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This is not your father's world, it's your Father's

The nation's minority population reached 100.7 million in 2007 according to the U.S. Census Bureau; a year before, the minority population totaled 98.2 million. "About one in three U.S. residents is a minority," said Census Bureau director Louis Kincannon. "To put this into perspective, there are more minorities in this country today than there were people in the United States in 1910. In fact, the minority population in the U.S. is larger than the total population of all but 11 countries." California has a minority population of 20.7 million. Texas has a minority population of 12.2 million. With a 3.4 percent increase between July 1, 2005 and July 1, 2006, Hispanic was the fastest-growing minority group. Asian was the second fastest-growing minority group, with a 3.2 percent population increase during the 2005-2006 period.

Four states and the District of Columbia are "majority-minority." Hawaii led the nation with a population that was 75 percent minority in 2006, followed by the District of Columbia (68 percent), New Mexico (57 percent), California (57 percent), and Texas (52 percent.)

Hispanics accounted for almost half, 1.4 million, of the national population growth of almost three million between July 1, 2005, and July 1, 2006. Hispanics are also fanning out to more states across the nation, creating a sharp contrast between their predominantly young numbers and those of an aging white society. The non-Hispanic white school-age population grew four percent since 2000 while the number of Hispanic school-age kids surged 21

percent. The white under-15 population declined in all but nine states since 2000. Also, it's noteworthy that the white population has shrunk in 16 states this decade including California, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

I grew up in a divided and polarized Chicago. Nobody but God could have put the vision in my teenage head and heart of a church made up of different kinds of people. Of course, cities, being what they are and doing what they do, have been announcing to the rest of us that a multicultural society is coming. Like it or not, Republican or Democrat, Buddhist or Baptist, this is happening in our country. Even now, with so much multiculturalism visible in pop culture, sports, and the media, people still remark on our multi-ethnic congregation. It's because, though they may be used to seeing this everywhere else in their world, they are not used to seeing it in church. It doesn't happen automatically. It doesn't even happen naturally. It happens supernaturally.

We have preached and bannered John 3:16. We have championed Matthew 28:19. Now, God is fast bringing the world to us. Again, city churches serve as great models and examples for what everyone else is now experiencing. The multicultural reality has long been ours.

This is nothing new. Skim Acts 2:1-13 again. The first church, the church in Jerusalem, was multi-ethnic and multicultural. In Acts 13, it appears not only that the pastoral team of the Antioch church represented three continents, but several ethnicities as well. It would

have been a rare first-century church that was not cross-cultural. So what to do? Grip your worn copy of "I'll Fly Away" and hope Jesus comes soon, real soon, or face the fact that a sovereign God is bringing the world to our very door, giving us unparalleled opportunity. Understand the reality. The numbers above are not going to reverse. These trends are not going to disappear. If you are not being impacted today, you will be tomorrow.

Embrace the reality. God is at work. How far did he bring that Indian who owns the motel in your town or city to be near you, to be near the gospel? Celebrate the reality. It is a theological reality worthy of excitement because all God does is with purpose and for great good. The new sociological reality presents a theological reality which equals great opportunity. Be proactive, not reactive. Study your area. Learn. Who is God bringing to live around you? These are people he expects you to reach. Practice the theology of a God who made the world and loves the world he made, a God who hung His Son on a cross with His arms stretched wide to embrace all people. Be a church who embraces everyone for the Gospel's sake. Yes, change means growth and growth means change. As surely as more people means a bigger building, different kinds of people means expanded thinking, growing vision, and strategy adjusted accordingly. This is not to be feared, but excitedly pursued.

Cross-cultural outreach expands your understanding of God's Word, enlarges your heart, extends your ministry, and gives you an opportunity you will thank God for in all eternity.