



ways
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to appreciate
biblical diversity

6 ways pastors can teach their congregation to appreciate biblical diversity.

by Dr. Harold D. Lewis Sr.

It's been nearly 60 years since the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. highlighted the fact that the 11 a.m. hour on Sunday morning is "the most segregated hour in America." Unfortunately, the statistics still show that Dr. King's observation, for the most part, remains true.

An immense number of American churches are primarily monoracial rather than multiracial. In other words, Christian believers are still worshipping homogeneously in Anglo churches, Black churches, Latino churches and Asian churches. Yet, the Word of God teaches us that in heaven, people from every racial group will worship God together. Since heaven's divine demographics will be diverse, wouldn't it be wise to start preparing for that divine and diverse gathering while we are still on earth? Shouldn't our earthly congregations foreshadow what it will be like when we get to heaven?

Unfortunately, the sins of racism, discrimination and ethnic pride have divided us as an earthly family of God and hastened a lack of appreciation of our earthly diversity. Now, more than ever, the Christian church must be reminded that when our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, hung, bled and died on Mount Calvary's cross, he did not sacrifice himself for one particular race or group. Instead, Jesus paid it all for every nation, every tribe, every people and every tongue (Rev. 7:9).

As Christian pastors and leaders, we have the privilege of partnering with God in his drama of salvation and the providential preparation of all his people. But we also have a spiritual responsibility to teach our congregation members God's kingdom perspective regarding biblical diversity. Biblical diversity views don't just happen. They must be taught.

"It's never too late to give up hate and appreciate God's divine diversity."

– Lewology

Here are six ways to help your congregation appreciate God's desire and design for biblical diversity:

Teach your congregation what the Bible says about biblical diversity.

Biblical diversity was God's idea. The Body of Christ is a beautiful bride that is multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic. Throughout the Bible, we can find God's plan to reconcile himself to people from every racial and ethnic group. For example:

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us (Acts 17:26-27, ESV).

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28, ESV).

The lesson from these verses suggests that not only did Christ come to be born in the flesh and live a sinless life of perfection, but he also died for *all who would trust in him*. It did not matter *who* came to trust in him because *all* who believed in him and repented of their sins would be saved. God is not concerned about a person's skin color or ethnic origin because all his children are citizens of his kingdom.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

(Rev. 7:9-10, ESV)

In this text, Paul teaches us that God is not concerned about a person's nationality; he wants us to seek him through Jesus Christ and be saved. We are all made from one man, Adam, and we all have the same human father. There are no races, only the human race with God.

If you want a sneak preview of how God's divine drama unfolds at the end of human history, take a stroll through the Book of Revelation. When Jesus Christ returns and establishes his kingdom, a great multitude of people will come from every nation, tribe and language. They will all come together to worship the King of kings and Lord of lords.


God loves diversity. He calls and saves people from every tongue and every nation. Therefore, God's people will be like a beautiful tapestry of different peoples from around the world that will worship before his great throne.

But biblical diversity is not reserved for when all get to heaven. We must teach it, preach it and pursue it *now*.

Possess the courage to correct cultural mistakes regarding the Bible and race.

Too often, Hollywood films and literature portray biblical personalities as Caucasians. These portrayals reinforce the notion that the Caucasian persuasion is the norm and anything else is not normal. This notion is especially dangerous when it comes to spiritual matters, whereby one's ethnic identity can be mistakenly associated with God's favor and grace.


Pastors can teach their congregation that these portrayals and illustrations are not accurate representations of the people in the Middle East or North Africa, where darker features and complexions are the norm. Addressing these mistakes can provide opportunities for further diversity dialogue.



Encourage your congregation to explore and educate themselves about other cultures.

Unfortunately, many of our Caucasian brothers and sisters living in the United States can go a lifetime without ever having meaningful social interactions with people of color. It is also too common for our schools' curricula to only focus on the accomplishments of Western civilization. When curricula mention people of color, they are often depicted in a negative context or slavery.

Pastors can encourage their congregation to be intentional about reading about and understanding other cultures outside of their own context. The internet makes reading and research accessible to everyone and can serve as a great educational resource.



Challenge your congregation to seek out social interactions with people of different ethnicities.

One of the most significant barriers to appreciating God's design for biblical diversity is our lack of proximity to people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Depending on where you live, this barrier may be more challenging for some.

However, the church is the perfect place to pursue these interactions. Unfortunately, Dr. King's quote, "11 o'clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours," remains accurate. But, if there is ethnic and racial diversity in your church, encourage your church members to become intentional about inviting people who are different from them to dinner or some other social activity.

Outside of church, this may mean participating in some auxiliary activities and civic groups where they can build diverse friendships with people from other cultures. Bowling leagues, aerobic classes and the like provide wonderful opportunities for these relationships.

Model a loving confrontation of racist words and behavior.

Racial and ethnic bigotry are social viruses that are spreading like an epidemic throughout our society. Unfortunately, people in power and authority who say and behave in racially insensitive ways often transfer these viruses to others.

These instances of racial insensitivity are divine opportunities for pastors to lovingly confront, challenge and correct persons in their congregations. A pastor should make a rebuttal like, “As people of God, we don’t say things like that. Those kinds of remarks are sinful and unacceptable. God calls us to love and accept everybody, regardless of race or ethnicity, because that’s how he loves us.”

For some pastors, this will require a degree of courage. Nevertheless, it will be worth the cost relationally when you see your congregation honoring God by honoring people.

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Remain faithful for a future when the Holy Spirit will tear down the walls that racially divide people.

Pastors, let your congregations witness your attitude, words and actions that show you believe God is at work in the world, drawing his people to himself and making us one in his Spirit and love, just as Jesus prayed in John 17:20-26.

Yes, while we are still in this earthly realm, there is much work to do. But we should have faith that the Spirit of the living God is our partner, our power and our provider. We should be faithful in knowing that what we can’t accomplish in our strength, God will accomplish in his.

Pastors, as you teach your congregations to appreciate biblical diversity, remind them that, according to Revelation 21:1-2, when the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and God establishes his kingdom on earth, it will be said that *“God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God”* (Rev. 21:3, NIV), but *“the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality”* (Col. 3:25, ESV).

Remind them that heaven won’t be full of homogeneous people but that we will all be glorified. Remind them that there will be nothing in heaven to separate us from God or each other. Remind them that we won’t have to fight against racism or wonder how to build and embrace biblical diversity. Instead, we will be divinely diverse, worshiping together and enjoying one another for eternity as God’s holy family.



View more biblical diversity resources at converge.org/biblical-diversity

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For over 170 years we've helped churches like yours bring life change to communities in the U.S. and around the world through church planting and discipleship multiplication, leadership training and coaching, and global missions.

God's people are multiethnic, multiracial and multicultural. To reach the entire world for Jesus, biblical diversity is required. The gospel sets the foundation for racial and cultural reconciliation. As we celebrate our human differences, we unite around God's Word—the final authority on all matters, including cultural and social issues. Converge's Office of Biblical Diversity works alongside our 10 U.S. regions to encourage, empower and equip churches to champion biblical diversity in their communities.

Connect with us at biblical.diversity@converge.org or 800.323.4215 to learn more.

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