



ETHNIC BLENDS **MARK DEYMAZ**

## Why Multiethnic?

**a**t one time, David T. Olson's book, *The American Church in Crisis* (Zondervan, 2008) sat on my nightstand. Its message is still on my mind. Olson is the director of the American Research Project and director of church planting for the Evangelical Covenant Church. Loaded with charts, graphs and sidebars, his research—and his conclusions—are based on his study of a national database of some 200,000 churches.

And there's cause for concern.

Olson writes, "On any given Sunday, the vast majority of Americans are absent from church, and if trends continue, by 2050, the percentage of Americans attending church will be half (of what it was in 1990)." To avoid this dismal future, Olson says, "the American Church must engage with ... three critical transitions ... which have altered the relationship between American culture and the Church." Namely,

- The transition from a Christian to a post-Christian society;
- The transition from a modern to a postmodern society;
- The transition from a monoethnic to a multiethnic society.

*On the Web: Visit OutreachMagazine.com/DeYmaz to share your ideas and questions about multiethnic ministry.*

**"The pursuit of ethnic blends must be firmly rooted in God's Word."**

For some time, the first two transitions have been widely assumed among evangelicals. It's the third transition that is generating new interest among local church pastors and planters, theologians, researchers and educators alike. Indeed, increasing numbers of us are now recognizing that the multiethnic church is not only a pragmatic response to address these changing times but, more importantly, a biblical response for the sake of the Gospel.

Olson writes, "In the monoethnic world, Christians, pastors and churches only had to understand their own culture. ... In the multiethnic world, pastors, churches and Christians need to operate under the rules of the early Church's mission to the Gentiles." And I really loved this statement: "As the power

center of (global) Christianity moves south and east, the multiethnic Church is becoming the normal and natural picture of the new face of Christianity."

Our desire to establish multiethnic churches, however, must not be rooted simply in the fact that "the neighborhood" is changing—the increasing diversification of certain states has rendered them *majority-minority* (with a population less than 50 percent white)—or because latest projections indicate the entire nation will be so declared by 2050, according to a Dec. 16, 2009, article by The Associated Press.

The pursuit of *ethnic blends* must be firmly rooted in God's Word.

In other words, it is not about racial reconciliation; it's about reconciling men and women to God through faith in Jesus Christ and likewise, about reconciling a local church to the principles and practices of New Testament congregations of faith such as existed at Antioch and Ephesus, for example. These early churches were multiethnic. In those diverse faith communities, believing Jews and Gentiles gathered as one to tangibly express the peace, hope and love of Christ before a lost and dying world. In so doing, men and women of varying backgrounds came together to obey the Great Commandment, declare a great compassion and fulfill the Great Commission. And their unity of mind, heart and purpose resulted in a great expansion of the Gospel and to accomplishing His will on earth as it is in heaven.

They were one in Christ and in the local church so the world would know God's love and believe (John 17:23). May we lead our churches to become so, as well.

*Mark DeYmaz is the directional leader of Mosaic Church in Little Rock, Ark. (MosaicChurch.net). His book, Ethnic Blends (Zondervan), co-written with Harry Li, is scheduled for release in April. In addition, Mark heads Mosaix (Mosaix.info) a relational network of multiethnic church pioneers, pastors and planters. Connect with Mark and other leading voices in the multiethnic church movement at the Multi-ethnic Church Conference, hosted by National Outreach Convention and Outreach magazine, Nov. 2-3, 2010, in San Diego, Calif.*

*To leave a comment, ask a question or suggest a future topic for this column, go to OutreachMagazine.com/DeYmaz.*