

Samuel Rodriguez: Our Prophetic Purpose

Why the ethnic church needs to change its focus from prosperity to biblical priorities.

For many in the ethnic church, the kingdom of God is the means and spiritual impetus to abandon poverty while embracing prosperity and unprecedented favor. But the church does not exist to primarily articulate a message of financial and societal empowerment. Although these elements may be an extension and a fringe benefit to faithfulness and godly living, the kingdom of God is not about the square footage of our homes or the size of our church buildings.

The primary purpose of the ethnic church in America is not to lift up our people but to lift up our Lord. We must lead a call for the entire body to embrace the true definition of the kingdom of God, which, according to St. Paul, is "Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (, NKJV).

Righteousness

Simply stated, the ethnic church needs to come to terms with its prophetic purpose. First and foremost, we must preach, teach, practice and live lives of virtue.

Our departure from legalism does not require embracing a concept of "cheap grace." More than ever, our pulpits need to hear the call for righteous living and a warning not to embrace the values of this postmodern world. Statistics indicate that the divorce and infidelity rates in our ethnic communities are at an all-time high. Before we preach financial prosperity and confess a plethora of positive affirmations, we must become oracles of righteousness.

Righteousness in action is justice. The ethnic church must

address the wrong and present the right. The church has a biblical obligation to speak and act when injustices prevail in our world. The church must take the lead in addressing poverty, racism, genocide, sex trafficking, torture and religious persecution. The ethnic church, particularly the Latino church, must speak to both the barrio of Los Angeles and the leaders in D. C. with the same prophetic zeal.

Peace

The ethnic church must similarly embrace its call to peace. As Sunday morning continues to exhibit the divide between black and white, Latino churches are strategically and prophetically situated to facilitate a church community that is not only multicultural but multiethnic.

Being blessed with the gift of both the Spanish and English languages along with the African, Indian and European heritages, the Latino is the embodiment of God's rich tapestry. Such heritage obligates the Latino church to reconcile all races and catapult peace in our communities and the kingdom.

Joy

If Christian leaders throughout America were asked what word comes to mind when we mention the Hispanic church, nine out of 10 would say "joy." The ethos of our community overflows with joy.

The call to contextualize the prophetic purpose of the Latino church can only be successful if covered with a bountiful amount of joy. Not the joy that can be acquired, but the joy that can be shared and invested. The Latino church has an obligation to bring to the Lord's church the sound of joy, wonder, charm and delight in His presence. When our nation is divided and the kingdom of God suffers violence, we remember that the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Sam Rodriguez is president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, which is the National Hispanic Association of Evangelicals serving approximately 15 million Hispanic believers.