

**Ministry and Diversity: Preparing Students to Minister Across Lines of Racial, Cultural,
and Socio-Economic Differences**

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By

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Introduction

Biblical higher education aims to prepare and equip men and women for meaningful kingdom work. In the colonial period of the United States, most institutions of higher education were in the business of educating future ministers. Harvard and Yale, among others, were established under the goal of knowing Jesus Christ.¹ The biblical imperative to reach lost people was and is clear. When he ascended, Jesus told his disciples that they would be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, New International Version). Colleges and universities, from the beginning, attempted to partner with churches to fulfill Jesus’ mandate.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, a change occurred in the nature and curriculum of many colleges. Secularism began to creep into established schools.² Denominations began to define issues differently. As the tide of theological liberalism washed over some schools, an opposition movement grew. In response to an increase of liberalism in colleges and universities in the late nineteenth century, the Restoration Movement (Christian Churches/Churches of Christ) started their own Bible colleges. The first of these, Johnson Bible College which started as the School of the Evangelists, opened in 1893. More Bible colleges opened throughout the United States in the following three decades. The central core for these Restoration Movement schools was an emphasis on “biblical teaching.”³ Restoration Movement Bible colleges exist to teach and train students for ministry, both in the United States and in foreign mission fields.

¹ William C. Ringenberg, and Mark Noll, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 29.

² Ibid, 86.

³ Douglas A. Foster, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 93.

It is crucial that Restoration Movement Bible colleges remain faithful to that purpose. However, there is an area that has been historically neglected by the Restoration Movement, especially Bible colleges. Teaching students to minister, effectively and confidently, across lines of racial, economic, and cultural differences has not always been prominent in Restoration Movement schools. The development of specific classes to prepare students for this kind of ministry will enable them to continue to reach lost people for Jesus Christ.

Ministry Context

Central Christian College of the Bible in Moberly, Missouri, was established in 1957 to “recruit and train leadership for the church at large according to the New Testament teaching.”⁴ Seven men served as CCCB’s president over the school’s sixty-five-year history. Nearly two thousand graduates have crossed the stage at CCCB with the skills and training necessary to impact the world for the kingdom of God.

Profile of Central Christian College of the Bible

Central Christian College of the Bible offers Bachelor of Arts and Science degrees in Preaching, Christian Ministry, Christian Counseling, Youth and Family Ministry, Christian Education, and Cross-Cultural Missions. Additionally, CCCB offers partnership degrees with Moberly Area Community College and Indiana Wesleyan University. Students who attend CCCB can prepare for full-time ministry or learn to do ministry in the marketplace. While all CCCB’s students are educated to be kingdom workers, about half of the current CCCB student body will earn a living in a located ministry. There is diversity among the students with respect to career options and goals.

⁴ Central Christian College of the Bible, *2015-2017 Academic Catalog* (Moberly, MO: CCCB, 2015), 4.

The student body of CCCB, however, does not reflect racial and ethnic diversity. In the Fall of 2022, CCCB had an enrollment of one hundred and ninety-nine students. One hundred and sixty-six students are in the undergraduate program, and thirty-three are in the graduate program. The racial and ethnic background, based on the Fall 2022 Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) report, reveals that the student population at CCCB is about seventy-seven percent white; twelve percent African American; six percent Hispanic; two percent Asian, and three percent a combination of other races and ethnicities. Like many other Restoration Movement colleges, CCCB is reflective of her predominantly white constituency.

One of the notable distinctives of CCCB is the faculty. The strengths of the faculty include experience and education. There are fifteen full-time faculty members. Eight of the fifteen have earned doctorates, and four others are pursuing them. This indicates that about eighty percent of the faculty have or are pursuing terminal degrees. The combined ministry experience of the faculty at CCCB is over three hundred years collectively. The academic and ministry experience of the CCCB faculty is a strength. However, the faculty at CCCB does not reflect much diversity. Eleven are white men; three are white women, and one is a native African man. Historically, CCCB has attempted to diversify its faculty, including hiring minority staff and professors. While good faith efforts have been made, there have not been many long-term minority faculty members.

The issue of diversity has been a challenge for CCCB. In an interview with Dr. Lloyd Pelfrey, one of CCCB's former presidents, he noted that Moberly was a segregated town when CCCB started. The Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* was decided in 1954. Prior to that, white and black children went to their own schools and had their own teachers. Moberly, like many other towns in central Missouri, struggled to implement a

desegregation plan. In CCCB's second year of existence, the board had to decide whether they would accept a black preacher into the school who wanted to study Greek and Hebrew. CCCB's board voted to admit him, but he decided not to attend. Instead, he moved to Kansas City and became a civil rights leader.⁵ Throughout the next two decades, a few African Americans attended CCCB, but none graduated. It was not until twenty-six years after its beginning that CCCB celebrated its first African American graduates, James Tolson and Kelly Burton. CCCB's history parallels that of many Restoration Movement colleges and churches.

A Renewed Effort

Despite the lack of lasting success regarding diversity, Central Christian College of the Bible continues to look for new ways to reach other people. Since 2021, CCCB has sponsored an area-wide gospel concert held on the CCCB campus. Gospel groups of various races and cultural backgrounds are invited to share music in a special time of worship and praise. Just over one hundred people attend and participate in this event each year.

To broaden the base for recruiting, CCCB hired a full-time admissions counselor of Hispanic background in 2021. The administrative leadership of CCCB recognizes the need for more intentional outreach and has demonstrated a willingness to implement some changes to facilitate it. The extension site in St. Louis, Missouri, is another opportunity for CCCB to broaden its base of constituents. At the end of 2021, St. Louis Christian College in Florissant, Missouri closed and merged with CCCB. CCCB added several students from St. Louis Christian College and inherited the opportunity to continue to minister and serve in North County, St. Louis, a minority-dominant community. These decisions have put CCCB in a position to minister more effectively to diverse groups of people than it has in the past.

⁵ Lloyd Pelfrey, Interview by Author, Moberly, MO, October 24, 2022.

Moberly's Troubled History

One of the important components of this ministry setting is the city of Moberly's past with respect to issues of race and culture. The public library is named The Little Dixie Regional Library largely because the area around Moberly, since the late 1800s, has been known as "Little Dixie." Incidents of racial unrest, violence, and injustice are scattered throughout the town's history.

In November 1919, a white farmer in Moberly accused four African American men of beating and robbing him. Halley Richardson, Sanford Taylor, George Adams, and James Anderson, all twenty years old or younger, were arrested and jailed in Macon, Missouri. Late one night a mob of one hundred and fifty drove to Macon and demanded that Sheriff Jesse Stamper let them in to get the four men. Stamper gave in to the mob who took the four to a park on the west side of town. They tried to hang the four of them from one branch of a tree, but it broke. One of the four was shot as he tried to stand. The other three ran away only to be recaptured. This is one of many incidents that happened in the area known as "Little Dixie."⁶

In the fall of 1955, just two years before Central Christian College of the Bible opened, seven black public-school teachers at the Lincoln School, the black school in Moberly, were let go after the 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* prohibited state-sanctioned segregation of public schools. The school district of Moberly, in compliance with the Supreme Court's decision, decided to close the Lincoln School. The teachers claimed the school district of Moberly denied them reemployment because of their race. They claimed the Moberly School District had a policy, at that time, not to hire Black teachers for schools in which white children attended. The defendants denied that such a policy existed and that the Negro teachers

⁶ Hannah Rea, "Strange Fruit: Lynching in the Midwest," *African American Midwest*, February 3, 2022.

were not hired because they were not as qualified as white teachers. The trial court found in favor of the school district. The United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit upheld the verdict in a June 17, 1959, opinion.⁷ This ruling, while unquestioned in 1959, is viewed differently today. This was the climate in Moberly around the time of the founding of Central Christian College of the Bible.

Problem Presented

The church of Jesus Christ, as represented in the Bible, is a multi-ethnic body of believers united to worship and honor God. John witnessed a multi-ethnic body praising God in his vision of the throne. He observed a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands (Rev. 7:9). God's desire for people of all nations to worship him is clear from the beginning of the church. As he ascended, Jesus told his disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). The scope of the Great Commission is "all nations." Scott N. Callaham writes, "God's promise and fulfillment of the justification of the peoples of the earth, by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, should motivate Christians to preach the gospel to all people without ethnic distinction scattered throughout the world, with the belief and expectation that some from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will believe the gospel and be saved."⁸

⁷ "Naomi Brooks et al., Appellants, v. School District of City of Moberly, Missouri, Etc. et al., Appellees, 267 F.2d 733 (8th Cir. 1959)," *Justia US Law*, Accessed October 26, 2022, <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/267/733/393864/>

⁸ Scott N. Callaham, and Will Brooks, eds, *World Mission: Theology, Strategy, and Current Issues* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 18. ProQuest Ebook Central.

God's desire for a relationship with all humanity is seen from the beginning. Callaham asserts, "Literally from 'the beginning,' Yahweh could not be a mere patron god of a single ethnic group, utterly unconcerned with (and likewise of no concern to) all others. As Paul later argues, 'Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also' (Rom. 3:29)."⁹ Desmond Alexander notes, "God's purpose in creating this world is to establish a resplendent metropolis that will fill the earth, where God will reside in harmony with humans."¹⁰ The biblical record is clear regarding God's intent for the church. The challenge is for Christians today to reach out to people of different backgrounds, cultures, and races. That challenge extends to Bible colleges and seminaries which must equip students to minister to a wide range of different people.

Many Restoration Movement churches and schools have not developed a consistent, sustained, and effective method to train leaders to reach a diversity of people. The history of the Restoration Movement reveals an indifferent attitude toward this challenge. Richard Hughes writes that while Alexander Campbell personally rejected slavery and viewed it as "not in harmony with the spirit of the age," he was hesitant to call it sinful, observing that the Bible never pronounced it right or wrong.¹¹ Hughes also notes that during the time of the Civil Rights Movement, "Almost never did white, mainstream Churches of Christ support the great, swelling movement on behalf of peace and justice that captured the imaginations of so many Americans

⁹ Callaham, *World Mission*, 18.

¹⁰ Desmond Alexander, *The City of God, and the Goal of Creation: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of the City of God* (Nashville, TN: Crossway, 2018), 163.

¹¹ Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2008), 274.

during those years.”¹² Hughes also provides a succinct reason for the Restoration Movement’s lack of action. “While we are Christians, we are also creatures of the culture in which we live.”¹³ If the Restoration Movement churches and Bible colleges are to stay relevant in kingdom work, there needs to be a change. Central Christian College of the Bible has the means and the desire to be part of that change. The problem is CCCB’s lack of a course that equips students to minister to people of different races and cultural backgrounds.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMin action research project is to develop and implement a course that equips students to minister to a diversity of people. Students at Central Christian College of the Bible, if equipped, have a unique opportunity to minister confidently and effectively to people of different racial, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. The leadership of CCCB is committed to expanding the school’s outreach. Extension sites have been opened in St. Louis and in Florence, Kentucky just outside of Cincinnati. There is a desire, not only to recruit a diverse student body but to equip students to minister to various people groups. The need is for a relevant and meaningful course to do so. That course is a Christian Education class called “Ministry and Diversity.” The Ministry and Diversity course will be practical for students of diverse cultures and will be beneficial for all Bible and ministry degree programs offered at CCCB. It will be written in a way that it can be utilized at CCCB in any degree program. The biblical foundation for Ministry and Diversity is stated by Paul when he writes of Jesus and the cross, “His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making

¹² Richard Hughes, *Reclaiming a Heritage, Updated and Expanded Edition: Reflections on the Heart, Soul, and Future of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2019), 53, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹³ Ibid.

peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Eph. 2:14-15). There is no distinction between people from God’s point of view. God does not show favoritism (Acts 10:34).

Ministry and Diversity will reflect current and effective strategies that will equip students to approach ministry to diverse people groups with confidence. God’s view of the city, both biblically and theologically, will be addressed. The four pillars of effective ministry to different people groups, Authenticity, Caring, Transformation, and Sustainability, will be explained.¹⁴ Reaching out to those who struggle with same-sex attractions will also be discussed.¹⁵ All of these are vital components to effective ministry to diverse groups of people.

The Ministry and Diversity class will be built upon three primary objectives. The course will create awareness of cultural differences, provide proven methods for multi-ethnic ministry, and cultivate a passion for reaching the lost. The ultimate benefit is the opportunity to echo what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:8. “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

Definitions

This paper focuses on the development of a class for Central Christian College of the Bible that will equip students to minister more confidently and effectively to people of different racial, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. It is important to understand the following words or phrases as they are used throughout this project.

¹⁴ Harry Louis Williams, II, *Taking It to the Streets: Lessons from a Life of Urban Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2091), 207.

¹⁵ Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 39.

Authentic or Authenticity. A ministry approach that is grounded in truth and humility. In this project, it allows for viewing the situation from a different perspective, while being grounded in truth. Harry Louis Williams writes, “Whether you are called to share the gospel outside the ragged front door of a crack house in the ’hood or with a new neighbor who just moved to town from another state, you are going to have to take some drastic steps to fit into their world, to understand them.”¹⁶ He also cautions, “The trouble begins when we insist that everyone sees the world through our lenses because our lenses are the only correct ones.”¹⁷ Authenticity retains a firm grip on truth, while retaining the flexibility to examine the world through different eyes.

Caring. The demonstration of concern and compassion to those who have needs. Raymond J. Bakke describes it this way. “I’ve watched Christians flock to the suburbs over the years so they could access the best our society could offer for their families, while raising suspicions about those of us who sought transformed communities of justice, peace, health and economic opportunity for those left behind.”¹⁸ In this context of this project, caring covers the broad spectrum of justice, poverty, and health. It is not only the feeling of concern, but the act of doing something about the suffering.

City. The located place in which diverse people groups live. There are two ways in which this word is used in this project. In the theological sense, it refers to the place where God will dwell with people from every nation and background. Alexander writes, “For those who are united to Jesus Christ, eternal life begins here and now, as does citizenship of the city that will one day be created by God on a renewed earth.”¹⁹ In the practical sense, the word refers to the

¹⁶ Williams, *Taking It to the Streets*, 61.

¹⁷ Ibid., 63.

¹⁸ Raymond J. Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 33.

¹⁹ Alexander, *The City of God*, 163.

areas in which a diversity of people live. Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz write, “Cities are mosaics of institutions, family and kinship groups, ethnic enclaves, and associations.”²⁰

Diversity. The differences among people. These differences include race, cultural background, socio-economic status, and language. It also includes those who hold different views regarding significant cultural issues including, though not limited to, same-sex attraction. Jessica Barron and Rhys H. Williams define diversity as a blending of racial and cultural groups. It also involves a blending of activities and practices.²¹

Poverty. The lack of basic needs to live and function. Those in poverty have “a feeling of powerlessness and an inability to make themselves heard.”²² Not having food, resources, and the ability to be independent are characteristics of poverty. Corbett and Fikkert add, “having no say in public or feeling inferior.”²³ In this project, the word is used to reflect people who are mired in these situations.

Reconciliation. The process of restoring relationships that have been broken. Bryan Loritts describes reconciliation in his discussion of Hosea and Gomer. “If he and Gomer had any hopes of having a flourishing marriage, they needed core agreements mutually accepted by both parties.”²⁴ Reconciliation is based on mutually agreed upon essential truths, and heavy doses of grace. It risks pain for the gain of being open to relationship again. Reconciliation, by its nature,

²⁰ Manuel Ortiz, and Harvie M. Conn, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 165.

²¹ Jessica M. Barron, and Rhys H. Williams, *The Urban Church Imagined: Religion, Race, and Authenticity in the City* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017), 72.

²² Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 50.

²³ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 50.

²⁴ Bryan Loritts, *Insider Outsider: My Journey as a Stranger in White Evangelicalism and My Hope for Us All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 172.

happens on an individual basis. In this project, reconciliation refers to both the God and human relationship, as well as human to human relationship.

Repentance. The act of acknowledging, admitting, and seeking forgiveness for wrongdoing with the intent to not repeat the wrongdoing. “Repentance is the divinely appointed means of repairing the relationship between God and humankind.”²⁵ Jeremy Walker writes, “It is, fundamentally, a thorough and radical change of the heart that results in a thorough and radical change of the life.”²⁶ The foundation of repentance is love. Love for the Lord and loving others compels repentance in the heart of one convicted by the Holy Spirit. In this project, repentance is referred to as both personal and communal. It is directed toward God and toward others.

Same-Sex Attraction. The desire to have a personal, intimate, sexual relationship with a person of the same gender. Wesley Hill observes, “the emphasis on the subject’s sexual orientation and not the corresponding action.”²⁷ For this project, same-sex attraction should be seen as the inclination toward same gender relationships, not just acting upon that inclination.

Sustainable. The concept that a ministry is able to continue and meet its objectives over a period. “Leadership teams should consist of people who are committed to going the extra mile, to showing up even when it’s hard to show up.”²⁸ In this project, this concept is a core principle. The ability to maintain a presence in the community served is crucial to long-term success and is the essence of sustainability.

²⁵ Ralph P. Martin, and Peter H. Davids, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament, and its Developments: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 1012.

²⁶ Jeremy Walker, *What is Repentance?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 5.

²⁷ Hill, *Washed and Waiting*, 30.

²⁸ Donna Claycomb Sokol, and L. Roger Owens, *A New Day in the City: Urban Church Revival* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2017), 59.

Transformative. The process by which the Holy Spirit changes the hearts, lives, and minds of people. In the context of this project, the process is seen in two ways. First, connecting people to the Lord who initiates change. Williams writes, “We are co-laborers with Jesus. That’s an exciting proposition. We are in this journey to take Jesus to a love-starved world that needs to not only hear his quoted words but see his imitated actions.”²⁹ Additionally, it involves engaging people in a personal way to challenge and stimulate a change in thinking. “Communities of people who are faithfully seeking reconciliation, peace, and justice can’t help but confront the individuals around them as they embody a different way of living and loving.”³⁰

Thesis Statement

Followers of Jesus must minister to all people. “There is a rallying call that churches should join broader communities in ensuring that churches themselves remain places where freedom of expression and faith are protected and embraced.”³¹ Paul affirms the Biblical mandate for that noting here is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). The church is larger than what most Christians see on Sunday morning. Central Christian College of the Bible for sixty-five years has been committed to training men and women for kingdom work. To continue to make an impact in the increasingly diverse world of today, CCCB must adapt its approach. Part of that adaption is the adoption of the Ministry and Diversity class.

²⁹ Williams, *Taking It to the Streets*, 200.

³⁰ Sokol, *A New Day in the City*, 49.

³¹ Kelebogile T. Resane, "Difficult Dialogue: A Tool Towards Racial Harmony in a Multicultural Church.," *Die Skriflig* 54, no. 1 (2020), 1.
<https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/difficult-dialogue-tool-towards-racial-harmony/docview/2403843422/se-2>

Ministry and Diversity, a course that encourages participation in broader communities and is biblically sound, will prepare students to minister in authentic, caring ways that can lead to a long ministry of transforming lives and hearts for the kingdom of God. For CCCB and colleges of the Restoration Movement, it is crucial to engage more effectively with a diverse population. If “Ministry and Diversity” is designed and implemented, then students will be more confident ministering to people of different races, backgrounds, and economic statuses.

Literature Review

The message of the Bible is that God wants a relationship with all human beings. God wants all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). John, in his vision, observes those in heaven praising the Lamb. They are declaring his worthiness to open the seals of the scroll because, by his blood, he redeemed people from every tribe, language, and nation (Rev. 4:9). God’s desire for diverse worshippers has always been part of the plan for the church. Kelebogile Resane asserts, specifically of the South African church and broadly of the church worldwide, that diversity and multiculturalism should be seen in both church leadership and membership.³²

For too long, the church has not reflected the multi-ethnic nature of God’s kingdom. One of the reasons for this is found in the way the church prepares students for ministry. Bryan Loritts addresses the experience of minority students in predominantly white Bible colleges. He contends they are like Ralph Ellison’s character, the invisible man, making the case that they are not seen. The message they get is that they do not matter.³³ If the church is to be what God calls her to be, Bible colleges and Christian universities must do better. Training for ministry must

³² Resane, “Difficult Dialog,” 7.

³³ Loritts, Bryan, *Insider Outsider*, 40.

address how to connect across lines of diversity. The class, Ministry and Diversity, will equip students for meaningful ministry to divergent groups of people. This literature review addresses God's view of the city, highlights the values that a successful multi-ethnic ministry must possess, and examines the divisive issue of same-sex attraction, considering the various views of it and how the Bible addresses it. It concludes with a look at how, historically, the Restoration Movement has engaged in ministering across lines of cultural, racial, and economic differences.

God's View of the City

The beginning of Genesis introduces a story whose climax is the creation of a wonderful city where God and humanity will live in harmony."³⁴ God intends for his people to dwell with him in his eternal city. Of the holy city, New Jerusalem, John observes that God's dwelling place will be among the people. In that city, he will be their God and they will be his people (Rev. 21:3).

Ministry to the diverse people groups of the city is important, and it makes a difference. Many urban churches can be revitalized and experience new life, regardless of how close they are to dying. The time has never been better for such a transformation to happen.³⁵ The Bible provides three truths that illuminate God's relationship with the city.

God's Purpose for the City

Jesus, before he ascended, told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would empower them to be his witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). The city of Jerusalem was the launching point for the message of Jesus. The message of Jesus would spread from there to cities around the

³⁴ Alexander, *The City of God*, 23.

³⁵ Sokol, *A New Day in the City*, 19.

world. It is crucial to understand that cities are not an amalgamation of buildings, homes, and streets. Cities, at the core, are people.

The dispersion of Christians from Jerusalem enabled the message of Jesus to spread to the cities of the world. Christians fled Jerusalem and took the gospel with them. There is another dispersion happening today. Residents of cities in communist countries are moving out of those cities into cities where the Christian faith is vibrant. Ministries in those cities have a growing opportunity to do meaningful kingdom work. Kiêu Công Thuân writes, “The Vietnamese diaspora is part of the plan of God to scatter them in Christian countries so that they can hear and respond to the Gospel. They are successful economically and educationally, but not missionally. Thus, reaching and training this community is practically and essentially important.”³⁶

The city was significant in the first century and even more so in the twenty-first century. Because of the sheer number of people in the city, God intends for evangelism and ministry to thrive and grow there. The message then can spread, sometimes from the city to the areas surrounding it, and, at other times, to those who migrate to that city from other places. In both circumstances, God continues to have plans for the city.

Sin Hinders God’s Plan for the City

God’s plan for the city is evident, but sin tarnished what God planned for good. Alexander asserts that city building, from the beginning, has been in the DNA of human beings. It is what God intended for humans to do. He observes, however, man’s selfishness and sin corrupted God’s intent. It is noteworthy that Cain names the city he built after his son, Enoch. By doing so

³⁶ Kiêu Công Thuân, “The Development of an Outreach Ministry to the Vietnamese Diaspora in Ulsan, South Korea: A Case Study,” *Journal of Asian Mission* 21, no. 1, (2020), 45.
<https://go.openathens.net/redirection/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/development-outreach-ministry-vietnamese-diaspora/docview/2616889623/se-2>.

he glorifies his son rather than the one who gifted him to be a builder.³⁷ Human beings, from the start, sought to build to glorify themselves. There is no better example of this than the Tower of Babel. The heart of the people is seen in their building plan. They sought to build a city with a tower that reached the heavens to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4). Babel was about the arrogance of humanity. They wanted to build to make themselves famous.

Sin corrupted God's plan for a city in which he could dwell with his people. Unhappiness and injustice displace peace and disrupt order. God created and intended everything to be orderly and just.³⁸ Human sin disrupted the order God intended for his people. Because of sin, the city is not as God intends it to be.

God's Plan for a Glorious City

Though the city is not what God created it to be, he maintains his plan for an eternal city. Jerusalem was intended to be the city of God. It is connected to King David and looks ahead to the day when Jesus Christ, as Messiah, will establish God's eternal city.³⁹ God's unfolding plan for humanity leads to the new heaven, new earth, and New Jerusalem. John foresaw that day describing the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven as a bride prepared for her groom (Rev. 21:2).

One of the key aspects of God's glorious city is justice. Though human beings may long for justice, they are often unjust and do not have the capacity to be just within themselves. Justice can only be found by embracing God's view of what is right.⁴⁰ The day will come when justice

³⁷ Alexander, *The City of God*, 23.

³⁸ Gerald P. Boersma, "Fons Iustitiae: Justice in the City of God," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* Vol. 23, Issue 1 (January 2021), 82. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1111/ijst.12460>.

³⁹ Alexander, *The City of God*, 68.

⁴⁰ Boersma, "Fons Iustitiae: Justice in the City of God," 71.

will be prominent. The eternal city of God will feature the Lord's justice. Right conduct will be honored, and wrong actions will be destroyed (Ps. 37:28). God's eternal city will be a place where peace and justice reign. It will be a place where all human endeavors that facilitate justice and mercy thrive and grow.⁴¹

God's plan for the city, while attacked by sin, remains intact. Abraham was seeking that city. Though he made his home in the Promised Land and lived in tents, his desire was for something greater. He was looking for the City of God (Heb. 11:10). That city is the fulfillment of God's ultimate plan.

Components of Effective Ministry to the City

Effective ministry to the city is important, and the components of it are found in the Bible. Paul writes, "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:9-11). Paul's command can be summarized succinctly. Effective ministry to the city must be Authentic, Caring, Transformative, and Sustainable.

Authentic

Authenticity is necessary to reach diverse populations. Harry Louis Williams suggests that the harvest fields of inner-city America are yearning for authentic believers who are committed to bringing the message and touch of Jesus Christ to those who live there.⁴² Authenticity is marked by a genuine walk with Jesus Christ. With respect to ministering to distinct groups of

⁴¹ David W. Smith, *Seeking a City with Foundations: Theology for an Urban World*, (Nottingham, England: Langham Partnership, 2019), 233.

⁴² Williams, *Taking It to the Streets*, 8.

people, it is shown by humility and the recognition that there is not one way to worship. People of diverse cultures may express praise, worship, and dedication differently. Authenticity recognizes the preferred approach of the one ministering but also respects the approaches of those being served. To do authentic ministry is to journey with people, recognizing that the launch of a new ministry is not necessarily the first time God has been working in a particular place. Those who seek to minister to the city must acknowledge the ministry efforts already at work in the city. Those who minister effectively to diverse groups understand that they are the next link in a long chain of servants that God is using to expand his kingdom.

Authenticity is not only humble, but it also builds trust. If people are to receive the message, they must trust the messenger. If they do not believe the person is authentic, the message will not convince or convict them.⁴³ It is not only a practical principle for success in the city, but it reflects a biblical theme. What authenticates our Christianity is not belief statements or convictions, but love (John 13:34–35)."⁴⁴ Authenticity demands a real relationship with Jesus Christ and requires loving and pouring into the lives of the people served. Authenticity is how the right to minister is earned. Authenticity is a crucial component of effective ministry to diverse communities of people and must be emphasized in the training of ministry students.

Caring

Effective ministry to diverse cultures must also reflect a caring attitude. Christians who have so much cannot refuse to help others who have so little (1 John 3:17). Williams posits a convicting question. If church members saw Jesus in the faces of the poor, would they do

⁴³ Alvin Sanders, and Efrem Smith, *Uncommon Church: Community Transformation for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 98.

⁴⁴ Loritts, *Insider Outsider*, 161.

nothing?⁴⁵ If Christians are to be effective, they cannot be indifferent to the needs of those around them. Christians reach out, serve, and love because God reached out first.⁴⁶

Meeting the needs of those who are hurting or struggling is showing them the Lord Jesus Christ. Love for others flows from loving God. The New Testament demonstrates that a relationship with God is connected to relationships with others.⁴⁷ Caring about the struggle of those in the community demonstrates the fundamental truth that Jesus cares. A caring church can have influence. When there are healthy churches in urban areas, they become advocates for elevating the quality of life there.⁴⁸ Caring for the needs of the people is a foundational principle of successful ministry to different people groups. Giving a cup of cold water to one who is thirsty may open the door to sharing living water with one whose thirst is eternal.

Transformative

Ministry to those of different cultures, backgrounds, and statuses must be transformative. It is important that authenticity and caring are the foundation of this kind of ministry. However, if the heart of this ministry is not transformation, it has no eternal significance. The gospel message changes the hearts and lives of all people. Effective ministry to diverse people groups must proclaim the cross of Christ and a personal relationship with Jesus. Nothing is more important than this message. Jesus' sacrifice paid the price for sin for all humanity. There is no discrimination, and there are no exceptions. In the ultimate act of love, Jesus, through his death and resurrection, brought life, hope, and healing. He restored the relationship broken by sin.

⁴⁵ Williams, *Taking It to the Streets*, 181.

⁴⁶ Sokol, *A New Day in the City*, 46.

⁴⁷ Brandt, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 23.

⁴⁸ Sanders, *Uncommon Church*, 14.

Jesus did not discriminate, and the cross does not discriminate.⁴⁹ Ministry to those who come from different cultures, socio-economic statuses, and races must not minimize what is the single, greatest unifying factor. Jesus Christ came to redeem all people and to bring them into a relationship with God through himself.

Transformation is what makes this kind of ministry distinctively Christian. One of the most significant outcomes of a transformed life is reconciliation. God gave Christians, through Jesus Christ, the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). Reconciliation with God matters. However, limiting the definition of reconciliation to only a relationship with God robs it of its power. True reconciliation is not just the forgiveness of sins and the removal of guilt. Reconciliation is the receiving of God's gift of salvation and the accompanying gift of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ It is through the leading of the Holy Spirit that reconciliation among brothers and sisters is possible. The path leading to harmonious relationships between people of divergent backgrounds and cultures must pass by the cross.

Sustainable

Ministry that impacts diverse communities is built on the foundation of authenticity and caring. Its passion is transformation, and its strength is sustainability. Simply put, effective ministry in areas of diversity must endure. Presence matters. The gospels record that many interactions and miracles happen because Jesus encounters people at precisely the right time. He

⁴⁹ Brenton Altmann, "As a Matter of Principle-Multicultural Mission and Ministry in Lutheran Education," *Lutheran Theological Journal* Vol 55, (2021), 76. <https://search-infomit-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/10.3316/INFORMIT.074675281239183>.

⁵⁰ Douglas A. Foster, "Reclaiming Reconciliation: The Corruption of 'Racial Reconciliation' and how it might be Reclaimed for Racial Justice and Unity," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 55, no. 1 (Winter, 2020), 65. <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/reclaiming-reconciliation-corruption-racial-how/docview/2447578923/se-2>.

is where the people are. That is what is effective.⁵¹ There is no shortcut or substitute for consistently showing up. Showing up is an important value for ministries that want to be successful. Those who lead successful ministries to people of diverse backgrounds must be committed to being there and doing the hard work to continue to develop and grow the ministry. Too many ministries, especially in urban areas or across cultural lines, are there for just a season and are gone. Continued presence leads to continued results and growth.

In addition to presence, another key component of a sustainable ministry is training others to lead and engage in the ministry. Paul challenged Timothy to entrust to others the things he heard Paul teach. The goal is to teach others who will teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). The local church can be the agent for personal life change and community transformation. One of the key components is the “train-the-trainer model.”⁵² This approach to ministry involves selecting and training people from the community to lead the community. The church has a unique opportunity to attract people from distinct cultures and backgrounds and can utilize that opportunity to equip them.⁵³ The indigenous leader must be trained well. This is crucial with respect to authenticity and sustainability. Training must respect the practices and customs of the culture while establishing the foundation of the gospel.⁵⁴ This approach will not only develop leaders from within the group but will lead to authentic faith. Recognition of the common humanity shared by different people groups is a foundational principle of spiritual formation and growth.⁵⁵ Bringing

⁵¹ Williams, *Taking It to the Streets*, 200.

⁵² Sanders, *Uncommon Church*, 127.

⁵³ Jerry Pillay, “Racism and Xenophobia: The role of the Church in South Africa,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* Vol 38 (2017), 11. <https://web-s-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/>.

⁵⁴ Callaham, *World Mission*, 130.

⁵⁵ Ryan A Brandt, and John Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church: A Multi-Denominational, Multi-Ethnic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2021), 143.

up leaders from within the group will facilitate long-term ministry effectiveness and must be a part of the Ministry and Diversity class.

Ministry to Those of Same-Sex Attraction

One of the most divisive issues affecting the church is how to respond to those who have same-sex attractions. This issue has split churches and families. If ministry students are to impact those of diverse backgrounds, the question of same-sex attraction must be addressed. There are three distinct views that a Christian who wants to minister to this group must acknowledge.

The first maintains the position that same-sex attractions are normal and fall within the range of acceptable human behavior. Many medical experts believe sexual orientation is not something that a person voluntarily chooses. Sexual orientation is a natural part of who a person is. There's nothing wrong with being LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual or Transgender).⁵⁶ This is the point of view most often taught in public schools and is reflected in both the media and culture. This view holds that same-sex attractions, transgenderism, and bi-sexuality are acceptable lifestyle choices. In a May 2, 2022, Gallup Poll, seventy-one percent of Americans polled believed gay and lesbian relationships were morally acceptable.⁵⁷ Sixty percent of Americans in May of 2022 believe gender is determined at birth, but almost forty percent believe it may be different than the birth gender.⁵⁸ For many in today's culture, this is the prevailing view.

A second view, loosely connected to the first, is also found in society and in some churches. This view holds that the Bible does not condemn monogamous, same-sex attractions. Those who

⁵⁶ "Sexual Attraction and Orientation," *Nemours Teens Health*, <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/sexual-orientation.html#:~:text=Homosexual.,Bisexual>. Accessed November 3, 2022.

⁵⁷ "LGBT Rights," Gallup News, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1651/gay-lesbian-rights.aspx>, Accessed November 3, 2022.

⁵⁸ Kim Parker, "Americans' Complex Views on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues," Pew Research, June 28, 2022.

hold this view assert that, while the words of Scripture do not change, how verses are interpreted must change over time.⁵⁹ This view teaches that the Scriptures that speak against acting on same-sex attractions are being misunderstood by Christians today. For example, this position would argue that Sodom was destroyed, not because of the sin of homosexual conduct, but the sin of violence, arrogance and aggression or gang-rape.⁶⁰ Those who adhere to this view interpret Scripture through the lens of culture, both at the time of the text and the current culture. There is a tendency among those who hold this position to redefine a “high view of Scripture.” The Bible is not inerrant or “God-breathed,” but is “God-influenced.”⁶¹ This view of the Bible allows for passages that address God’s view of same-sex attraction to be reinterpreted or dismissed. This is the position of many progressive churches in the United States and around the world.

While both points of view are held by many, the key question is not what the most popular view is, but what is God’s view. The key to answering that lies in the nature of the Bible. For those who do not hold to the inerrancy of Scripture, either of the previous views can be supported. Bible passages that speak against same-sex attraction can be reinterpreted to mean what best fits the narrative. If the Bible is not the final arbiter of what is true, then either of the previous two positions on same-sex attraction can be advanced. However, if the Bible is the inerrant word of God, then it is much more difficult to hold one of those two positions. Despite attempts to spin the text to mean something else, the words of the Bible are clear on this topic. Both the Old and the New Testaments reveal God’s view of this contentious issue (Lev. 18:22

⁵⁹ Adam Hamilton, “The Bible, Homosexuality, and the UMC—Part One,” April 27, 2016.

⁶⁰ “Sodom and Gomorrah Addresses Gang Rape, Not a Loving Relationship, The Reformation Project, <https://reformationproject.org/case/sodom-and-gomorrah/>, Accessed November 3, 2022.

⁶¹ Adam Hamilton, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2014), 158.

and 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Regardless of how many churches today seek to redefine God's Word on this issue, the Bible's message is evident. Acting on these urges is not what God wants for his people. Those who seek to minister across this line must be tethered to this truth.

A third way to look at this contentious issue is expounded by Wesley Hill. He asserts the Christian's struggle with homosexuality is not unique. Sin, mercy, and forgiveness are the same for all humans, regardless of the temptation.⁶² The struggles of those with same-sex attraction are not particularly different than the struggles of heterosexual people. For those who have same-sex attractions, Hill advocates for a life of celibacy.⁶³ This response, while not likely to receive wide approval in culture, is biblical.

Taking truth to a culture that resists the truth is challenging. Building on the foundation of the authority of the Bible, the initial response must be one of love and compassion. Christians who hold the Bible to be inerrant cannot accept same-sex attraction as normative. However, it is equally true that Christians are not to judge those outside the church (1 Cor. 5:12). Christians are to be sympathetic, compassionate, and Christ-like with those who do not know Jesus (1 Pet. 3:8). Humility and love must lead in discussions about same-sex attractions. The task of the minister is not to change sinners but to bring them to Jesus. Christians have been called to love and engage people in the way Jesus did, allowing the Holy Spirit to bring change.⁶⁴ Everyone is a sinner (Rom. 3:23). James adds that missing the mark by a lot or a little is still a sin (James 2:10). The sin of acting on a same-sex attraction is no greater or lesser than any other sin and can be forgiven. Forgiveness and a fresh start are available to all who seek it (1 John 1:9). Argument

⁶² Hill, *Washed and Waiting*, 27.

⁶³ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁴ Loritts, *Insider Outsider*, 150.

and debate will not win this group to the cause of Jesus Christ. Transformation through the work of the Holy Spirit is what will make the difference (Gal. 5:16-26). Being the hands, feet, heart, and eyes of Jesus is the starting point. Presenting Jesus as the source of hope, help, and healing is the next step and is crucial to impact this diverse group of people.

The Restoration Movement's Response to Diversity

The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, historically, have been reluctant to engage in the discussion on the issues of peace, justice, and racial reconciliation.⁶⁵ Forty years ago, on the campuses of many Restoration Movement colleges, these issues were rarely discussed.⁶⁶ While the Restoration Movement has sought to stand for what the Bible says, it did not see that the gospel speaks to questions of justice and peace just as clearly as it addresses baptism, worship, and salvation.⁶⁷ While the Restoration Movement has added much to the theological discussion around the issues of salvation, baptism, and the assurance of salvation, it has been largely absent in the discussion of how the Bible addresses justice and diversity. Both Stone and Campbell, as well as many other early Restoration Movement leaders, viewed slavery as a serious social issue, but unrelated to the gospel and not an issue over which the church should divide.⁶⁸

Not only has there been little dialog, but there is also a difficult history to overcome. Bible colleges and universities related to the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ did not admit black students until many years after other schools already had.⁶⁹ For too long, too many

⁶⁵ Hughes, *Reclaiming a Heritage*, 51.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁸ Hughes, *Reviving an Ancient Faith*, 275.

⁶⁹ Hughes, *Reclaiming a Heritage*, 55.

Christian Church/Church of Christ schools have not been open to people of different backgrounds. While there are no longer policies that prohibit a diverse student body, there are not large numbers of minority students enrolling. This reality leads to little awareness of diverse cultures and minimal training in reaching diverse people groups.

To resolve some of these problems, Christian Church/Church of Christ schools must reframe the restoration vision. It must see more than just the perspective of heaven and eternity. It must see the importance of representing Jesus in this earthly life. The schools of the Restoration Movement must become cross-centered and counter-cultural, both for this life and the eternal life to come.⁷⁰ Training cross-centered, counter-cultural leaders is the objective of the Ministry and Diversity class.

Conclusion

God's desire for a city in which he and his people dwell is introduced in the Old Testament. Genesis foreshadows the concept of God dwelling with humanity on earth.⁷¹ God's people are on a quest for the Promised Land. One of the results of that is the establishment of the city of Jerusalem. As glorious as the earthly city of Jerusalem was in God's sight, it does not compare to the glory of the eternal city of God, New Jerusalem. That city, seen prophetically throughout Scripture, is still to come. The Old Testament city of Jerusalem was the place in which God interacted with his people. There will come a day when the New Jerusalem is established, and God will dwell with his people forever. As glorious as Jerusalem was because of God's presence, the New Jerusalem will be even more glorious. In the New Jerusalem people of all backgrounds,

⁷⁰ Hughes, *Reclaiming a Heritage*, 102.

⁷¹ Alexander, *The City of God*, 33.

races, and cultures will live and praise the Lord. The challenge for the church and those who prepare church leaders is to equip them to reach all people, for of such is the kingdom of God.

Preparing leaders to reach all people must be guided by the gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The gospel creates communities that through the Holy Spirit reflect and develop the mind of Christ.⁷² This is the goal of effective ministry to diverse communities. This kind of ministry is built on authenticity and caring. It is fueled by the desire to see transformed lives, and it is entrenched by a mindset that is willing to go the distance. It is this kind of ministry that will facilitate effective outreach to people of different racial, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds.

The motivation behind this work is clear. God sent Jesus to die and rise again so that all who have a relationship with him might have eternal life (John 3:16). God loves all people and wants to spend forever with them in his eternal city. The city matters to God because people matter to him. Effective ministry to diverse people groups pleases the Lord and anticipates the day when all nations will worship him together.

⁷² Carla Works Swofford, *The Least of These: Paul and the Marginalized* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 163.

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