

The Diversity Rubric shows the four stages/components of Biblical diversity. They are stages in that each stage provides a foundation for the following one. They are components in that in some ways each is needed at all times. Even though it may take us a while to achieve transformation we still need to see it as our end goal when we start out. Our goal is not just to gather a diverse group of individuals, but to build a community so conformed to the image of Christ that we have both a platform and a body through which God can bring the transformation of his kingdom to the world. Lastly, they are elements that are always needed, no matter the current stage of development. At each stage, we must continue to reach for God's vision of kingdom diversity and pray for transformation in our own hearts to live it out.

## What are the stages of diversity?

### **Information**: Adopting God's Vision

**“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. - Rm. 12:1**

The first stage, Information, provides the framework for the work to be done. It is really about getting God's perspective. We are born into this world and are shaped by it and programmed to think about ourselves and others in a certain way. We must dedicate ourselves to the study of God's word, renewing our mind, so as to be transformed from our earthly way of thinking, into understanding what God's will is.

We need transformation in understanding the sacredness of God's creation and how every nation is descended from one man (Acts 17:26) and that our ethnic identity is eternal (Rev. 7:9). Additionally, we must know that the family of God is made up of every nation and that God's desire is for us to live in complete unity, a unity which testifies the Gospel to the world (John 17:21). Furthermore, we must strive to live the ethic of the kingdom (Mt. 5:1-15, Luke 4:18-19) and practice the ministry of reconciliation which includes reconciling people to God and each other (2 Cor. 5:16-21, Eph. 2:14-22). These basic but powerful truths must be fully embraced in order to combat the lies of the evil one that has long influenced the minds of believers. Along with understanding, we must teach our congregation these wonderful truths and pray earnestly for transformation in each mind and heart. In addition to educating ourselves regarding to the truth of Scripture, we must inform ourselves regarding our community. Who is in our neighborhoods but lacking in our church? Statistical information must be gathered. In addition to numbers, we must also seek understanding of the cultures around us and how to connect to them. This will prepare us to move on to the next phase.

**Summary: Pray, study, seek, relate, teach, expose, identify, and strategize**

### **Formation**: Creating a Kingdom Community

**His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. - Eph. 2:15-16**

The second phase of diversity development, Formation, is to create a Christian community that mirrors the the nations/ethnos that live in and among us. This phase will require a lot of adaptation on our part. We must take the information we learned in phase one and use it determine what changes we must make to attract, evangelize, relate to, and serve those we have not previously connected with.

This will not be easy. If we have not done a good job teaching our current congregation regarding God's vision for diversity and his desire for his body to be heaven on earth, then we may alienate the faithful. Unfortunately, some of this cannot be avoided. Our modern church model is to “feed” our congregants. Many rebel from being called do adjust and even die to their own needs in order to serve those outside the church. We cannot let this deter us.

On the other hand, we must be “wise as serpents, but meek as doves.” We must move forward with wisdom from God praying earnestly at each step of the way. We must remind ourselves that we do not war against flesh and blood. People are not our enemies. It is Satan, the accuser, who seeks to segregate the church so that we do not accurately represent Jesus to the world.

In this stage hospitality is our greatest guide. We must make room for the stranger by preparing a

place for him/her that is comfortable and familiar. These means thinking through everything we do: our music, food, and other traditions. Something as simple as how you receive an offering can help a visitor feel at ease or dis-ease. More than making room, we must go and seek out those we are lacking and draw them in.

In order for a new humanity to be built in our local congregation, we must have pioneers, members of our target audiences that join us in the effort towards multi-ethnicity. How do we find these? We pray for God to provide them and we also speak to those God leads us to and ask them unashamedly to work with us. "We are not diverse, but we want to be. We believe this is what God wants, but we can't get there alone. I know it will involve sacrifice on your part, but will you join with us?" Seeing the "other" in leadership may not be easy for us or our congregants, but it is the gospel we are called to live out.

**Summary:** Pray, seek, adapt, serve, evangelize, relate, call, and be-friend

## Conformation

: Taking on the Image of the Son

**For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.- Romans 8:29**

The third phase of diversity development, Conformation, is the Holy Spirit's supernatural work by which he transforms a group of individuals that we have gathered into a true kingdom community. How does this take place? It happens as we abandon our own cultural allegiance and seek instead to be conformed into the image of the Son. We are all born into a culture, a way of thinking and viewing the world, a filter by which we interpret information. In many ways, Christian discipleship is the process by which we leave behind our culture of origin and instead embrace the culture of God's kingdom. We see the places where our filters are in conflict with the truth of Scripture and slowly, by the Spirit's work, we are transformed into new ways of thinking and acting. Our values, perspectives, priorities, and desires change. It is such a huge transformation Jesus called it being born again. One of the problems with our history of segregation in the church is that it has allowed each culture to create its own definition of kingdom culture. We have taken our own values and filters and labeled them God's. Even though Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him, the church has instead often chosen to affirm our desires, reject the death the cross requires, and have Jesus follow our ways of viewing and doing things. Conformation requires that we look critically at our own culture and reject it when it is in conflict with that of the kingdom culture. It also requires us to adapt ourselves in times when our culture may not be sinful, but is a hindrance to the unity of the body. Practically speaking conformation cannot happen without honest conversation where we listen and learn each other's history's and experiences. This process will be well served by a gospel desire to serve one another. Furthermore, we must remember, conformation is NOT assimilation. The goal is not to assimilate new culture groups into the majority culture, but all cultures into one way of seeing and doing- God's.

**Summary:** Pray, encourage, relate, discuss, understand, challenge, confront, heal, repent, forgive, and encourage

## Transformation

: Manifesting the One to the World

**Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. - Matthew 6:10**

The final step of diversity development, Transformation, is to see change in our society. The kingdom that Jesus announced is good news to the poor, liberty for the captives, and recovery of sight for the blind (Luke 4:18). It called its followers to live by a radical new ethic where they put the needs of others, especially the underserved and marginalized first. It was this gospel that turned the world upside down in just a couple of generations.

Unfortunately, there has been a shift over the past few hundred years from a gospel of the kingdom—the good news that the rule of God is now with men—to a gospel of personal salvation. The former called believers to do the works of the kingdom as a *response* to their personal experience with God. The latter has reduced the gospel to a ticket to heaven that separates private life from public

influence. As a result, believers no longer expect our lives to transform the world around us. Like the early disciples, we serve a resurrected Lord who defeated hell, death, and the grave. We have a gospel of power to share with the world. A multi-ethnic local congregation that is truly conformed to the image of the Son, is a powerful weapon.

First, it manifests the gospel of reconciliation by its very existence. When situations such as Ferguson happen, it has a voice to share with the community, a credible voice that will be listened to. Secondly, by having worked through the racial and ethnic discord we were born in to, they are able to work together through Biblical justice issues with grace and wisdom. They will not be driven by political or cultural perspectives, but by God's views and desires. Thus, they can serve the community around them without hidden agenda or bias. The world is starving for a witness of the true God that is more than words, and even more than charitable actions. It needs today the same thing it needed 2,000 years ago—an accurate picture of the Father "in the flesh". Jesus perfectly represented the Father in his life (Hebrews 1:3). The church of God, the body of Christ, can be God's vehicle of transformation again if it is informed, formed, and conformed.

**Summary:** Pray, investigate, serve, support, invest, heal, reconcile, and advocate