HELP, LORD! THEY ARE SO DIFFERENT

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

• American-born
• Grew up in Malawi, age 3-18
• Served as a missionary in Malawi for 16 years
• Teacher of world mission at SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, since 1998
INTRODUCTION

• Today’s focus
  • Mission of the members of culturally diverse local churches
  • To culturally and religiously diverse peoples
  • In the urban areas

• USA will be featured in parts of the presentation but the principles apply everywhere

• Diversity in America comes from
  • Diverse peoples with a long family history here
    • Predominantly Christian
  • Recent immigrants
    • Many profess non-Christian world religions
URBANIZATION

Urban Population

Rural Population

Urban Population

Rural Population

1800 1900 2000 2012 2025

0 500,000,000 1,000,000,000 1,500,000,000 2,000,000,000 2,500,000,000 3,000,000,000 3,500,000,000 4,000,000,000 4,500,000,000 5,000,000,000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tokyo, Japan</td>
<td>37 m</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jakarta, Indonesia</td>
<td>26 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seoul, South Korea</td>
<td>22.5 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Delhi, India</td>
<td>22.2 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shanghai, China</td>
<td>20.8 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Manila, Philippines</td>
<td>20.7 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Karachi, Pakistan</td>
<td>20.7 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>New York, USA</td>
<td>20.4 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sao Paulo, Brazil</td>
<td>20.1 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>19 m</td>
</tr>
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= 230 million
10 LARGEST US CITIES

1 New York 8.5m
2 Los Angeles 3.9m
3 Chicago 2.7m
4 Houston 2.2m
5 Philadelphia 1.5m
6 Phoenix 1.5m
7 San Antonio 1.4m
8 San Diego 1.4m
9 Dallas 1.2m
10 San Jose 1.0m

= 25.6 million
OLD MISSION FIELD LOOKED LIKE THIS
TODAY’S MISSION FIELD LOOKS LIKE THIS WITH MANY VARIATIONS
MISSION IS ABOUT PEOPLE

• Don’t make “city” into an abstraction
• Don’t think “the city this or the city that”
• Think “people who need the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ who live in cities”
• We do not evangelize cities—we evangelize people
THEY ARE REALLY DIFFERENT!

• Within the American urban church
  • Blacks
    • African, West Indian, African American, many others
  • Whites
    • Yankees, Rebels, Europeans (East, West, North, South), Australians, many others
  • Spanish/Portuguese Speakers
    • Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Brazilians, Argentinians, many others
  • Asians
    • Filipinos, Koreans, Indonesians, Indians, many others
  • Many others

• In the mission fields of the urban church
  • All of the above and many, many others
  • Every kind of Christian
  • Every kind of non-Christian religion
  • The “nones”—people who profess no religion at all
UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES: ICEBERG MODEL

- Differences are deep
- Surface, visible
  - Language
  - Dress
  - Food
  - Behaviors
- Sub-surface, not readily visible
  - Logic systems
  - Assumptions about reality
  - Most influential
UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES: ONION MODEL

- Basic assumptions
- Beliefs, values
- Visible behaviors
DEFINING CULTURE

• “A more or less integrated system of [elements are inter-related]
• learned [culture is not inherited]
• behaviors, [body language, food, dress, music]
• values, [like honesty, orderliness, cooperation]
• feelings, [range of expression, intensity allowed]
• and ideas [intellectual, conceptual, ideas]
• shared by a group” [culture belongs to a group, not an individual]
  • Paul Hiebert
A MODEL OF ETHNICITY

Inherited Kinship Genetics

Ethnicity

Learned Culture
ILLUSTRATION OF ETHNICITY MODEL

- Ethnicity is built of different components and combinations of components
  - 3 orphaned, white, British, identical triplet brothers
  - Adopted as infants by couples in Jamaica, Norway and Japan
  - They grow to adulthood, never returning to the UK
  - At age 30 they meet for the first time in USA
  - What do they discover?
  - Do they have the same ethnicity?
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

In addition to cultural diversity, there is great religious diversity among urban peoples.

- Types of Christianity
- Non-Christian world religions
  - “Big three”—Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism
- Secular/postmodern peoples
- New-age
- Modern paganism
Christians 33%
Muslims 21%
Hindus 13%
Buddhists 7%
Atheists + Agnostics 13%
Others 13%

RELIGIOUS DISTRIBUTION 2012

Muslims + Hindus + Buddhists = 41%
MISSION MODELS

• The old geographic model of mission
  • “Exotic peoples,” like Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and animists were “over there somewhere,” in India, China, or Africa
  • Missionaries went “over there” from USA and Europe

• The new geographic model of mission
  • The very diverse peoples are still “over there”—in greater numbers than ever before
    • Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America are now the most fully evangelized continents
    • The least evangelized peoples are concentrated in Asia and Middle East-North Africa
    • Cross-cultural missionaries must go in increasing numbers to the least-evangelized
    • Missionaries now go “from everywhere-to-everywhere,” from all SDA divisions
  • Many very diverse peoples have come “over here”—concentrated in urban areas
    • Very diverse urban churches must reach the highly diverse peoples around them
  • Some needing special missional focus are multi-generation, traditional peoples
    • United Kingdom—Whites
    • USA—First Nations, Euro-Americans, African-Americans
Global migration is at all-time high

USA
- 80 m first and second generation immigrants
- 25% of population
- Majority live in metropolitan areas
- Many are Roman Catholic from Latin America
- Many are Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist
IMMIGRANTS IN THE CITY

• Prior to immigration
  • People live in a culture with various sub-cultures
  • They relate to people in sub-cultures who are members of the main culture
  • Example: Egyptians relate with other Egyptians, mostly Muslim, and a few Christians

• Upon migrating
  • People live among many very different cultures and sub-cultures
  • Example: Egyptians immigrants to urban USA relate with people from all the continents, speaking hundreds of languages, practicing many religions

• Life-patterns change, providing a significant, potential opportunity for Christian mission
IMMIGRANT RESPONSES TO NEW CULTURAL-RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

• Extinction  
  • Lose original identity

• Continuation  
  • No influence from new environment

• Intensification  
  • Strive to keep ethnic-religious purity

• Conversion  
  • Take a new identity intentionally
A MODEL OF URBAN INTER-CULTURAL, INTER-RELIGIOUS MISSION

SDA Church with Multiple Ethnicities

Anther Ethnic-Religious Group

Inherited Kinship Genetics

Learned Culture

Ethnicity

Inherited Kinship Genetics

Learned Culture

Ethnicity

Religious identity

Religious identity
TRADITIONAL ADVENTIST OUTREACH

• Designed for other Christians
  • Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics, others

• Other Christians generally agree with Adventists
  • Bible as the rule of faith and practice
  • Triune God
  • Jesus as the Savior of humanity
  • Salvation from sin by grace, through faith
  • More, depending on the group

• Other Christians often disagree with Adventists on
  • Sabbath
  • State of the dead
  • Prophetic interpretation
  • Role of Ellen White
  • More, depending on the group

• Adventists proclaim a corrective and add-on message to people who have professed Christianity for many generations
OUTREACH TO WORLD RELIGIONS

- Muslims
  - Don’t accept Triune God
  - Don’t understand Jesus as Son of God
  - Don’t see Bible as God’s supreme revelation
- Hindus
  - Believe in 360 million gods
  - Don’t see Bible as God’s revelation
- Buddhists
  - Don’t really believe in a deity
  - Don’t see Bible as God’s revelation
- All
  - Define sin differently than Christians
  - Believe in salvation by good deeds
- Result of using methods designed for Christians among non-Christians
  - SDAs convert mostly other Christians
  - Very few converts come from other world religions
  - NY13 evangelism efforts converted no one directly from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism
ILLUSTRATED RANGE OF RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE

MISSION
Mission to other Christians

Mission to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists
RESPONDING TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH

• How do you feel when you sit in a church board meeting or in church services with fellow Adventists who are culturally very different from you?
  • Different music
  • Different relational styles
  • Different preaching styles
  • Different conflict resolution styles
  • Different theological tendencies
MISSIONAL RESPONSE TO RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN URBAN MISSION FIELD

• How do you feel when you meet people who
  • Dress, eat, and smell different?
  • Take their shoes off too worship?
  • Sit on the floor when they worship?
  • Use different sacred texts instead of the Bible?
  • Have religious practices that seem strange and odd?
  • Pray on Fridays?
  • Burn incense and use prayer wheels?

• When they don’t respond positively to standard Adventist evangelism or Bible studies how will we respond?
  • Ignore them, leaving them as “invisible people” down the street?
  • Write them off as “lost”?
  • Repeat the “once-size-fits-all” approach hoping something will change?
PERSONAL RESPONSES TO DIVERSITY

•Acknowledge my own ethnocentricity
  • “I really prefer my culture and don’t enjoy other cultures very much beyond the superficial level!”
  • Consciously or sub-consciously using my culture as the standard for evaluating others

•Avoid cultural superiority
  • “My culture is best!”

•Avoid cultural defensiveness
  • “Don’t you dare hint that something about my culture is less than ideal”

•Be humble about our own cultures
  • There is no “ideal” or “model” culture because every culture is deeply warped by sin
  • Be humble about our own cultural styles of being Adventist Christians
MISSIONAL RESPONSES TO URBAN DIVERSITY

• For the sake of the unevangelized urban millions Adventists must …
  • 1. Increase inter-cultural competence in the church family
    • Unless we achieve inter-cultural harmony in the church there is little hope for cross-cultural outreach in the urban mission field
    • Mission is the true motivation for developing inter-cultural competence
    • Without mission, we might as well withdraw into mono-cultural congregations where everything that happens is culturally pleasing and familiar
    • Without mission the church is merely a social club
    • Definition of inter-cultural competence:
      • The learned skill of being able to relate effectively with people of diverse cultures
      • The ability to switch rapidly between multiple cultural perspectives
  • 2. Talk openly about cultural differences and conflict in the church
    • Don’t let cultural differences be the “elephant in the room” that no one acknowledges
MISSIONAL RESPONSES TO URBAN DIVERSITY

• For the sake of the unevangelized urban millions Adventists must …
  • 3. Intentionally incorporate members from every culture into all functions of the church
  • 4. Study the mission fields surrounding urban churches to identify and understand
    • Cultural groups
    • Religious groups
    • Community issues and needs
  • 5. Start building personal relationships in daily life with people very different from ourselves
  • 6. Start small by forming church groups who will focus on different people groups
  • 7. Try different outreach methods specifically adapted to specific people groups
CONCLUSION:
THE BIBLICAL MODEL

• Christ’s model
  • “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”
    • Philippians 2:5-8

• Paul’s model
  • “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some”
    • 1 Corinthians 9:22
WHO IS IN YOUR MISSION FIELD?
HOW WILL YOU REACH THEM?