

PRINCIPLES FOR BEING CHRISTIAN AND DOING CHURCH
FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

The Command for Inclusivity

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Principle Four:

While the African American experience defines our history and culture, we are called to be multi-cultural and multi-ethnic in our vision and ministry, particularly if our local context reflects ethnic diversity and change.

Thesis: God has a vision for our lives that is greater than any vision we can have for ourselves or others can have for us.

Scriptural demonstration of thesis: Matthew 28: 16-20

The Command to Radical Growth

The Command for Revolutionary Inclusiveness

Command demonstrates the Lord's radical faith in us

Command demonstrates the Lord's revolutionary faith in the Holy Spirit

Church's track record of failure

Church's ethnic composition

Church's limited understanding of the faith

Church's Response to the Lord's Command

Acts 2 and radical growth

Only Jews and proselytes received the message

Beginning of radical inclusiveness: Acts 8: 26-39; 10; 11: 19-26; 12

Radical change is seldom a voluntary act

Radical change occurred in Acts by command of Holy Spirit

Radical change happened because of circumstances

The Crisis of Radical Change and Inclusiveness

Opposition of those who do not understand full implications of the Gospel

Opposition of those who can only interpret Gospel in light of their traditions, comfort zones, culture and brands

Challenge of New Converts

The Why Question of the New and Defensiveness of Traditionalists

Defensiveness often indicates the lack of an answer that makes sense

New people feel no obligation to bow before sacred cows nor their creators

Challenge of new converts offers opportunity to define what is essential

Challenging questions foster growth for all parties

The decision of Church in Acts 15

Belief in the Lordship of Jesus Christ is what makes a person a Christian

Everything else is subordinate to the Lordship of Christ

Baptism

Holy Communion
Gifts of the Spirit
Ministry offices
Organization and polity
Gender
Race
Custom
Length of Membership

Questions for Saint Philip African Methodist Episcopal Church in the city of Atlanta, Georgia:

What does it mean to be historically and culturally African American in a multi-racial and multi-ethnic context?

What does inclusiveness mean and look like in terms of our order of worship, language, preaching, and music?

How much are we willing to bend or change for the sake of the Gospel and the Lordship of Christ?

Does our location in the Southern region of the United States impact our discussions or efforts in the area of racial or gender inclusiveness?

Are there any guidelines from our past history as a church or in Scripture that will help us as we work through these issues?