

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Are ethnic churches in America biblical?

Are ethnic churches in America biblical? - posted by iansmith (), on: 2006/10/26 1:49

Through a series of events in my college days I was brought into fellowship with an ethnic church on my university campus. As a Caucasian there has always been subtle tension between my leaders, the ministry and I.

The church started 25 years ago as a Korean-American church, but later changed to an Asian-American focus. (although they say that they welcome everyone). The guiding principles of the church are very biblical and it has a strong family atmosphere, which is what attracted me to the church.

The mission statement for the ministry is 'raising Asian-American leaders for the 21st century' and the argument has always been that this ministry fills a niche that a multi-ethnic or traditional 'white' church could not. The name of the campus group distinguishes this difference as well, we'll call it 'Asian -denomination- student -fellowship-'. Recently several of our sister churches have split away from the home church leadership and have declared themselves multi-ethnic. They changed their campus group names to be more inclusive.

My church is not planning on changing its name, and continues to argue that we are reaching out to people who would not be comfortable attending if our campus group was not named 'Asian... Fellowship'.

I feel that the name 'Asian...' puts up a wall that divides and restricts people coming to the gospel for the sake of comfort and a 'niche'. But I have a hard time articulating how I feel about this... it is always difficult to explain the name of my church to my family and non-Asian friends. I have been attending this church for 6 years, I have many relationships and a debt of love to my leaders, and I do not doubt that they love me in spite of the difference of our skin colors.

I feel however that the argument that the leaders make is fundamentally flawed... they say that they are reaching out to people who are not comfortable around other ethnicities when I often have felt that it is them who are not comfortable. It really pains me that this church seems to get so much right, but falls on its face when it comes to this subject. My leaders do not even seem open to the discussion of the topic.

My question is this: Is it biblically correct to segregate a church along ethnic lines when the members of that ministry speak the dominant language and participate in every day activities with other ethnicities?

Re: Are ethnic churches in America biblical? - posted by enid, on: 2006/10/26 8:12

When one looks at the Bible, and see that Christ died for the ungodly, that includes everyone, all of us.

I can understand a dominant ethnicity in a church where a certain ethnic group resides, e.g large Asian community, lots of Asians in the local church, predominantly, not only.

However, if a non Asian came to the church, the individual should feel welcome, know they are accepted, because of what Christ has done on the cross, not because of their ethnic background.

In the book of Acts, we see different nationalities represented.

God is no respecter of persons.

If you start to use Asian language, when members of the congregation do not speak that language, you immediately invite segregation.

For my part, if I could not understand what was being said, I wouldn't go.

It is not biblically correct to segregate nationalities.

We know God did for His people Israel. But then, the other nations worshipped pagan gods.

If we are worshipping the same God, there is no need for segregation.

I hope you get some more input for your question, because it is an important one.

That's all I have.

God bless.

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2006/10/27 14:20

Obviously, y'all have lived in a sheltered environment....but let us consider human nature as pertains to culture.

I will go on record to say there is room in the world for churches who target ethnic peoples BECAUSE their culture is different. They think differently, respond differently to situations. Ideally, the church should be a mixture of races that reflect the racial makeup of the community in which it resides. But that ain't the case. It is said the most segregated place you will find on any given Sunday is in the churches. Racism? Sometimes, but not always. Is it whites against blacks? Sometimes. Is it blacks against whites? Sometimes. Blacks against Hispanics? Sometimes, and vice versa; and etc., etc.

The reality is that people like to be with others who are similar in culture, age, philosophy, doctrine. Hence, you find different denominations, based on their take of doctrine. I would not want to be in a church where all the others are young people and I would be the only white/gray head. Young people simply cannot or will not relate to an older person. We are not asking for sympathy: we are asking for friendship, people that understand our concerns, interests. (And yes, I love to mingle with people of different backgrounds because they enrich my life, but - and that "but..." is not what you can get rid of). That is the crux of the entire matter. We can all be brothers and sisters in Christ, but time restraints will not allow us to be close friends with everyone. You can be kind to all, but you want to be with people who will be like you are.

Now does race make a difference in culture? It usually does. Unless, the person was raised by people of a different race. I know of a family that raised Choctaw twins. They have imbibed the culture inherent to the race of the foster family. They are not culturally Choctaw. The whites accept them as they would another white. The Choctaws don't. It is culture that divides and usually what makes it visible is the color of one's skin, like it or not. Liking another person of a different race has nothing to do with it. I love people of different races and they are welcome to our church. We go out of our way to make them feel welcome. But the culture barrier remains.

Can faith surmount culture? Sure. But the church culture will reflect the racial makeup of the majority of the congregants. And I, for one, do have my preferences. And neither should anyone fault that: everyone is like this, like it or not.

My opinion...
ginnyrose