

Love compels Christians to confront racism

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HOUSTON—Love for one's neighbor compels Christians to confront the reality of racism, D.Z. Cofield told participants at the No Need Among You Conference.

"Some of us like to park at the meter of hate," said Cofield, pastor of Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church in Houston, host site of the Oct. 25-27 conference, sponsored by the [Texas Christian Community Development Network](#).

"You need to recognize you are expected to love all people," Cofield said, pointing out Christians too often tend to define narrowly the objects of their love.

Love beyond theology

"We must love even beyond what our theological position proclaims," he added.

As evidence of lack of love based on flawed theology, Cofield cited the "cornerstone speech" Alexander Stephens, vice president of the Confederate States of America, delivered in 1861. In it, Stephens declared as the cornerstone of the Confederacy "the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man." Stephens went on to justify white supremacy by quoting Scripture.

Rather than recognizing all humanity is created in God's image, racism creates God in the image of the person espousing the racist ideology,

Cofield asserted.

“If we cannot love all people, we are not really practicing the gospel,” he said. “You need to realize loving all people reveals that the true love of God is really in you. ... Love beyond comfort. Love beyond what is convenient.

“You must commit to doing all you can to grow in your love for all people. Grow in the kind of people you give love to. Grow in the amount of love you give to people.”

Seek diversity

Diversity in the church includes racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, said Ikki Soma, pastor of the multicultural City of Refuge Church in Houston. But it also includes socio-economic, political, educational and generational diversity, he told participants at the conference.



Ikki Soma, pastor of City of Refuge Church in Houston, discusses the challenges and blessings of worshipping in a multicultural church. (Photo / Ken Camp)

Soma described the challenges and blessing of ministry in a context where

a blue-collar laborer working on his GED high-school-equivalency diploma worships alongside a graduate student pursuing her Ph.D.

He also noted close affiliation with any political party prevents a church from becoming truly diverse—including racially in a country where most white evangelicals identify as Republican and most African-American evangelicals identify as Democrats.

Pointing to the Great Whore of Babylon in Revelation 17, Soma warned against the church—the Bride of Christ—prostituting itself for the sake of political power, worldly influence and wealth.

Instead, he called on churches to emulate the diversity pictured elsewhere in Revelation, where people of every nation, tribe and language worship Christ.

In the midst of “a proud and arrogant world,” worship in a multicultural context teaches humility, “seeing self rightly in the eyes of God,” Soma said.

A multi-ethnic congregation also provides members opportunities to grow in at least two other fruit of the Spirit, he added.

Members who are part of the majority population who have grown up with power and privilege learn gentleness and meekness, which Soma defined as “power under control.” Members who are part of the minority population who have been denied access and opportunity learn patience, which he defined as “anger stretched wide.”