; this is what it means to love your neighbor. Tim Keller writes, “What does it mean to love your neighbor? . . . By depicting a Samaritan helping a Jew, Jesus could not have found a more forceful way to say that anyone at all in need - regardless of race, politics, class, and religion - is your neighbor.”⁵⁰ Pursuing justice is loving one’s neighbor.

⁵⁰ Tim Keller, *Generous Justice: Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 67.

Pursuing Justice

In Matthew 23, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” Biblical justice is expressing the compassion of Christ among all of humanity. As the church, Jesus calls Mercy to be the salt and light of the earth, and to be cities on a hill (Matt 5). For that to happen, Mercy Church must pursue both truth and justice (Eph 5:9).

Pacifying justice stands to pacify wrongdoing. For justice to happen, there must be lament, corporate confession, acknowledging racial issues, and understanding what those issues are at Mercy Church. The church’s expression of justice remains in line with the covenant he made with his people in creation (Gen 1:26-31). As one people, the church should care about all the things of God and executive his justice upon the earth. Therefore, when Mercy Church understands the biblical call to cross-cultural unity, it can teach others about God’s majesties. Each culture brings value to the table, and when combined, the church gets to see a full, robust vision of God. The culminating objective of biblical justice is to see God’s people reconciled to him and eternally changed.

Solutions to Pursuing Biblical Justice

In pursuing biblical justice Mercy Church could create a biblical statement of race and justice. Having a statement on race and justice allows for the members to understand where Mercy stands on this topic. Having a stance on these matters is not just biblical but moral because it is about expressing the dignity of all people.

Also, Mercy needs to decentralize its local outreach ministry to be campus-specific. Each campus is in a different location and has different needs for its community. Mercy Church needs to focus its concentration on particular issues such as homelessness, poverty, racism, etc. Having a narrower approach will sow more seeds in one direction.

Conclusion

Gleaning from this chapter, as Mercy Church increases its knowledge of the biblical call for cross-cultural unity, it needs to get R.E.A.L about making change as the call is embraced. Below are the four primary steps Mercy should take:

Renovate—Each ministry needs to rethink how they approach and practice ministry. The executive team needs to ensure that all ministries are incorporating multicultural practices into their ministry area.

Educate—Mercy should create a diverse team of people to help the church think and educate on race and racism concerns. This team will be called The Racial and Ethnicity Council (TREC).

Activate—To activate biblical justice, Mercy needs to decentralize their local outreach to be campus specific to be better neighbors in those specific communities

Legislate—Mercy needs to leverage its decision-making power among a diverse group of people. The executive team should invite a minority unto this team—forming an executive team that helps make decisions for the church.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter occurs as a recording of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project. The first section discusses the formation and development of the project and how it was developed into a class; section 2 focuses on the implementation of the project; section 3 offers an evaluation of the class results. As I began my research, I had a hypothesis that there was a gap between orthodoxy and orthopraxy as it related to cross-cultural for the members of Mercy, and this project proved my theory right. Particularly, members of Mercy would affirm that all people are created in God's image, and everyone should be treated equally, but their actions were counterintuitive to what they believe. The four barriers to cross-cultural unity—colorblindness, the lack of ethnic awareness, misunderstanding of racism, and misunderstandings of biblical justice—proved biblically and sociologically challenging for Mercy members who participated in the project. The evaluation component of this project revealed the pre- and post-project learnings of class participants.

Project Planning

Project Development

The inception of this project began when Mercy Church asked me to join their staff back in 2016. Spence Shelton, the lead pastor, shared with me his vision of being a multicultural church and reaching the diverse city of Charlotte. After much prayer, my family decided to move to Charlotte. In September 2017, we arrived in Charlotte and realized that Mercy Church was a long way from fulfilling the vision of being multicultural. So, I labored intensely to figure out why.

I read extensively and called many pastors and thought leaders around the country to gain a deeper understanding of the matter. I spent around ten hours a week studying. Then, a catalytic moment came to me at my father's funeral when I saw 300-400 people, multicultural and multiethnic, reflecting on my father's life. My previous lead pastor, Dusty Thompson, eulogized my dad's funeral. In his sermon, he preached about my dad's life and how he lived a multicultural life and affected people from various races and backgrounds. At that moment, I realized that engaging in multicultural ministry is what the Lord is calling me to.

After much prayer, I began working on my doctorate at SBTS in January 2019 to commit to that dream. I started writing and studying, but everyone was telling me that my writing was too broad. My proposal was a comprehensive project to transform Mercy Church into a gospel-centered multicultural church. In December 2019, I lost my project advisor, which in hindsight, I see as God-ordained. Michael Haste, the director of the doctoral studies office, offered to advise me while finding another advisor. During that time, he gave me some insight and forced me to think more narrowly. We decided to move forward with the first step of my original proposal, to educate the members of Mercy Church on the biblical call to cross-cultural unity. Therefore, in par with that emphasis, one of the project's goals was for me to write a four-week class about the biblical call for cross-cultural unity, using a pre- and post-survey to evaluate how individuals gained understanding.

Model Development

Due to difficulty in securing a project advisor, the start of my project was delayed. After talking to Dr. Haste, we decided to change my original plans from a sermon series that pairs with a small group discussion, to a four-week class during the summer of 2020.

The purpose of this project was to establish a class to increase the biblical knowledge of cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church (see chap 1.) The goals were (1) to

create a survey to assess Mercy Church’s understanding of cross-cultural unity; (2) to develop a curriculum based on the results from the survey; (3) to teach the curriculum through a four-week class at Mercy Church to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural unity; (4) to evaluate the results from the class to assess the impact on the attendees.

To fulfill the first goal, I evaluated the best questions to release for a survey. I began by putting together a list of questions in February 2020. The survey questions varied in style, including both interpersonal and extra-personal understanding of race and culture. I designed the survey for class participants to complete within ten minutes and formed the survey in an unbiased manner. The aim was not to condemn individuals of their understanding or lack thereof; instead, it was to assess comprehension. However, Dr. Haste recommended that I use and modify an already existing survey to reduce the risk of my survey getting rejected when submitting to the ethics committee. Therefore, after extensive research, I found a survey created by Renew Partnerships.¹ I emailed them on April 6, 2020, to ask if I could use and modify their survey. The director of Renew Partnerships, Chad Brennon, set up a Zoom meeting to discuss my request. We met on April 9, and he gave me permission to use and modify the survey. I then created the survey in a Google Form and altered some of the questions based on grammatical errors I saw. Next, I submitted the survey to the ethics committee, and they approved my research on May 6, 2020.

The questions in the survey were topical. Each topic meant to address the participants’ understanding of cross-cultural unity. Therefore, the questions were not “yes” or “no”; instead, they were based on “equipped” or “not equipped,” ranging from 1-5 on how equipped they felt on the particular topic. Participants were urged not to answer questions based on their perception but rather on their comprehension—some of the questions varied in nature. Most questions were assessing an individual’s knowledge,

¹ See Renew Partnerships, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://renewpartnerships.org/help/inventory/>.

but some surveyed their interaction with different ethnicities. The broad categories for the survey were (1) Demographics: Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Occupation, Education, Perspective on Mercy, Membership Longevity, Language, and Church Involvement; (2) Biblical Principles Related to Race/Ethnic Relations; (3) Motivations for Building Multicultural Organization; (4) Concepts Related to Race/Ethnic Relations; (5) Skills related to Race/Ethnic Relations; (6) Race/Ethnic Relations in the United States; (7) Common Barriers for Whites People; (8) Common Barriers for People of Color; and (9) Common Barriers for Organizations.²

After I found the survey, I began to build out the syllabus for the class.³ To create a class covering the biblical call to cross-cultural unity, I first consulted the Bible and see what is said about the subject (see chap. 2). Then, I had to understand what kept Mercy Church from following the biblical call to cross-cultural unity. Chapter 3 of this project comprises my deliberations and assumptions. My primary development strategy was to address the head (what does one need to know), the heart (what does one need to feel) and the hands (what does one need to do). To accomplish this goal, the class had four components to learning: pre-teaching (video lectures on the subject), interactive discussion (large group guide lecture and discussion), learning communities (smaller groups for processing), and homework (readings and exercises).

The class covered the biblical call to cross-cultural unity (week 1), God's heart for the call (week 2), how to gain a heart for the call (week 3), and practical tools to help one embrace the call (week 4). To gauge knowledge of the biblical call for cross-cultural unity, I administered a pre-and post-survey to the class. Class participants were required to watch videos, do exercises, and readings each week before the class. The assigned book for the class was *Beyond Colorblind* by Sarah Shin. Class participants read two to

² See appendix 2.

³ See appendix 5 for Class Syllabus.

three chapters a week. Class participants watch videos from IVP series “Beyond Colorblind.”⁴ These videos followed the story line of the gospel as it relates to ethnicity: beauty, brokenness, redemption, and restoration. To get an understanding of the sociological factor’s regarding cross-cultural unity, class participants watch videos by Oliver Phillips. These videos covered: “High Power/Low Power Distance”; “Power Distance Example Video”; “Individualism/Collectivism”; “High and Low Tolerance”; and “High Context/Low Context Cultures.”⁵ Last, class participants watched two sermons: “Racial Reconciliation” by Beau Hughes⁶ and “Seeing Each Other’s Stories” by Bryan Loritts.⁷ All of the teachings were uploaded and administered through Ministry Grid for easy access.⁸

Each week, the entire class met together in a large group for instructions and focus and then broke out into smaller learnings communities and then regathered as large group for a discussion. The goal of the large group discussion was to help class participants to deepen their understanding of each week’s topic. Class participants were given a class guide with questions as they prepared for the large group discussion each week. Due to the intensity of this class, I made a rule that I could redirect the conversation

⁴ Intervarsity, “The Beyond Colorblind Campaign: Video Series,” accessed April 10, 2020, <http://2100.intervarsity.org/overview/video-series>.

⁵ See YouTube, “Oliver Phillips,” accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/user/raphaelorp/featured>. Oliver Phillips is the executive director of the Connexion Empowerment Center Inc.

⁶ Beau Hughes, “Racial Reconciliation,” sermon delivered at The Village Church, Dallas, January 17, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZM0hSsm5CI>.

⁷ Bryan Loritts, “The Gospel and Race: Seeing Each Other’s Stories,” sermon delivered at Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, Mountain View, CA, May 1, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKBK29OnCGo>.

⁸ Ministry Grid is an online platform created by Lifeway Leadership to help train and disciple members of a church. There are more than 850 pre-built courses, which allows for ministry leaders to customize their own training. <https://ministrygrid.com>.

to a healthy dialogue if the discussion disregards the rules of engagement. The following “Rules for Engagement” were guiding principles to ensure the best learning experience.⁹

1. We will treat everyone with dignity.
2. We will use “I” statements when discussing with one another.
3. We will be honest and present with ourselves, each other, and, more importantly, God.
4. We will give compassion to each other as we wrestle through our own experiences.
5. We will give respect to all parties despite our disagreements.
6. We will maintain theological integrity as we uncover a sociological issue.
7. We will maintain confidentiality about private information shared by individuals.

In addition to the video’s and chapter readings, participants completed exercises each week to help them think deeply about each subject matter. These exercises were primarily aimed at the heart. They would first do the exercise, answer heart-level questions, and then discuss within their learning communities.¹⁰ In week 1, participants completed an exercise called “Your Ethnic Story,” which helped individuals understand their ethnic heritage in light of the gospel.¹¹ Every person is made in the image of God; therefore, the exercise helped participants trace their ethnic story within the gospel narrative of beauty, brokenness, redemption, and restoration. In week 2, participants completed an exercise called “The Biblical Overview of Cross-Cultural Unity Exercise,” which helped individuals understand the biblical emphasis of the call. The exercise covered eight primary Scriptures outlining the Bible’s focus on cross-cultural unity (see chap. 2). In week 3, class

⁹ These “Rules of Engagement” were mostly borrowed from Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*, ed. J. Derek McNeil (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015).

¹⁰ Learning communities were the small groups (3-4 people) where class participants discussed and reflected on each week’s pre-teaching videos, reading, and homework before the large group discussion.

¹¹ Borrowed from IVP and Sarah Shin, “Ethnic Story Worksheet,” *InterVarsity*, December 2018, <http://mem.intervarsity.org/resources/ethnic-story-worksheet>.

participants engaged in two exercises. First was the “Samaritan Woman Exercise,” a Bible study of the passage of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. The purpose was to show Jesus’ ministry of cross-cultural engagement. The second exercise was “The Racial Awareness Exercise,” which focused on bringing racial awareness within the class participants’ everyday reality. The instructions for this exercise were for participants to address everything starting with a “racial” category, such as, “This is the white grocery store or the Asian bank.” The purpose was to show how whites typically normalize their culture and differentiate other cultures, races, and ethnicities. Lastly, in week 4, class participants were to complete “The Lament Exercise,” which focused on individual lament. Often when talking about race and justice, individuals want to move into immediate action, yet lamenting is a healthy action step in pursuing cross-cultural unity.

A vital component of the class was a diverse group of people. Therefore, I organized the learning communities that were led by a hand-picked facilitator. The facilitators agreed on the role description that I sent them.¹² Each learning community needed to have at least one person of color in each group. I firmly believe that proximity breeds empathy, but distance breeds suspicion. Therefore, each person needed to share their stories and journey.¹³ This model is called contact theory, which suggests that relationships will improve in conflicting groups when they have meaningful contact. Contact theory must be mutually beneficial within a learning environment that offers multiples avenues for processing and interaction.¹⁴

¹² See appendix 6 for the Facilitator Guide.

¹³ Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 130-42. Rah urges for the power of story in cross-cultural communication.

¹⁴ McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 33-34. McNeil suggests that, if done right, Contact Theory will break stereotypes, and true meaningful relationships will be formed.

Implementation

Expert Panel

The second goal of the project was to develop a curriculum based on the results of the survey. The class curriculum priority was to address the misunderstandings of cross-cultural unity from Scripture at Mercy Church and to address some sociological factors that cause disunity. As stated in the research methodology, an expert panel accessed the strengths and teachability of the class. Therefore, on May 3, 2020, I email four pastor/ministry leaders from differing vantage points in the cause of unity detailing the request for them to be a part of my expert panel.¹⁵ Within one day they all agreed to be on the panel and requested the materials for review. I then sent them my research profile, which included main sections from my proposal, the survey, and the rubric, and I sent them the class guide with all the videos linked in the document for the class.

Then, on May 10, 2020, we met via Zoom, I described the class and the rationale of its composition and explained thoroughly the expectations, which were to (1) read over the abridged introduction; (2) read over the class materials to get a comprehension of the material; (3) read over the survey to get a good grasp of the questions; (4) grade the class material against the questions using the rubric; and (5) have another meeting to discuss findings via Zoom. All four agreed to those terms and understood the expectations. We then decided to meet on May 26, 2020, to discuss their findings and their evaluation of the class using the rubric. The rubric addressed the biblical support for the project, the

¹⁵ (1) Dusty Thompson (DMin) is the Lead and Founding Pastor of Redeemer Church in Lubbock, Texas, and the South-Central Director for the Acts 29 Network. Thompson is a white man who leads a majority white church and is heavily involved in planting churches both domestically and internationally. (2) Spence Shelton (MDiv) is my lead pastor, and aspires to transition Mercy into a multicultural church. Shelton was part of the Summit Church in Durham, NC, which began the transition into a multicultural church. (3) Jason Davila (DEdMin) was formerly a pastor, and previously a leadership consultant with Leadership Network in Dallas. Davila is both Latino and Mexican-American, and he also has been active in helping churches think well on this topic since he has worked at both predominantly and respectively Latino and White churches. (4) Jamaal Williams (DEdMin) is the lead pastor of Sojourn Midtown in Louisville, which is a multicultural church. Williams previously led a predominately African-American church and has done extensive research in the areas of race, racial justice, and diversity.

class usability in other church contexts, and how well the class served the participants with understanding and applying the content. The panel evaluated the class using a scale of 1 to 4, with “1” as unsatisfactory, contrasted to “4” as most satisfactory. The expert panel’s varying perspectives gave me a broad viewpoint on the class. A more in-depth explanation of the expert panel’s responses is in the evaluation component of this chapter.

Class Promotion: Beyond the Color Barrier

A significant component of the project was for the class participants go through the class. The class content was finished on April 30 and was ready for promotion. When Ahmaud Arbery was murdered, and subsequent events happened around the same time in our country, the leadership of Mercy began searching for answers to help the church understand the racial climax in our country.¹⁶ The church then promoted the class during the Sunday morning stream on May 10. Within two days, the class filled up and I closed the registration.

The Class: Beyond the Color Barrier

As noted, class participants began the course by filling out the survey to discover their comprehension of cross-cultural unity. The results of the survey are in the evaluation component of this chapter. Each Monday, we met via Zoom from 7:30 p.m.–9:00 p.m. for four consecutive weeks in June. The class began each week in prayer, and then we discussed the main objective for the day. We dialogued for then minutes, and then broke into learning communities using the Zoom breakout rooms. Learning communities lasted thirty minutes. The facilitator guided their group, and I spent five minutes in each learning community since there were six of them. I interacted in each

¹⁶ Ahmaud Arberry, a black man, was innocently murdered by three white men while running in a neighborhood. See article by Theresa Waldrop, “Three Men Indicted in the Death of Amhard Arberry,” CNN, June 25, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/24/us/ahmaud-arbery-grand-jury-indictment/index.html>.

learning community; I took notes to make sure I highlighted any misunderstandings within the lecture and large group discussion time.

The large group discussion time was formidable for the class participants. Each week we went through some of the questions in the guide. Often, we only got through a few questions because of the engaging dialogue. The topics for each week were in this sequential order: (1) Understanding God's Heart for Cross-Cultural Unity; (2) Understanding the Biblical Call to Cross-Cultural Unity; (3) Understanding the Sociological Factors in Pursuing Unity; and (4) Learning How to Be an Advocate in Pursuing Unity.

Each week, multiple individuals came to some type of revelation on the weekly topic, whether it was personal, sociological, or theological. Often, tears flowed from various persons because many had never shared their thoughts openly, or they came to the realization of the biblical call for cross-cultural unity. Therefore, there were moments of lamenting and processing as eyes were opened.

Project Completion

The last class was completed on June 22, 2020. Afterward, on June 23, 2020, I sent out the survey as a post-evaluation to the participants to assess their growth of learning due to the class. The survey was intended to collect pre- and post-quantitative data from the class participants. Next are my findings from the survey.

Evaluation

Expert Panel Feedback

An essential factor in assessing the success of this project was to have an expert panel evaluate the class according to the rubric (see appendix 1). All scores from the rubric indicated in the exemplary or sufficient level as displayed on table 1, therefore representing the panel's approval. The areas that showed less than exemplary marks were

adjusted for the class. The panel comments during the discussion were helpful in strengthening the class. They additionally made comments on the rubric scores.¹⁷

The three common critiques I received from the panel were that there was too much content. To remedy that, I eliminated some context of the content and reduced some of the redundant questions. Due to the impersonal nature of Zoom, they urged me to make it clear that class participation was necessary. To make it more personal, they recommended having people share from their learning communities in the large group discussion. Those learnings ended up being very powerful.

Table 1. Expert panel rubric results

Rubric Criteria	1	2	3	4
The content of the class is faithful to Scripture.	0	0	0	4
The concept of cross-cultural unity within Scripture is clearly interpreted and explained thoroughly.	0	0	0	4
The class sessions and resources helped address the misunderstandings of cross-cultural unity assessed in the survey.	0	0	1	3
The content of the class is thorough, given the time constraints for its delivery.	0	0	0	4
The content of the class curriculum is clear and understandable.	0	0	1	3
The content of the class curriculum is presented in a logical format.	0	0	1	3
The class can be tailored for other churches with similar demographics to Mercy.	0	0	1	3
The class is beneficial for the church present and the dawning of the Next Evangelicalism.	0	0	0	4
The class is fulfilling the goal of increasing the knowledge of cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church.	0	0	0	4
The class presented an understanding of both individual and corporate responsibility for cross-cultural unity.	0	0	0	4

The expert panel also observed that the content assumed a certain level of literacy and assumed an understanding of class participants background.¹⁸ The expert panel recommended the literacy level to be a delimitation within the project. They then

¹⁷ The scoring options on the rubric were 1= insufficient; 2=requires attention; 3= sufficient; and 4=exemplary.

¹⁸ For an introductory understanding, see Trillia J. Newbell, *United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity* (Chicago: Moody, 2014).

mentioned that the survey was broad. They did not think that observation a negative nor positive, but had some concerns. Last, they were concerned about the amount of content in comparison to the time constraints. Ideally, they thought the class should be extended for better comprehension.

Overall, they thought the work was strong, the content was robust, and the content was faithful to Scripture.¹⁹ The expert panel mentioned that the course text, *Beyond Colorblind*, authored by Sarah Shin, did a great job of disarming all cultures, but particularly people of color. Regarding the class, they thought the open-ended questions were the way to go. However, they anticipated that class participants would diverge from the main point if I was not clear on goal regarding the open-end questions.

Survey Results

The first goal of this project was to create a survey to assess Mercy Church's understanding of cross-cultural unity and administer it to class participants. Twenty-nine students signed up, but only 25 participated in the "Beyond the Color Barrier" class for all four weeks, and 25 were included in the assessment.

After the class, a post-class survey, which was the same as the pre-class survey, was administered to participants. The emphasis of this research was to inquire about the knowledge of Mercy Church's desire for cross-cultural unity compared to its comprehension. I choose to do a mixture of random sampling and representative sampling. Therefore, participants in this class represented a sample size of Mercy's church' age and ethnic diversity.²⁰

¹⁹ See appendix 4 for expert panel feedback.

²⁰ See appendix 7 for the demographic breakdown.

Table 2. Demographic information

Age						
18-28	29-34	39-54	55-67	75 or over		
13	6	2	4	0		
Gender						
Male			Female			
11			14			
Ethnicity						
Native Am.	Asian	Caucasian	African Am.	Mex. Am.	Latin Am.	Multiethnic
1	1	18	5	0	0	1

Of the 25 participants, there were slightly more women than men in the class. Regarding the age breakdown, 18-28 range made 52 percent of the class participants, 29-34 made up 24 percent, and the 55-67 age group made up 16 percent. The ethnic breakdown also represents Mercy’s larger population. Around 72 percent of the church is Caucasian, while American Americans/Blacks make the second-largest population at 20 percent, with remaining ethnicities making up 8 percent. There were not any Mexican Americans nor Latin Americans in the class, though this represents the larger population of Mercy having few Mexican and Latin Americans in fellowship. In addition, Mercy does not have Mexican or Latin Americans represented in any layer of its leadership.

Pre-Test

The results from the pre-survey proved my suspicions—there was more variance in questions among the Biblical Principles Related compared to Race/Ethnic Relations section. Furthermore, in the Race/Ethnic Relations section, the average score was low, and all of the scores did not deviate far from the mean —thereby the class participants felt the least equipped in this area. Table 3 represents the highest mean score with a low standard deviation regarding the pre-test. The average mean score in table 3 was 3.55, with an average standard deviation of .93, which tells that the participants’ results were spread out.

Questions 14-18 all have further standard deviation from the mean, which reveals that most participants either feel very equipped regarding this topic or they feel very under-equipped. However, within the concepts: race and ethnic relations section,

there was not much deviation from the mean score. Overall, this means that class participants felt unequipped to have intrapersonal conversations regarding race, culture, and ethnicity. Table 4 represents the lowest section within the concept component of the of the pre-test.

Table 3. Pre-test results for biblical principles related to race/ethnic relations

Survey Question	Mean Score	Standard Dev.
14. Unity among Christians is an overflow of the perfect unity in the Trinity. The Trinity is our standard and model of integration. Therefore, our goal is interdependent, loving relationships rather than mere tolerance or statistical diversity.	3.40	.82
15. Sin and spiritual death are the root cause of all divisions and conflict between individuals, ethnic groups, and nations. A spiritual problem requires a spiritual solution. Training, dialogue, and good intentions are not enough. It is only through Christ living in us that we can experience true unity and peace with one another.	3.76	.83
16. God opposes unity that is focused on exalting humanity or human institutions. The ultimate goal of our unity must be the exaltation of God's glory and not the glory of our leadership or organization.	3.44	.82
17. God commands us to treat outsiders and the vulnerable (e.g., widows, orphans, foreigners) with justice and special kindness. Providing "open doors" is not enough. We must be intentional about integrating outsiders, just as Christ was intentional about integrating us. When we serve those on the outside, we are serving Christ.	3.64	1.08
18. Our identity in Christ takes precedent over all of our other identities, including our ethnic identity. But the Bible does not promote "color blindness" or trying to ignore cultural differences. Ethnic diversity is good because God creates and sustains it. Therefore, we should value our ethnic differences rather than trying to ignore them.	3.52	1.08

Table 4. Pre-test results for concepts to race/ethnic relations

Survey Question	Mean Score	Standard Dev.
25. Concepts: race, ethnicity, culture, nationality. How are they different? How are they related?	2.48	1.16
26. Concepts: systemic barriers, personal barriers. How are they different? How are they related? What causes and perpetuates them?	2.44	.96
27. Concepts: racism, prejudice, implicit bias, white dominance, white structural advantage, white normative culture. What are they? How are they related? What causes and perpetuates them?	2.52	1
28. Concepts: assimilation, code-switching, tokenism. What are they? How are they related? What causes and perpetuates them? Are they helpful?	2.24	1.05
29. Concepts: 1st generation immigrant, 1.5 generation immigrant, 2nd generation immigrant, 3rd generation immigrant, third culture kid. What is the difference? What are some ways each group can add strength to multiethnic organizations? What are some common challenges for each group in multiethnic organizations?	1.92	.86

The contrast between the biblical knowledge sections and the concept sections is the reason the class needed to happen. Class participants affirmed the biblical categories for cross-cultural unity, but the scores for the concepts section scored statistically lower than the other sections. Essentially, the pre-test proved a desire to increase the knowledge of the biblical call for cross-cultural unity, but there was a disconnect between desire and knowledge.

Comparing the Test

After teaching the class, I administered a post-survey, which asked the same set of questions and items as the pre-survey. With the use of a *t*-test, I compared the results of the pre- and post-survey.²¹ Using inferential statistics, the *t*-test for the dependent variables survey demonstrated significant growth of class participants due to the class. The results from the pre- and post-class survey and the *t*-test dependent variables are shown in table 5.

Table 5. Cross-cultural survey results

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	Pre-Total	Post-Total
Mean	122.08	172.24
Variance	341.16	258.94
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.048297491	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	24	
t Stat	-10.49207085	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000000000095	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.90806E-10	
t Critical two-tail	2.063898562	

²¹ A *t*-test measures two dependent variables to provide a statistical evaluation of the class efficacy.

When the two surveys are compared, a few interesting observations may be noted. First, the standard deviation for all of the research questions was far apart, indicating that the questions asked were helpful and thought-provoking. The average mean for the pre-survey was 3.05 compared to the standard deviation, which was 1.03. For the post-survey, the average mean score was 4.32 compared to the standard deviation was 0.71. What that indicates there was a statistical increase in learning from the pre- and post-survey.

Second, for the post-test, questions 32 and 34 stood out. Both questions had higher standard deviations than the rest. Table 6 shows the average mean and standard deviation for both questions.

Table 6. Questions 32 and 34 post-average mean and standard deviation

Survey Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
32. "I am concerned I may lose part of my cultural identity in multicultural environments."	3.92	1.08
34. "I'm afraid I will be considered a sellout by individuals in my race/ethnic group."	3.64	1.08

I performed a pivot test to understand the results better, and I initially thought that the older population was the problem. To understand the data, I went to Joe Harrod, the statistician for the seminary, to see if I was reading the data correctly. He graciously helped me and used my results as a class example using investigator triangulation.

Regarding question 32, I found that the middle age group had the lowest mean score.²² Thereby, I had to reject that hypothesis, concluding that the older age group was the problem. The 29-38 age group had the lowest mean and the highest standard deviation which then caused me to look deeper into the question to see why. Then I counted six people in this age group, and those six were the source of most of the lower mean scores

²² See appendix 3.

and standard deviations. Then I looked at these individuals' ethnicity. I noticed that the lowest average score came from one participant who skewed the average. What can be gathered from my observation that the mean is susceptible to outliers. The average score to the question was lower because of one outlier. One person brought the numbers down, making that person an outlier. I looked a deeper into the one participant and realized that respondent 25 was the outlier. This individual was an immigrant ravaged by war and has been neutralized as a citizen. I knew going in that this person's situation was going to be a challenge for people with that type of experience, but now there is data backing that up.

Then I look into question 34, as I uncovered the data, I realized that class participants scored higher than the pre-survey. Still, the standard deviation was likewise more elevated than the other scores. As I compared ethnicity and age to those scores using a pivot table, the results revealed that African Americans felt like they will be betraying their own culture if they shared their beliefs about what the Bible says about ethnicity—proving my hypothesis that African Americans carry a more substantial burden at Mercy than any other ethnicity in this conversation.²³

Reproducibility

This project was intended to impact the members of Mercy Church as a way to help them understand the biblical call to cross-cultural unity. Pastors from other churches and organizations can use this class to equip their churches. Many pastors have shared that this class has already been pivotal in bringing about reconciliation within their churches. To make this class more reproducible, I could create training for those who want to teach this class at their church. The videos are already open for anyone to use, and I would need to modify the class for public use.

²³ See appendix 3.

Conclusion

As an expert in the field, Harrod confirmed that the data was not by chance, but the class presented a statistical improvement of those who participated in the class. Therefore, there was an increase in understanding the biblical call for cross-cultural unity for class participants. After the project, class participants understood the four barriers for cross-cultural unity: (1) colorblindness; (2) the lack of ethnic awareness; (3) misunderstanding of racism; and (4) misunderstandings of biblical justice. In knowing the challenges, both theologically and sociologically, participants felt better equipped to have conversations with their friends and family at Mercy.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The methodology and implementation presented in chapter 4 showed that the class was successful for those who participated in the class to increase their knowledge of cross-cultural unity. Through this project, the four barriers to cross-cultural unity were addressed, leading class participants gain biblical conviction in becoming culturally competent ministers of the gospel. In this chapter, the project's purpose, goals, strengths, weaknesses, what I would do differently, theological reflections, and personal reflections are discussed.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The stated purpose of this project was to establish a class to increase the biblical knowledge of cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church. Cross-cultural unity is not conformity to the majority culture at Mercy; rather, it expresses the diverse kingdom of God (Rev 7:9). The kingdom of God is a beautiful locale where the saints gather from all four corners to enjoy each other before God.

Mercy Church desires to be multicultural church that reaches the diverse city of Charlotte with the gospel, with the hope that members will carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. Participants learned that a true understanding of cross-cultural unity leads to fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) and Great Commandment (Luke 10:25-29). In light of this, the purpose of the project was met, and participants grew in their knowledge of the biblical call of cross-cultural unity.¹

¹ See table 5 in chap 4.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Four goals served as objectives to ensure the success of the purpose of the project. Each goal built on the previous one and happened in sequential order. The first goal was to create a survey to assess Mercy Church's understanding of cross-cultural unity. After much research, I modified a survey created by Renew Partnerships, and this goal was accomplished. The details of the survey can be found in appendix 2.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum based on the results of the survey. I designed the class curriculum to address some critical misunderstandings about cross-cultural unity. The primary problem in discussing issues of cross-cultural unity is that many individuals address these issues primarily first experientially and subjectively. I wanted to ground class participants' understanding in the Bible; therefore, the entire class was heavily rooted in Scriptures.

The expert panel was incredibly helpful. Each individual gave a unique perspective and strengthened the class overall. Their feedback was both affirming and clarifying. They affirmed that this class was needed within our current times and that I wrote it much grace and thoroughness. They helped me clarify areas that needed to be cleaned up to make the class more engaging. We all agreed that, due to the pandemic circumstances, there were some limiting factors to the project, but they challenged me to take notes throughout the teaching of the class to understand how to teach a class on Zoom.

My co-workers at Mercy additionally also gave their feedback and observations on the class. Their comments were not necessarily content-oriented, like the expert panel. Instead, they helped me think through the promotion of the class. They helped me think through the wording of each topic and to communicate the necessity of the class to a broad audience.

The third goal was to teach the class curriculum through a four-week class at Mercy Church to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural unity. Overall, class participants vocally affirmed that they grew a lot from the class. Many confessed that they never

really stopped to consider what God had to say about cross-cultural unity from the Scriptures. As the class progressed, participants' confidence increased, and the class went longer in each session due to active engagement in discussion.

The fourth goal was to evaluate the results from the class to assess the impact on the attendees. A *t*-test for dependent samples showed a significant positive change in participants increased knowledge ($t_{(24)} = 10.492, p < .0001$).² Thus, I have achieved my goal of increasing the knowledge of the biblical call for cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church, Charlotte, NC. The results from the pre- and post-class survey and the *t*-test dependent variables can be found at table 5 (see chap 4.)

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of this project was its theological emphasis. Each week participants continued to discuss how their eyes have been awakened to the beauty of God's design for diversity from the Scriptures. One class participant had an MDiv in systematic theology, and he told the class that he never made some of the biblical connections that the class presented. He, along with a few others, previously worked in full-time ministry, and this was their first interaction with the Bible in this way.

The second strength of the project was the learning communities. These smaller groups within the class allowed for participants to express their thoughts and learnings. Each group was fairly diverse in age, gender, and race, which allowed for contrasting experiences.

The third strength of the project was the accessibility of the class. Due to COVID-19, the class was forced to go online. Overall, this experience led to constant

² This number is the *t*-stat or absolute value. Since it is larger than the *t*-critical one-tail value of 1.71088208 and the critical two-tail value of 2.063898562, it is determined that the class intervention made a positive difference in the knowledge and conviction of the participants.

class participation. Additionally, since the class demanded participants to share sensitive information, having to do the class from their home's comforts gave them security.

The last strength of the class was the class effectiveness. I was able to analyze the data and during my Applied Empirical Research course with my professor in front of the class. Together, we were able to carefully examine the data and observe the significant learnings from class participants empirically. I have corresponded with individuals who are friends of the class participants, and they were amazed by their transformation in four short weeks.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project had three weaknesses. First, the survey was the weakest part of the project. In hindsight, I wish I would have taken Applied Empirical Research before I executed my project. There were too many questions on the survey that I did not need to ask for the data I was trying to gather. I wish I would have had more insight on how to conduct survey research as it related to the content of the class.

The other weakness of the project was the time constraint for the class, which was both a weakness and limitation. In wisdom from Haste and Hughes, to complete the project, the class needed only to be four weeks. Having this time constraint cause me to take a semester worth of content and put it into four weeks. Overall, most class participants got through the material and understood why we were covering so much content, but if the class would have been longer, there would have been more learning and comprehension among participants.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic caused another challenge, requiring me to move the class to Zoom. Although there were some positives to meeting over zoom, the negative was the lack of body communication. In tense conversations and discussion, it is helpful to read others' body language. In addition, I was not able to practice some of the techniques in week 3 that relate to power distance.

What I Would Do Differently

There are four things I wish I would have done differently as I approach this project. First, I wish I had a control group that did not take the class to observe and measure their data against class participants. Having a control group would have strengthened my research and findings.

Second, although I received positive results from the survey, I wish I would have written my own survey. After taking Applied Empirical Research, I realized that the survey I used was extremely complex, and I did not have the research skills to interpret some of the data. For example, some questions were double-barreled. The research group that created these questions was intentional in their crafting of the questions.

Third, to strengthen the project, I would have spent more time evaluating the pre-survey results and crafting the content to serve class participants better. I sent the survey upon signing up for the class. I looked at the data, but I did not do much with it. In hindsight, it would have been helpful if I took notes from the survey to focus on low scoring questions.

Fourth, I realized from the first class that I needed to secure an administrator for the class. I was entirely too busy to follow-up with people on the logistics side of things. And during Zoom, it is difficult to communicate and work the platform at the same time. Therefore, at times I needed to regroup to focus on the content instead of the logistics.

Then last, I would change the length of the class to eight weeks instead of four weeks. I would have liked to have alternating weeks between the class and the learning communities for class participants to process the information more thoroughly. During the class, each week, I would go between each learning community private room to listen in on their discussion, and most often, when it was time to enter back into the large group discussion, they were halfway through the discussion questions. Giving adequate time for learning communities would have strengthened class participants' understanding of the material.

Theological Reflections

I have three theological reflections. The first theological reflection that moved me as I studied the Old Testament, particularly in Genesis, is that I was amazed at God's design for diversity from the beginning. Growing up, I was taught that God loves all kinds of people. Then, as I matured in the faith, I based my understanding of diversity in Revelation 7:9—thereby making Revelation a proof text as to why the church should pursue diversity. However, as I journeyed through the Old Testament, I realized diversity is rooted in God's character and then expressed upon created. Revelation is a sublime text, but diversity is rooted in creation before the Fall of humanity, rather than a by-product.

The second theological reflection is that cross-cultural unity is not a blending of races or ethnicity but an expression of the kingdom. Unity is not a human achievement; instead, it was achieved at the cross. The church often thinks that it needs to fight for unity, but the church operates in unity from the cross. In John 17:20-21, Jesus prayed for the church to be one as he and the Father are one. Therefore, oneness is a heavenly reality demonstrated on upon the earth. God gave the command through the apostle Paul to operate as one new man (Eph 2:14-16), but in a new man there are different body parts (1 Cor 12). Therefore, for Mercy Church to operate in one new man, all ethnic groups are called to have mutual responsibility within the body. This posture calls for all ethnic groups to own their responsibility in both their sin and their strengths, and to think "kingdomly." The result of thinking kingdomly is that everyone accepts that they are sinners and owns their responsibility in the call to cross-cultural unity. It stands as a call for everyone to hold each other accountable toward kingdom initiatives, but it does not bypass each other's sins. Living as kingdom citizens calls each ethnic group to embrace their strengths and leverage them for the good of the church and the kingdom.

Last, the incarnation of Christ gives the church a healthy model to understand how to operate in light of the unity purchased for the church at the cross. First John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us." This truth sets me free. Christ came to me,

loves me while I am a sinner, and died for me (Rom 5:8). Christ was different from me but became human and wrestled with the same things I wrestle with, but he did not sin. He loved those who were hard to love, and he had compassion for those who were misunderstood—Jesus lived an otherworldly life. The incarnation of Christ living on the earth is counter-cultural to every culture, but Jesus was not culturally exclusive and wanted everyone to become Jewish, which is primarily why Jesus fulfilled the Jewish cultural laws (Gal 2). However, he came to take a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation and make one people united in him (Gal 3:28; Rev 7:9.)

Personal Reflections

My heart changed during this project. I went into this project hopeless. Primarily due to my in-depth study of the topic broadly and due to my own experiences. I have been on staff at majority-white churches for a decade. These churches are god-fearing, gospel-preaching churches, and I have loved both of my lead pastors, and I have a friendship with both. However, the challenge they and I have felt is that this vision of cross-cultural unity from the Scriptures is impossible.

As all have examined, America's racial climate has given many a sense of hopelessness. But I have studied this topic over the last few years and my heart has changed. I have hope because unity is not something to achieve; it is something that was accomplished. Christ tore down the wall of hostility between God and humanity and humanity and itself. In tearing down the hostility, the church is called into oneness within the fellowship of the trinity. God's people can walk in oneness and understand each other's journey as they fight to walk as God's people. Some of the problems I had in understanding unity were that my heart was too callous toward white people. I was angry at their ignorance and lack of recognition of their compliance in the issue, but the Holy Spirit showed me that I was causing more disunity than unity. I could critique what I saw without letting emotions rule my observations. I learned that any good thing that turned

into the ultimate thing had become idolatry. Beforehand, I would retreat and not say anything but have now learned to be “healthily exploratory.”

Another personal reflection is that I do not have to pick a side when having discussions with both whites and blacks. I have often been considered an “outsider,” to be both of those races because I was too black for my white friends and too white for my black friends, leaving me as a cultural nomad. This project helped me realize that I do not have to pick sides, because I can choose the kingdom. As a kingdom citizen, the only side I have to decide is God’s side. As I look at God’s kingdom and explore the kingdom principles, I am able to understand the realities that I was experiencing healthily. Primarily, God has spoken to me—he loves me as a black man and loves my passion for my culture, but he does not love when I choose hate over love. To be clear, love is not divorce from critique because that is blind love, but God has called me into a love that accepts someone in all of their flaws. When that happens, I can engage in conversations and contend for the kingdom. It does not matter what people think about my approach because I am aiming to please Jesus (Gal 1:10). God has given me the vision to see that both parties have a call to mutual responsibility, and all must embrace that call.

My studies benefited Mercy Church, but have also blessed the church at large within the United States. Since working on this project, many local and national organizations and churches have reached out to me to ask for help thinking through how they can become an organization or church that reflects God’s diverse kingdom. I have always dreamed of equipping African American ministers for effective gospel ministry, but I never dreamed of equipping people from all ethnicities for gospel ministry.

Conclusion

To increase the biblical knowledge of cross-cultural unity, Mercy Church must first gain biblical conviction around cross-cultural unity. From that, the church can address the four barriers of colorblindness, lack of ethnic identity, lack of understanding of racism, and the lack of conviction around biblical justice. Once those matters are adequately

addressed, Mercy can then get R.E.A.L about making changes to become a multicultural church. My hope is that the work accomplished on this project would lead to the flourishing of Mercy Church and churches within the United States. My prayer is the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-26:

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

APPENDIX 1

RUBRIC FOR THE CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY CLASS

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Support					
The content of the class is faithful to Scripture.					
The concept of cross-cultural within Scripture is clearly interpreted and explained thoroughly.					
Content					
The class sessions and resources helped address the misunderstandings of cross-cultural unity assessed in the survey.					
The content of the class is thorough, given the time constraints for its delivery.					
Clarity					
The content of the class curriculum is clear and understandable.					
The content of the class curriculum is presented in a logical format.					
Scope					
The class can be tailored for other churches with similar demographics to Mercy.					
The class is beneficial for the church present and the dawning of the Next Evangelicalism.					
Methodology					
The class is fulfilling the goal of increasing the knowledge of cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church.					
The class presented an understanding of both individual and corporate responsibility for cross-cultural unity.					

APPENDIX 2

CROSS-CULTURAL SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your personal understanding of cross-cultural unity as a member of Mercy Church.¹ This research is being conducted by Pastor Rashard Barnes for purposes of the research focuses on the membership of Mercy Church: evaluating the current racial, ethnic, and cultural comprehension for dissertation research. In this research, you will be presented with a set of questions in assessing your understanding of cross-cultural unity. There is not a right or wrong answer; this is a not test. Please do not spend more than 10 seconds on each question. The value of the assessment is based on your honesty and clarity on each question. To be more specific, individuals try to answer questions based on where they want to be, while some try to remain modest. My encouragement is that you respond as honestly as you can.

Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By your completion of this cross-cultural comprehension survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. Email address _____
2. Do you agree to participate in this research?
 - a. I agree to participate
 - b. I do not agree to participate

Background Questions

Please complete the following background questions. All information will be kept confidential, has no bearing on your score.

3. Enter your full name _____

¹ This project used the Renew Partnerships Self-Inventory to survey Mercy Church members. Permission from Chad Brennan on April 7, 2020. Renew Partnership, "Self-Inventory," accessed July 1, 2020, <https://renewpartnerships.org/help/inventory/>.

4. Gender
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

5. Age
 - a. 18-28
 - b. 29-38
 - c. 39-54
 - d. 55-67
 - e. 68-75
 - f. 75 or over

6. Ethnicity: Please describe your ethnic origin. Please select all that applies.
 - a. Native American
 - b. Asian
 - c. Caucasian/European
 - d. Black/African American
 - e. Black/African
 - f. Mexican American
 - g. Latin American
 - h. Other:

7. Occupation: What best describes the nature of your occupation? *Check all that apply.*
 - a. Stay-at-Home Parent
 - b. Construction/Labor/Factory
 - c. Sales/Service
 - d. Clerical
 - e. Professional
 - f. Management
 - g. Student
 - h. Administrative
 - i. Agricultural
 - j. Technical/Computer Science/Data Science
 - k. Trades/Craft
 - l. Retired
 - m. Medical
 - n. Non-Profit
 - o. Other:

8. Education: What is your highest level of formal education? (mark only one)
 - a. Some High School
 - b. High School diploma
 - c. Some College
 - d. College Degree
 - e. Graduate Degree
 - f. Post-Graduate Degree

9. Perspective about Mercy Church: What best describes your feelings towards Mercy Church? *Check all that apply.*
- Enthusiastic
 - Blessed
 - Satisfied
 - Indifferent
 - Concerned
 - Burdened
 - Disappointed
10. Membership Longevity: How long have you been a member of Mercy Church?
- less than one year
 - 2 years
 - 3-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - Not a member
11. Language: What is your native language?
- English
 - Spanish
 - French
 - German
 - Arabic
 - Chinese
 - Other:
12. Language: How many languages do you speak?
- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4 or more
 - 13.
13. Involvement: How many hours on average per week, do you spend serving at Mercy Church (i.e. teaching a bible study, leading a community group, serving on Sunday's, etc.)?
- None
 - 1-2
 - 2-3
 - 3-4
 - 5 or more

CROSS-CULTURAL SURVEY ASSESSMENT

Please note, it will take around 10 minutes to complete the assessment survey. Therefore, if you do not have that amount of time to complete the assessment in one sitting, I ask that you do it at a later time. Your accurate responses are critical in taking the survey in one session.

The questions will vary in form. Some questions are based on your personal understanding, while some are based on how you interact with others. We are offering a class (4-week) based on this survey called Beyond the Color Barrier, over the summer. If you intend to take that class my recommendation is for you to save your answer.

Throughout the assessment, you are going to be asked questions that will make you want to self-project as it will talk about race/ethnicity/culture. Your temptation is to try to answer the answers to how you will like to be perceived. My request is you answer the questions according to your understanding of the concept or skill. Keep in mind, overestimating your level of comprehension will not help you grow as a disciple of Jesus. This assessment is meant to help you grow.

*Each question will be measures from 1-5 determining if you feel equipped or not equipped on the topic.

Biblical Principles Related to Race/Ethnic Relations

The following are a few of the many biblical principles that can guide our efforts to promote healthy race/ethnic relations. Please answer how equipped you feel to teach and apply these principles.

14. Unity among Christians is an overflow of the perfect unity in the Trinity. The Trinity is our standard and model of integration. Therefore, our goal is interdependent, loving relationships rather than mere tolerance or statistical diversity.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

15. Sin and spiritual death are the root cause of all divisions and conflict between individuals, ethnic groups, and nations. A spiritual problem requires a spiritual solution. Training, dialogue, and good intentions are not enough. It is only through Christ living in us that we can experience true unity and peace with one another.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

16. God opposes unity that is focused on exalting humanity or human institutions. The ultimate goal of our unity must be the exaltation of God's glory and not the glory of our leadership or organization.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

17. God commands us to treat outsiders and the vulnerable (e.g., widows, orphans, foreigners) with justice and special kindness. Providing "open doors" is not enough. We must be intentional about integrating outsiders, just as Christ was intentional about integrating us. When we serve those on the outside, we are serving Christ.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

18. Our identity in Christ takes precedent over all of our other identities, including our ethnic identity. But the Bible does not promote "color blindness" or trying to ignore cultural differences. Ethnic diversity is good because God creates and sustains it. Therefore, we should value our ethnic differences rather than trying to ignore them.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

Motivations for Building a Multicultural Organization

The following are a few of the many things that can motivate our efforts to promote healthy race/ethnic relations. Please answer how equipped you feel to apply these motivations in your own life and with other individuals.

19. Building a healthy, multicultural organization helps us to advance the gospel by showing the world the unifying power of the gospel. Segregated Christian organizations can unintentionally give the impression that the Bible condones, or even promotes, race/ethnic divisions.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

20. Building a healthy, multicultural organization allows us to form diverse relationships that enrich our lives and help us to grow closer to Christ.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

21. Building a healthy, multicultural organization adds individuals with new perspectives, gifts, and relational connections that can help us to more effectively minister to the physical and spiritual needs in our community.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

22. Building a healthy, multicultural organization helps us to promote inclusion and racial justice in our society. Segregated Christian organizations can unintentionally perpetuate race/ethnic divisions and injustice.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

23. Building a healthy, multicultural organization is essential for the effectiveness and sustainability of our organization. If we do not adapt to the changing needs and demographics in our society, we risk becoming irrelevant and unsustainable.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

24. Control Question: For control purposes select, "Texas" as your favorite state.
 - a. North Carolina
 - b. New York
 - c. Texas
 - d. California
 - e. Hawaii

Concepts Related to Race/Ethnic Relations

The following are a few essential concepts related to promoting healthy race/ethnic relations. Please answer how equipped you feel to understand these concepts and teach them to others.

25. Concepts: race, ethnicity, culture, nationality. How are they different? How are they related?
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

26. Concepts: systemic barriers, personal barriers. How are they different? How are they related? What causes and perpetuates them?
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

27. Concepts: racism, prejudice, implicit bias, white dominance, white structural advantage, white normative culture. What are they? How are they related? What causes and perpetuates them?
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

28. Concepts: assimilation, code-switching, tokenism. What are they? How are they related? What causes and perpetuates them? Are they helpful?
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

29. Concepts: 1st generation immigrant, 1.5 generation immigrant, 2nd generation immigrant, 3rd generation immigrant, third culture kid. What is the difference? What are some ways each group can add strength to multi-ethnic organizations? What are some common challenges for each group in multi-ethnic organizations?
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

Skills Related to Race/Ethnic Relations

The following are a few essential skills related to promoting healthy race/ethnic relations. Please answer how equipped you feel to apply these skills and teach them to others.

30. I understand cultural differences (e.g., individualism/collectivism, clock/event time, high/low power distance, high/low context). And, I can identify and accommodate cultural differences (e.g., I change my leadership approach when working with individuals with a high-power distance cultural perspective.).
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

31. I avoid stereotypes and inaccurate assumptions about a person based on their race/ethnicity (e.g., She must be collectivistic because she is Asian American. He must be individualistic because he is Anglo American.).
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

32. I avoid making negative comments and jokes about race/ethnic groups. If I am around someone who makes a negative comment or joke about a race/ethnic group, I can address it in a productive way.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

33. I avoid asking someone to serve as a spokesperson for their entire race/ethnic group (e.g., How do black people feel about ___?) I realize that no one can speak for their entire race/ethnic group and that asking them to do so can be offensive.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

34. When cross-cultural misunderstandings and conflicts arise, I am willing and able to work with others and make sacrifices in order to find a productive solution.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

Race/Ethnic Realities in the U.S.

The following are a few of the realities that powerfully affect our efforts to promote healthy race/ethnic relations. Please answer how equipped you feel to understand these realities teach them to others.

35. Current race/ethnic dynamics in the U.S. flow from our history. We must understand our past to effectively address our present realities and challenges. U.S. history is full of contradictions regarding race/ethnicity. E.g., The Declaration of Independence stated, "all men are created equal", but over 70% of the men who signed the declaration were slaveholders.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

36. White European colonialists formed the U.S. based on a system of white dominance that maintained power and privilege among white people and prevented upward class mobility by people of color. That system of white dominance continues to have a powerful influence in our society.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

37. Throughout U.S. history, people of color have been systematically oppressed through overt acts of injustice (e.g., resettlement, slavery, Jim Crow, internment camps, incarceration) and more subtle acts of discrimination (e.g., housing segregation, unequal education, employment bias, predatory loans, microaggressions)
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

38. Historically, most predominantly white Christian institutions (e.g., churches, colleges, ministries) have openly supported or passively perpetuated race/ethnic injustices. This significantly hinders the ability of predominantly white Christian institutions to become multicultural and to help to address race/ethnic injustices in our society.
 - a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped
 - f.

39. The U.S. is far from post-racial. The U.S. continues to be one of the most racialized societies in the world. Major disparities still exist between people of different races/ethnicities (e.g., income, wealth, employment, poverty, health, housing, incarceration rates).
- 1 - Not Equipped
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 - Very Equipped

Common Barriers for White People

The following are common barriers that often prevent white individuals from participating in efforts to promote healthy race/ethnic relations. If you are a white person, please answer how equipped you feel to recognize and address these barriers both in yourself and other people. If you are not a white person, please answer how equipped you feel to recognize and address these barriers in other people.

40. "I'm not a racist person so I don't feel like it is necessary for me to be involved with race/ethnic diversity efforts."
- 1 - Not Equipped
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 - Very Equipped
41. "I'm afraid I will sound ignorant or racist if I discuss issues related to race/ethnicity."
- 1 - Not Equipped
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 - Very Equipped
42. "I don't feel like I have a cultural perspective to add to race/ethnic diversity efforts."
- 1 - Not Equipped
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 - Very Equipped
43. "I feel like race/ethnic diversity efforts are a form of reverse racism."
- 1 - Not Equipped
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 - Very Equipped

44. "I think we need to allow race/ethnic changes to happen in due time and not try to rush it."
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

Common Barriers for People of Color

The following are common barriers that often prevent people of color from participating in efforts to promote healthy race/ethnic relations. If you are a person of color, please answer how equipped you feel to recognize and address these barriers both in yourself and other people. If you are not a person of color, please answer how equipped you feel to recognize and address these barriers in other people.

45. "I am concerned I may lose part of my cultural identity in multicultural environments."
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped
46. "It is hard to trust white people because of the prejudice I have experienced."
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped
47. "I'm afraid I will be considered a sellout by individuals in my race/ethnic group."
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped
48. "I am tired of talking about it. I don't feel like it makes any difference."
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

49. “What’s the point in trying to speak up? I don’t feel like the leadership really values my perspective.”
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

Common Barriers for Organizations

The following are common barriers that often prevent organizations from being effective with their efforts to promote healthy race/ethnic relations. Please answer how equipped you feel to recognize and address these barriers in your organization.

50. In many organizations, motivations and goals for their race/ethnic diversity efforts are not well-defined, effective, and consistently communicated.
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped
51. In many organizations, only a small percentage of the individuals are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to help build a healthy, multicultural organization.
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped
52. In many organizations, there are policies and procedures (e.g., hiring policies, admissions practices, promotion procedures, etc.) that hinder race/ethnic diversity efforts.
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped
53. In many organizations, unhealthy power dynamics (e.g., top-down management styles) prevent new perspectives from being heard and race/ethnic diversity efforts from being implemented.
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

54. In many organizations, there is little awareness of the history of the organization in regard to race/ethnicity. The positive events are not celebrated. The negative events are not acknowledged and addressed.
- a. 1 - Not Equipped
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 - Very Equipped

APPENDIX 3

PIVOT POST-SURVEY QUESTIONS 32 AND 34

Table A1. Pivot table post-survey questions 32 and 34

	Count of ID	Average of Q32	Average of Q34	StdDev of Q32	StdDev of Q34
Asian, age 18-28	1	4	4	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Black/African American, age 18-28	3	3.7	3.3	2.309401077	1.1
Caucasian/European, age 18-28	9	3.8	3.5	0.4	0.9
Black/African, age 29-38	1	4	3	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Black/African American, Black/African, age 29-38	1	1	1	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Caucasian/European, age 29-38	4	4.2	4	0.9	1.1
Caucasian/European, age 39-54	1	5	5	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Native American, Caucasian/European, Black/African American, age 39-54	1	4	4	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Caucasian/European, age 55-67	4	4.5	4	0.6	1
Total	25	3.9	3.6	1.1	1.1

APPENDIX 4

RUBRIC FOR EXPERT PANEL: RATING THE QUALITY OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY CLASS

Expert Panel Review

Biblical Support

- Rating – 4
- Comments – The training has a strong grounding in scripture and a wonderful survey of scripture in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The key part of this class is to convince people Biblically.

Content

- Rating – 3.875
- Comments – The content is comprehensive and exemplary. One constraint may be that the class could cover too much material for the average member. After a couple of run-throughs, the amount of content should be evaluated to make sure it matches the time constraints. Although not participants in the class, we believe this will be intentionally and comprehensively addressed.

Clarity

- Rating – 3.75
- Comments – The content of this class will engage participants in an honorable and honest way. Furthermore, the class is well-paced for this type of environment and setting.

Scope

- Rating – 3.875
- Comments – The class is reproducible and will benefit many churches. We think this is one of the more exciting parts of this project. Even more now than when I first heard of this project.

Methodology

- Rating – 4
- Comments – The writing and approach cultivate an atmosphere where honesty and relational flourishing can happen. Without being present for the class, we do anticipate a successful delivery.

APPENDIX 5

BEYOND THE COLOR BARRIER: SYLLABUS

Class Description

In our current climate, there is extreme hostility on matters of race, culture, and ethnicity. Particularly in the church, these matters contrast the unity we are called to have as believers, representing every nation and tribe, who are forgiven through Christ by a holy and just God. Instead, many misunderstandings arise because of these tensions and divisions, leading to Christians being at odds or separated from one another. As a result, we need to distinguish healthy practices of engagement and conversation about racism and culture within the church.

This course is designed to give you a language and understanding of racism, ethnicity, and culture. This information and experience will be beneficial for this lifetime and the life to come. Our God is about redeeming His multicultural bride, and heaven is going to be diverse. So why wait? Over the course of the semester, you will develop the tools necessary to have a responsible and informed conversation about racism, culture, and ethnicity within the church. The overall goal, though, is for your heart to change and worship God.

The Goals

- For individuals to discover, embrace, and celebrate racial and ethnic diversity.
- For individuals to see the biblical and theological necessity of diversity and how it reflects the image of God.
- To develop a common language around the issues involving race, culture, and ethnicity so that individuals can comprehend and synthesize in meaningful dialogue inside and outside of the church.
- To help individuals cultivate and demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills for cross-cultural unity.
- For individuals to understand the narratives that play in misunderstandings that lead to disparity and hostility, and for them to discover their personal biases.

The Breakdown

The class will consist of four main parts: pre-teaching, teaching, learning communities, and homework.

1. **Pre-Teaching:** involves watching a number of videos on Ministry Grid before the teaching time.
2. **Interactive Discussion:** will take place via Zoom, and deepen the understanding of each week's topic.

3. **Learning Communities**: will provide participants with opportunities to discuss and reflect on each week's discussion and homework.
4. **Homework**: will consist of application exercises to be completed between teaching times and discussed within learning communities.

Rules for Engagement

Due to the intensity of this course, the values below will be the guiding principles expected to ensure the best learning experience.

- We will treat everyone with dignity.
- We will use "I" statements when discussing with one another.
- We will be honest and present with ourselves, each other, and, more importantly, God.
- We will give compassion to each other as we wrestle through our own experiences.
- We will give respect to all parties despite our disagreements.
- We will maintain theological integrity as we uncover a sociological issue.
- We will maintain confidentiality about private information shared by individuals.

Timeout Clause

In the case that the conversation disregards the rules of engagement, Pastor Rashard has the ability to redirect the conversation to a healthy dialogue.

Attendance

Due to the nature of the content, we request that you attend all four weeks of the class.

Style

All papers should be submitted as double-spaced, with 12-point font, a name, and the topic. Submit all documents via Ministry Grid.

Guide to Readings and Videos

As you learn, you will notice that non-white individuals create the majority of these resources. This is not an attempt to pay white people back for their lack of inclusion of minorities within the church. Instead, these individuals were selected because they are minorities, and their voices matter on the subject. For those from the majority culture, we encourage you not to check out or dismiss the "gold" within the content. These individuals are flawed individuals, but they are prophetic. Therefore, if you find yourself disagreeing, we encourage you to understand why you disagree. You need to clarify with reason and evidence. For the participants of color, your temptation is to check out because some of these topics are painful. We invite you to let this begin your healing process. For some of you, your life has been codified by tokenism; let this be a turning point for you.

For everyone, we ask that you keep an open mind and allow the spirit of God to work in all of us as we journey on this process together. Please do not read and listen to lectures to get through the material. Give yourself space to process and reflect. Have meaningful conversations with your learning communities. We hope that in the end, your affections are stirred for the Lord and that you would praise God for His work in creation.

Required Reading: All required readings should be read in their entirety.

Book

- *Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey* by Sarah Shin

The Assessment

- [Take the Assessment](#) (Will take before and after the course to evaluate the progress of learnings.)

Additional Resources

- [Racial and Ethnic Composition Among Christians](#)
- [The Cross-Cultural Understanding Assessment](#)

Required Videos

- Beyond Colorblind: Overview
- Beyond Colorblind: Beauty
- Beyond Colorblind: Brokenness
- Beyond Colorblind: Redemption
- Beyond Colorblind: Restoration
- Racial Reconciliation
- High Power/Low Power Distance
- Power Distance Example Video
- Individualism/Collectivism
- High and Low Tolerance
- High Context/Low Context Cultures
- Color Me Blind Video
- See Each Other's Stories

Course Schedule and Assignments

WEEK	TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES	READINGS (Due on this date)	ASSIGNMENT (due on this date)
<i>PRE-WORK</i>	Before the class, you will be assigned to a learning community. Please review the pre-discussion questions.	Read the syllabus thoroughly.	
<i>WEEK 1</i>	Understanding the Biblical Call to Cross-Cultural Unity	Read <i>Beyond Colorblind</i> Chapters 1-3	<u>Pre-Teaching Videos</u> - Beyond Colorblind: Overview - Beyond Colorblind: Beauty Assignments(s): - Complete the Ethnic Story Exercise.
<i>WEEK 2</i>	Understanding God's Heart for Cross-Cultural Unity	Read <i>Beyond Colorblind</i> Chapters 4-5	<u>Pre-Teaching Videos</u> Assignments(s): - Biblical Overview of Cross-Cultural Unity Exercise
<i>WEEK 3</i>	Understanding the Sociological Factors in Pursuing Unity	Read <i>Beyond Colorblind</i> Chapters 6-7	<u>Pre-Teaching Videos</u> Assignments(s): - Racial Awareness Exercise - Samaritan Woman Exercise
<i>WEEK 4</i>	Learning How to Be an Advocate	Read <i>Beyond Colorblind</i> Chapters 8-10	<u>Pre-Teaching Videos</u> - Color Me Blind Video - See Each Other's Stories: Assignments(s): - Lament Exercise - Re-Take the Assessment.

APPENDIX 6

BEYOND THE COLOR BARRIER: FACILITATOR GUIDE

PURPOSE: The purpose of learning communities is for individuals to discuss and reflect on the content of the class each week. The questions provided at the end of each week give direction for the conversation.

GOALS

- **Trust.** For people to open up, they need to know that the environment is safe and that they can trust the group.
- **Dignity.** We all have broken worldviews, and we need to treat everyone with dignity.
- **Comprehension.** For individuals to talk through the concepts more robustly.

IDEAL AGENDA (30 Minutes)

- **3 - 5 Minutes:** In the first meeting, briefly introduce yourself.
- **3 - 5 Minutes:** State the purpose.
- **20 -25 Minutes:** Go through the questions (Note: you might want only to pick two or three of the questions provided.)

HELPFUL TIPS

1. **Remember the rules of engagement:** Due to the intensity of this course, the values below will be the guiding principles expected to ensure the best learning experience.
2. **Utilize the "Timeout" clause:** You can redirect the conversation to a healthy dialogue if the discussion disregards the rules of engagement.
3. **Keep everyone on track:** It will be hard to keep everyone on track but is necessary to help guide the conversation.
4. **Communicate the Big Picture:** Learning communities are to share experiences. Please advise participants that the goal is not to answer all of their questions. Instead, it is to get the big picture of God's heart for unity and the role they play in it.
5. **Be brief:** As you give introductions, do your best to be concise so that you can help your group to focus on the conversation.
6. **Do not be the expert:** As a facilitator, you are guiding the conversation. Do not presume to be the expert on these matters. Again, the goal is to share experiences and for people to come to personal recognition in the role they play.

Please direct group members to Pastor Rashard with all questions or concerns.

APPENDIX 7

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

Age

25 responses

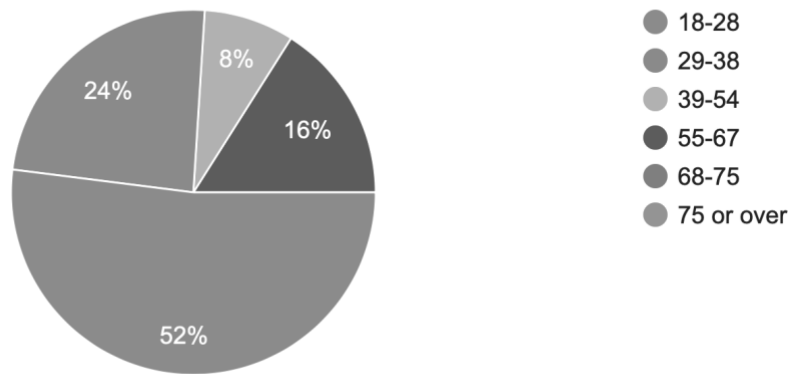


Figure A1. Age breakdown of class participants

Ethnicity

25 responses

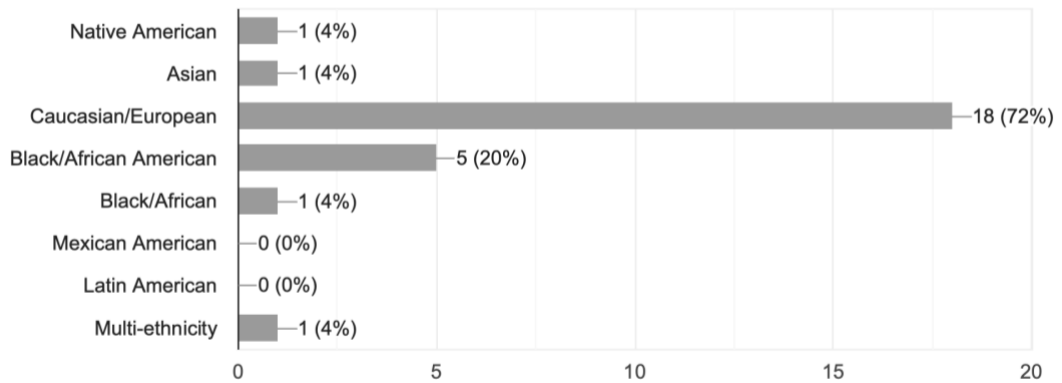


Figure A2. Ethnicity breakdown of class participants

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alcántara, Jared E. *Crossover Preaching: Intercultural-Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Gardner C. Taylor*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015.
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New Press, 2012.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.
- Bradley, Anthony. *Aliens in the Promise Land: Why Minority Leadership Is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013.
- Branson, Mark, and Juan F. Martinez. *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Book of Acts*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- _____. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Genesis*. Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox, 1986.
- Clair, Matthew, and Jeffrey S. Denis. "Sociology of Racism." *Scholars as Harvard*, 2015. Accessed July 3, 2020. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/matthewclair/files/sociology_of_racism_clairandenis_2015.pdf.
- Clasen-Kelly, Fred, Anna Douglas, Jane Wester, and Ames Alexander. "You Told Me to . . .': Charlotte Man Appeared to Be Lowering Gun when Police Shot Him." *Charlotte Observer*, April 15, 2019. <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/crime/article229227114.html>.
- Cleveland, Christena. *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013. Kindle.
- Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett. *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.

- Cox, Kiana. "Most U.S. Adults Feel What Happens to Their Own Racial or Ethnic Group Affects Them Personally." Pew Research Center, July 11, 2019.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/11/linked-fate-connectedness-americans/>.
- DeYmaz, Mark. *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments and Practices of a Diverse Congregation*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2007.
- DeYmaz, Mark, and Bob Whitsel. *re:Mix: Transitioning Your Church to Living Color*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2016.
- DeYoung, Curtiss Paul, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- DuBois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover Publications, 1903.
- Edwards, Korie L. *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Evans, Tony. *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation: The Kingdom and How We Are Stronger Together*. Chicago: Moody, 2011.
- Fitch, David T. *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines That Shape the Church for Mission*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.
- Foster, Kenneth. "Hallowed Be Your Name." In *Heal Us Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church*. Edited by Doug Stevens, 259-68. Oklahoma City: White Blackbird Books, 2016.
- France, R. T. *Matthew*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Freeman, Alexis. "Is God Racist or Is It My Church." Embrace Race, June 2020.
<https://www.embracerace.org/resources/is-god-racist-or-is-it-my-church>.
- Freeman, James M. *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. New Kingston, PA: Whitaker House, 1996.
- Garman-Brown, Ophelia, Dee O'Dell, Crandall Bowles, David Chadwick, Jeffrey A. Conway, Esteban Echeverria, Michael Friedland, Dale Gillmore, Tisha Greene, Alvaro Gurdián Jr., Grazell Howard, Ron Leeper, Marianne Lyall-Knusel, Matt Martin, Clifford Matthews, Felcia McAdoo, Symone McGee, Barry Sherman, Andrew Plepler, and Ricky Woods. "The Charlotte Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force Report." *Leader on Opportunity*, March 2017.
<https://www.leadingonopportunity.org/report/chapter-2>.
- Graves, Joseph L. *The Race Myth: Why We Pretend Race Exists in America*. New York: Plummer, 2005.

- Gray, Derwin. *The High-Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Hays, J. Daniel. *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.
- Hernández, Tanya K. "Race v. Ethnicity." *New York Times*, July 12, 1997. <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/15/opinion/1-race-vs-ethnicity-136301.html>.
- Hughes, Beau. "Racial Reconciliation." Sermon at the Village Church, Dallas, January 17, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZM0hSsm5CI>.
- Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Hyatt, Erik, "Missions Sunday: From Homogeneous to a Heterogeneous Unit Principle." *The Exchange with Ed Stetzer in Christianity Today*, January 29, 2017. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/january/from-homogeneous-to-heterogeneous-unit-principle.html>.
- Josephus. *Jewish War*. Rev. ed. Translated by G. A. Williamson. Revised by E. Mary Smallwood. 1959. Reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1970.
- Jun, Alexander. "Multivocality in the Church: Striving for More Harmonious and Diverse Faith Communities." In *All Are Welcome: Toward a Multi-Everything Church*. Edited by Leon Brown, 45-66. Austin: Storied Publishing, 2018.
- Keener, Craig S. *Acts: 3:1-14:28: An Exegetical Commentary*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- _____. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
- Keller, Timothy. *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- _____. *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012.
- _____. *Generous Justice: Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012.
- Kidner, Derek. *Genesis*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Lewis, Lance. "A Familiar Conversation." In *Heal Us, Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church*. Edited by Doug Stevens, 1-10. Oklahoma City: White Blackbird Books, 2016.

- Lincoln, C. Eric. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. Kindle.
- Lipka, Michael. "The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups." Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>.
- Loritts, Bryan. "The Gospel and Race: Seeing Each Other's Stories." Sermon delivered at Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, Mountain View, CA, May 1, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKBK29OnCGo>.
- _____. *Insider/Outsider: My Journey as a Stranger in White Evangelicalism and My Hope for Us All*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.
- Lupton, Robert D. *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help, and How to Reverse It*. New York: Harper Collins, 2011.
- Luther, Martin. *Commentary on Galatians*. Luther Classic Commentaries. Translated by Erasmus Middleton. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006.
- _____. *Letters to a Birmingham Jail: A Response to the Words and Dreams of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* Chicago: Moody, 2014.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *Acts*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary, vol. 5. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Mathews, K. A. *Genesis 1-11*. The New American Commentary, vol. 1A. Nashville: B & H, 1996.
- Mathis, David. *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. Kindle.
- McNeil, Brenda Salter. *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*. Edited by J. Derek McNeil. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015.
- McNeil, Brenda Salter, and Rick Richardson. *The Heart of Racial Justice: How Soul Change Leads to Social Change*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Merkle, Benjamin L. *Ephesians*. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Nashville: B & H, 2016.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The Gospel according to John*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010.
- Moo, Douglas J. *Galatians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Newbell, Trillia J. *United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity*. Chicago: Moody, 2014.
- Newell, Marvin. *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999.

- Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Online Etymology Dictionary. "Culture (n)." November 20, 2019. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/culture>.
- Passel, Jeffrey, and D'Vera Cohn. "Immigration to Play Lead Role in Future U.S. Growth." Pew Research Center, July 1, 2008. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/>.
- Peach, Mark. "Privileged to Serve." In *Heal Us Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church*. Edited by Doug Stevens, 89-98. Oklahoma City: White Blackbird Books, 2016.
- Percept Group. "Ministry Area Profile 2019." June 7, 2019. <http://www.ministryarea.com/Reports/ReportViewer.aspx?id=564ecc8f-b38b-4f6d-8df0-a6453b987333>.
- Rah, Soong-Chan. *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*. Chicago: Moody, 2010.
- _____. *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. Kindle.
- Robertson, Campbell. "A Quiet Exodus: Why Black Worshipers Are Leaving White Evangelical Churches." *New York Times*, March 9, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/blacks-evangelical-churches.html>.
- Ross, Allen P. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing, 2017.
- Rumfeld, Donald. *Rumfeld's Rules: Leadership Lessons in Business, Politics, War and Life*. New York: Harper Collins, 2013.
- Ryle, Herbert Edward. *The Early Narratives of Genesis: A Brief Introduction to the Study of Genesis*. London: McMillan and Co., 1892.
- Sanders, Alvin. *Bridging the Diversity Gap: Leading toward God Multi-Ethnic Kingdom*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2013.
- Sanneh, Lamin. *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Shin, Sarah. *Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey*. Downers Groves, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. Kindle.
- _____. "Ethnic Story Worksheet." December 2018. <http://mem.intervarsity.org/resources/ethnic-story-worksheet>.
- Shumsky, Neil Larry. "Zangwill's 'The Melting Pot': Ethnic Tensions on Stage." *American Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (March 1975): 29-41.

- Staats, Cheryl, Kelly Capatosto, Lena Tenny, and Sarah Mamo. "Race and Ethnicity: Views from Inside the Unconscious Mind. State of Science: Implicit Bias Review." 2017. Accessed October 13, 2019. <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017-SOTS-final-draft-02.pdf>.
- Stevens, Doug, ed. *Heal Us, Emmanuel: A Call for Racial Reconciliation, Representation, and Unity in the Church*. Oklahoma City, OK: White Blackbird, 2016.
- Stevenson, Bryan. "We Need to Talk about an Injustice." *TED*, March 2012. www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice?language=en.
- Thielman, Frank. *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
- Tisby, Jemar. *Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.
- _____. "A Wilderness Wandering after the "Quiet Exodus." *The Witness*, April 23, 2018. <https://thewitnessbcc.com/after-the-quiet-exodus-a-wilderness-wandering/>.
- United State Census Bureau. "QuickFacts Charlotte, North Carolina." July 1, 2018. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/charlottecitynorthcarolina/POP060210>.
- Vaughn, W. Curtis. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1963.
- Van Opstal, Sanda Maria. *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.
- Wallis, Jim. *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and Cathi J. Fredricks. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Washington, Kelvin. "The Holistic Perspective of God's Mission." *The Witness*, April 27, 2019. <https://thewitnessbcc.com/holistic-perspective-gods-mission/>.
- Webber, Robert E. *The Secular Saint: A Case for Evangelical Social Responsibility*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Williams, Jarvis. "Jesus Prayed for Unity." *The Witness*, January 7, 2016. <https://thewitnessbcc.com/jesus-prayed-for-the-unity/>.
- _____. *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology*. Nashville: B & H, 2010. Kindle.
- Williams, Jarvis, and Trey Moss. "Focus on 'All Nations' as Integral Component of World Mission Strategy." In *World Mission: Theology, Strategy, and Current Issues*. Edited by Scott N. Callahan and Will Brooks, 131-48. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019.

Worthen, Molly. "Can Black Evangelicals Save the Whole Movement?" *The New York Times*, April 20, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/20/opinion/sunday/black-evangelicals-diversity.html>.

Yancey, George. *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embrace Mutual Responsibility*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.

Zangwill, Israel. *The Melting Pot*. New York: Macmillan, 1909.

ABSTRACT

INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLICAL CALL FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNITY AT MERCY CHURCH CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Rashard Quinn-Acie Barnes, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. William Beau Hughes

The purpose of this project is to establish a class to increase the knowledge of Mercy Church's cross-cultural understanding. Chapter 1 stipulates the establishment of the project, which includes the context, rationale, purpose, goals, definitions, limitations/delimitations, research methodology, and conclusion. Chapter 2 presents the biblical and theological basis for cross-cultural unity. Chapter 3 summarizes theological and practical issues related to cross-cultural unity at Mercy Church. Chapter 4 formulates the planning and implementation of the project alongside an evaluation and conclusion. Chapter 5 examines and evaluates the project with personal deliberations.

VITA

Rashard Quinn-Acie Barnes

EDUCATION

BS, Texas Tech University, 2011

MATS, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016

MINISTERIAL

Youth Director, Full Armor Ministries, Lubbock, Texas 2009-2011

Discipleship and College Pastor, Redeemer Church, Lubbock, Texas, 2011-
2017

Campus and Equipping Pastor, Mercy Church, Charlotte, North Carolina,
2017-