

# ACTS

## Trials and Triumphs of an Emerging Multi-Ethnic Church

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# ABOUT ME AND TODAY'S TALK

- ▶ I've been English Congregation Pastor at Ottawa Chinese Bible Church for nine years
  - ▶ Grew up a white boy from Wisconsin, in a very mono-ethnic community.
  - ▶ Today's task is to walk through the book of Acts as an introduction to the issues of ethnic identity that lie at the heart of the book.
  - ▶ 5 key passages/themes
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# IS CHRISTIANITY FOR MY PEOPLE?

- ▶ Acts 1:1 *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.*
- ▶ Luke/Acts was written to a Western European who viewed Christianity as an “Eastern religion”
- ▶ The ethnic church assures a newly contacted people group that Christianity is for their people

# THE FIRST STRUGGLE FOR EMERGING NEXT-GEN MINISTRIES: LEGITIMACY

- ▶ *Acts 6:1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.*
- ▶ Tension was between groups in the church who differed in the level of assimilation to the broader culture (Hebrews and Hellenists)
- ▶ Appointing leaders to care for their own legitimized the emergent generation

# WELCOMING GOOD GENTILES, REACHING OUT TO BAD GENTILES

- ▶ Acts 10:1 *At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.*
- ▶ The church joyfully welcomed “Good” Gentiles; yet when people reached out to “Bad” Gentiles, it took strong leadership to resolve the tension.
- ▶ “Preach the Gospel to whomever comes, we’ll figure out the rest.”

# THE SECOND STRUGGLE FOR EMERGING NEXT-GEN MINISTRIES: IDENTITY

- ▶ *Acts 11:25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*
- ▶ After gaining legitimacy – the right to exist – another question emerges: who are we? What do we exist for?
- ▶ “Preach the Gospel to whomever comes, we’ll figure out the rest.”

# KNOW WHEN TO LEAVE AND WHEN TO LET BREATHE

- ▶ Acts 20:25 *And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*
- ▶ Paul understood that part of his missionary task was to develop and pass the baton on to emergent indigenous leaders. To do this, he had to leave and let them breathe

# ACTS: TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF AN EMERGING MULTI-ETHNIC CHURCH

- ▶ Is Christianity for My People?
  - ▶ The First Struggle for Emerging Next-Gen Ministries: Legitimacy
  - ▶ Good Gentiles, Bad Gentiles
  - ▶ The Second Struggle for Emerging Next-Gen Ministries: Identity
  - ▶ When to Leave and Let Breathe
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