

## What's off limits in conversation?

*"For the first time in a long while I was able to share in an intimate setting my experience in [multicultural] ministry. It was truly a blessing,"* stated Pastor Corey Hodges, one of the two very insightful, transparent panelists at a recent luncheon.

Connecting and networking with others who are already working in multicultural ministry in the Wasatch Front is a major goal of *The Vine Institute*. One of the ways we have accomplished this is to gather pastors and leaders for discussions and conversations. It has been a rewarding time for everyone involved, an opportunity to learn from one another.

Our latest luncheon featured Corey Hodges, Pastor of New Pilgrim Baptist Church and Corky Seevinck, Senior Minister of The Fellowship in a panel discussion. Their candor and openness

set the tone for a challenging and inspiring discussion. Each leader contributed his differing experiences with multicultural ministry in his congregation.



Racism and prejudice, sensitivity and offenses, were some of the issues discussed during our time together. For example, Corky shared that whenever he hears the subject of multiculturalism he is reminded of growing up in South Africa during apartheid  
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## Where did you come from?

During a planning session for the upcoming festival, Mark (the pastor of a Vietnamese church) and Tip (a leader from a Tongan church) requested that all participants of the event identify their heritage. *"We all came from somewhere,"* Mark challenged. *"I would like to see something of the Anglo heritage reflected in dress, food or music"*. Laughter filled the air as we considered his comments.

In every pursuit *The Vine Institute* sponsors, our heart's desire is to present opportunities for us all to share our unique cultural heritage so that we might more fully reflect the glory of God. Tip also reflected on how much he had learned from others in his recent course. *"I just don't have many places to interact with anyone but my Tongan community"*.

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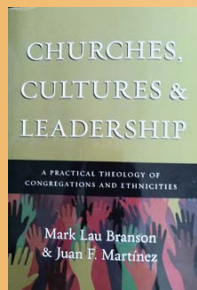
## Churches, Cultures & Leadership

by Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez

Book reviewed by Tom McClenahan

A friend shared with sensitivity that the common American practice of standing and walking around while eating and visiting at a reception was not comfortable for his culture. How can we bring Christian people of different cultures and values together without holding each other hostage to our own likes and dislikes?

One of the most recent books exploring issues of multicultural ministry is Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez's *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (IVP 2011). The book



grew out of a course the multicultural authors have been co-teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. Their motivation is to *"promote more attentiveness, wisdom and faithfulness concerning intercultural life in and among churches, and between churches and their neighbors."* Their belief is *"that the church's identity and agency should be characterized by reconciliation."* But their experience is that when people of different cultures share life, even if they are Christians, *"once we get beyond music and food, the complexities increase."* As my friend reminded me, even sharing food may not be so simple.

Discussing issues of culture and ethnicity in church life, the authors seek to equip leaders to create environments that make God's reconciliation apparent in the church and in its

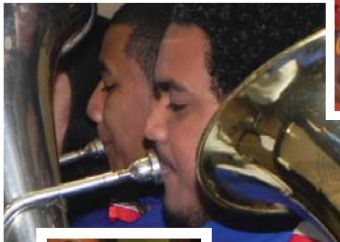
engagement with its neighbors. After laying a solid biblical and theological foundation, they move through not-as-dry-as-it-sounds socio-  
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**Open Circle**  
*Making room at the table*

Bring a potluck dish & a friend  
 Meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday  
 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm  
 803 East 900 South, SLC  
 Check web site for topics & current information

Open Circle is an informal gathering to increase awareness of multicultural life and ministries.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



October 1, 2011

7762 Main St., Midvale, UT

11:00 am - 3:00 pm

An event to introduce diverse ethnic Christian groups  
**Kingdom without Borders**  
 A Festival of Cultures in Christ

Including food & worship from . . . .

**Sudan America Cambodia Tonga Burma Vietnam . . .**



**FOOD, ART + WORSHIP**

*(continued from page 1, What's off limits)*

heid. Multiculturalism for him becomes an issue of the heart which is most likely true of each one of us. Do we have God's heart for all people? Corey told of a person at one of their church's mixed-culture food events who was overheard saying of another people group "Their food smells bad!" With wise and gentle pastoral care he admonished the person, who apologized in tears when she realized that her comment was offensive. Besides some of her own ethnic food "smells bad" to others.

The two panelists reminded us of ways to grow if our congregations are going

to work more effectively in multicultural settings. They acknowledged that there is a significant difference between groups that are new arrivals or first generation and those who have been born and raised here, but whose families are foreign born.

We are thankful for the willingness of these two men to share their successes as well as their struggles and to remind us of our need for one another in the Body of Christ. This fall we will offer more opportunities for discussions and relationships to grow as we look forward to deepening the conversation.



*(continued from page 1, Book Review)*

cultural insights. But the book climaxes in the final section on implementation. The most engaging and encouraging chapter for me was the case study of a church that watched their neighborhood become predominantly Latino and then transformed successfully into a biracial congregation.

Of the books I've read on this subject, this is the most comprehensive and still practical resource for growing healthy relationships with people with whom you share faith but not culture. The Body of Christ is strongest and most beautiful when we honor and celebrate the many cultures God has reconciled to himself in Jesus Christ. This book is most welcome.



*(continued from page 1, Where did you come from?)*

In today's busy world it is easy to isolate yourself from those who are different from you and to only interact with those in your same circle.



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