

Commentary
MOST U. S. CHURCHES ARE STILL SEGREGATED
By Jefferson Edwards (Author of PURGING RACISM FROM CHRISTIANITY)

The Barna Research Group in Oxnard, California presents interesting research of the approximately 324,000 Protestant churches in the U.S. Tremendous contradictions arise between how pastors characterize their churches and congregations, and the ministry of those churches and the actual reality of the conditions of those churches through Barna's Research. For instance:

-Nine out of ten pastors call their church "evangelistic." However, less than one out of three church attenders has shared his/her faith in Christ with a non-Christian within the past 12 months.

-Four out of every five pastors (81%) describe their congregation as "evangelical." Only one out of every four adults uses that label to describe himself/herself.

-Amazingly, three out of five senior pastors state that their churches are "seeker sensitive." Yet, only one out of four churches offer a weekend event specifically designed with the needs and perspectives of non-believers in mind, and consistently the dominant complaint of visitors who never return to Protestant churches is that they found the experience to be "irrelevant to my life."

One of the strangest and inconsistent findings in the Barna survey is that half of all the pastors interviewed – 51% - claim that their church is "multi-cultural." But incredibly, recent Barna Research surveys show that in more than 80% of the 324,000 congregations in the U.S., at least 90% of the people are of the same racial group. What would cause half of our pastors to claim that their churches are multi-cultural?

We may first need to re-define what "multi-cultural" or "multi-racial" is. Many pastors who may have one or two families who are of a different race than the majority of their congregation may consider themselves "multi-cultural." However, that's really stretching the term "multi," which is a derivative of the word "multitude." "Multi-cultural" would have to refer to many cultures or races, not just 1 or 2 couples.

I believe that most pastors "want" their churches to be multi-cultural or multi-racial. That's why many of them feel it to be a positive characteristic to refer to their churches in the category of multi-cultural. But I don't believe that those same pastors are willing to make the changes that make their churches "multi-desirable." I mean changes in their view of other races, seeing them as equal in God's sight – changes in their music – changes in views of white supremacy or black (or other races) inferiority – changes in racial interpretations of Scripture (i.e., the fallacy of the curse on Ham in relation to black people) – changes in disposition concerning people who are different from you.

In short, there has to be a change in the whole concept of stereotypes that we have toward each other, and we must fulfill the command of the Lord when He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another" (John 13:35). The term "...love one to another..." literally means love one at a time. We must take the time to get to know people regardless of their race or culture, as individuals. We must let go of our stereotypes and generalities about people groups and categories of people. Then we must recognize that there can be no unity, nor relationship, nor can we approach any reconciliation among the races until we see each other as equal.

If you are willing to make some of these changes then the great desire of many pastors to see their congregations realistically multi-cultured will begin to be realized, and we can start the much needed process of purging racism from Christianity.