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IMPLEMENTING A GENERALLY ACCESSIBLE AND  
SUSTAINABLE TRAINING MODEL AMONG  
INDIGENOUS PASTORS IN MEXICO'S  
OAXACA STATE

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Missiology

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by  
Anthony Lynn Steele  
May 2016

**APPROVAL SHEET**

IMPLEMENTING A GENERALLY ACCESSIBLE AND  
SUSTAINABLE TRAINING MODEL AMONG  
INDIGENOUS PASTORS IN MEXICO'S  
OAXACA STATE

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I dedicate this dissertation to Beverly, Aaron, and Amy, who have remained faithful and supportive through years of schooling and preparation for ministry. I could not have begun, much less completed, any of this journey without you.

I especially dedicate this to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has sustained me, refined me, and molded me, into the image of Himself, I hope, through this entire process—to Him be all the glory.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABHMS	American Baptist Home Mission Society
A. C.	Asociación Civil
A. R.	Asociación Religiosa
AFCU	American and Foreign Christian Union
CBS	Chronological Bible Storying
CPI	Centro para la Plantación de Iglesias
FMBSBC	Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention
IMB	International Mission Board (of the Southern Baptist Convention)
IMBSBC	International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention
IMMAR	Iglesia Metodista Mexicana Asociación Religiosa
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía
IPNM	Iglesia Presbiteriana Nacional Mexicana
MAC	Middle American Caribbean
M. E.	Methodist Episcopal
MTW	Mission to the World
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.)
RTIM	Reaching & Teaching International Ministries
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
STBDGHL	Seminario Teológico Bautista Dr. G. H. Lacy
STBM	Seminario Teológico Bautista Mexicano
STPM	Seminario Teológico Presbiteriano de Mexico A. C.

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## PREFACE

God has blessed me with an opportunity to do in my later years that which I have longed to do since childhood—serve as a missionary. It has been a joy to serve in the country of Mexico for three years and now in all of Latin America training pastors. T

I am grateful to missionaries with whom I have worked in Oaxaca doing pastor training and to those who have contributed your thoughts to this research. Your skills and heart for the local church have been an inspiration to me. There are also other missionaries and educators, not least of whom is my doctoral supervisor, Dr. M. David Sills, who have poured of their experience and labor into my life. You have enriched me and equipped me for what I do now.

I am grateful for my family. Beverly, my wife, has been patient over many years of working at my side and seeing the Lord lead us thus far. I love you and I am grateful for the way you have been a helpmeet in every way. Our children, Aaron and Amy, have been a blessing to us. I am thankful to you and to Amelia and James for the grandchildren you have given us.

Most of all, I am filled with gratitude and humility for the work the Lord has done and is doing in and through me to allow this poor sinner to do anything for His glory. Jesus paid it all!

Anthony Steele

Mayfield, Kentucky

May 2016

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The history of the modern missions movement has passed through phases that have included various emphases including world evangelization, contextualization, people group strategies, and, with some major denominations, the complete withdrawal of a missionary force or transforming missions involvement into social programs only. Missions strategies may fluctuate according to current trends. The challenge is to find the strategy that is both biblical and effective. For those who have a high view of the Scriptures, the biblical method is the only effective method.

Increasingly, missiologists are recognizing that it is time for churches and leaders in the Global South to take the lead. The goal is that pastors and leaders be equipped to evangelize their own nations and people groups and to send their own missionaries abroad to participate in a more active and more effective way in the work of world evangelization.<sup>1</sup> The need to train indigenous and national pastors is perhaps the greatest contemporary need in missions and global church planting efforts. The question remains, “How can churches in the Global South be equipped to take on this leadership role in world evangelization?” Increasingly, scholars see that the key to the Global South church taking the lead in this way is adequate theological training of indigenous pastors. This training equips pastors and leaders to strengthen their local churches and to provide a check against doctrinal error spreading among churches and church planting

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<sup>1</sup>Although several writers have declared the need for indigenous pastor training from Henry Venn, John Nevius, Hudson Taylor, Roland Allen, Melvin Hodges, and David Bosch throughout the history of the modern missions movement, an increasing number of missiologists are calling for a more focused strategy of indigenous pastor training in our day, including M. David Sills.

movements in the Global South. The ultimate aim is a strong church in these regions of the world fulfilling a robust role in completing the Great Commission.

### **Purpose**

This dissertation will examine and address the needs for theological training for pastors and leaders in Mexico's Oaxaca state. The dissertation will seek to answer the following questions: What access to theological education do pastors in Oaxaca currently have? What needs for theological training still exist? What are the challenges to providing a minimal level of training to pastors and leaders in Oaxaca? Finally, what are some strategies that might be implemented to provide pastors and leaders in Oaxaca the training they need? Although theological education opportunities do exist in Mexico, those opportunities are generally not accessible to pastors who live in remote villages or whose economic circumstances do not allow them to leave home for training. The goal of this dissertation, then, will be to propose solutions to this challenge so that missionaries and missions agencies may implement appropriate strategies to meet the need.

The state of Oaxaca in Mexico is among the most diverse areas of the country in terms of the sheer concentration of indigenous ethnolinguistic groups. John Schmal writes, "Even today, it is believed that at least half of the population of Oaxaca still speaks an indigenous dialect."<sup>2</sup> Because of the rugged topography of Oaxaca, different groups have been separated from one another for millennia, a reality that has allowed the development of different cultural and linguistic patterns that remain evident to this day. A few larger language groups within Oaxaca exist such as Zapotec, Mixtec, and Mixe, but some language groups contain a significant number of dialects, which may almost be characterized as separate languages. For example, it is not uncommon to find Zapotec speakers who live only one or two mountains apart who are unable to understand one

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<sup>2</sup>John P. Schmal, "The indigenous people of Oaxaca," accessed May 26, 2015, <http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/371-the-indigenous-people-of-oaxaca>.

another's language completely. Many individuals among these ethnolinguistic groups cannot or by choice do not read their own language. According to records from the Mexican census office INEGI, roughly sixteen per cent of the population of Oaxaca fifteen years or older is unable to read in any language.<sup>3</sup>

Oaxaca State is roughly comparable to the U. S. state of Indiana in terms of area at 93,793 square kilometers or roughly 36,200 square miles. The total population of the state of Oaxaca is nearly 3.8 million according to the 2012 census estimates. Of this number, over a million people speak an indigenous language besides Spanish.<sup>4</sup>

The state of Oaxaca is divided into 570 *municipios* (a *municipio* is roughly the equivalent of a county or parish in the United States), which constitute nearly one-fourth of all *municipios* in Mexico. The sheer number of *municipios* in Oaxaca is due to the rugged topography of most of the state. These *municipios* are also included in about thirty districts in eight regions within the state of Oaxaca. Of the 570 *municipios* of Oaxaca, 418 are governed by a system called *Usos y costumbres*, a federally recognized system of local self-governance.<sup>5</sup> According to the practice of *Usos y costumbres*, the federal government of Mexico often takes a hands-off approach to such communities, an approach which allows a near autonomous self-rule. In this system, to a degree, even the criminal elements are permitted to lead until such time that the federal government is required to step in to keep the peace in certain areas.

Geographic conditions within Oaxaca also directly impact the governance and

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<sup>3</sup>INEGI, Cuéntame . . . Información por entidad/Oaxaca, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/oax/poblacion/educacion.aspx?tema=me&e=20>. INEGI is an acronym for Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, with offices in Aguascalientes, Mexico and formed by presidential decree January 25, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>INEGI, México en Cifras: Información Nacional, por Entidad Federativa y Municipios, accessed March 25, 2015, available at <http://www3.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/mexicocifras/default.aspx?e=20>.

<sup>5</sup>Canedo Vásquez, Gabriela, "Una conquista indígena. Reconocimiento de municipios por 'usos y costumbres' en Oaxaca (México)," *La Economía Política de la Pobreza*, ed. Alberto Cimadadore (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2008), 401, PDF, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/clacso/crop/cimada/Vasquez.pdf>.

commerce of the state in various locations. For example, it is often necessary for individuals to travel from remote villages to centers of commerce (*distrito* cities) in order to do business. This is both due to the political realities on the ground and the rugged topography of mountainous regions of Oaxaca. This context is a critical component in any strategy to reach pastors for training, as pastors are required to participate in the same commercial movements as the rest of the population in order to make a living.

When one speaks of the need for theological education in Mexico's indigenous areas various challenges come to mind. First among these challenges would be that, although various indigenous groups have been reached with the gospel at some level, a significant need for theological training still exists. Joshua Project variously describes the progress of reaching Oaxaca's indigenous groups as formative or established.<sup>6</sup> Although the gospel has penetrated into most regions of Oaxaca, the level of discipleship and theological development remains lacking, as will be demonstrated in this study. This reality can lead to a certain level of evangelism and church planting without commensurate theological sophistication. The end result can be a significant number of churches and believers with an immature faith and a propensity to theological error.

Another challenge is the ever-present reality of syncretism in Mexico. Syncretism is traditionally a way of life in Mexico. From the introduction of Christianity into Mexico and other parts of the New World there has been a mixing of indigenous religions and Catholicism. Justice Anderson writes, "Religiously, the Mexican harbors a dichotomy between anti-clerical secularism with its rampant materialism, and folk-Catholicism with its religious syncretism."<sup>7</sup> Even evangelical churches demonstrate some level of syncretism within their worship and teaching. Nicole Sault, in her discussion of

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<sup>6</sup>JoshuaProject.net Home/People Groups/Listings/All Countries/Country: Mexico, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://joshuaproject.net/countries/MX>. Joshua Project's levels are roughly defined as "formative" being from 2 to 5 percent evangelical and "established" being more than 5 percent evangelical.

<sup>7</sup>Justice C. Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga: Baptists and their Precursors in Latin America* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 75.

godparenthood relationships among Zapotec women notes, “Recent research has demonstrated that religious identity and affiliation may be fluid and flexible, often moving back and forth or combining two traditions, whether these be Catholic, Protestant, or indigenous Mayan traditions.”<sup>8</sup>

A third challenge may be seen in the general lack of accessibility to theological training in Mexico in general and Oaxaca in particular. Baptist work in Oaxaca goes back to the beginnings of Baptist missions in Mexico. The Mexican Baptist Convention has made efforts to provide theological education through seminaries.<sup>9</sup> Historically, efforts to provide opportunities for Mexican Baptist pastors have been hindered by revolution,<sup>10</sup> theological schisms with North American missions entities,<sup>11</sup> growth of independent Baptist churches in Mexico,<sup>12</sup> interpersonal relationship problems between Mexican Baptists,<sup>13</sup> and changing strategies by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (IMBSBC).<sup>14</sup> Although two seminaries in Mexico have ties to the Mexican Baptist Convention, recent figures indicate two hundred students in both seminaries combined.<sup>15</sup> This number is not to be disparaged, but it is an indication of the

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<sup>8</sup>Nicole L. Sault, “Godparenthood Ties among Zapotec Women and the Effects of Protestant Conversion,” in *Holy Saints and Fiery Preachers: The Anthropology of Protestantism in Mexico and Central America*, ed. James W. Dow and Alan R. Sandstrom (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 135-36.

<sup>9</sup>Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 123-25. Anderson discusses the process of integrating the work of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (now the International Mission Board) with the Mexican Baptist Convention, during which time advances were made in theological education opportunities within Mexico. The G. H. Lacy Baptist Seminary located in Oaxaca City is mentioned as having expanded its program for preparation of Mexican theological students (125).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 121-22.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 125-26.

<sup>15</sup>CNBM: “102 Reunión Plenaria, Tepic, Nayarit, 2011,” accessed September 4, 2015, <http://www.pibjuarez.com/editoriales/E-00422I.pdf>. This document from the 2011 meeting of the Mexican Baptist Convention reports 103 students enrolled at G.H. Lacy Seminary and 97 enrolled at Lomas Verde (Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary).

need for additional efforts to train pastors in a nation of 115 million people. Many Baptist pastors in Oaxaca are not able to move themselves and their families to one of the two seminaries in Mexico making seminary education a nearly impossible option.

### **Definitions**

Before discussing the background and scope of this dissertation, it may be helpful to provide some definitions of key terms pertinent to the study. I have already used the term “Global South” in the introduction of this prospectus. During the Cold War, the world was often divided into three parts: the Western Bloc nations (the United States and other NATO countries), the Eastern Bloc nations (the Soviet Union and other Eastern European communist countries), and the Third World (undeveloped or developing nations not a part of the other two categories). In 1981, Willy Brandt wrote the introduction to the study done by the Independent Commission on International Development Issues. The report was entitled “North-South: A Program for Survival.”<sup>16</sup> In his introduction, Brandt spoke of the world in terms of the more economically developed North (the U.S.A., Europe, and the Soviet Bloc countries, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand) and the developing nations of the South (including South Asia, Africa, and Latin America). This distinction was widely accepted and continues to be used.

This study focuses on certain ethnolinguistic groups. Ethnolinguistics is a branch of cultural anthropology that attempts to see people groups in terms of their culture and language. The assumption is that culture and language both contribute to the worldview of a people. Paul Hiebert refers to the same field of study as ethnolinguistics when he describes “anthropological linguistics.” He writes, “Anthropological linguistics examines how language is used by ordinary people in the many different settings of

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<sup>16</sup>Willy Brandt, “A Plea for Change: Peace, Justice, Jobs, An Introduction by Willy Brandt,” *North-South: A Program for Survival* (London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1980), 7-29.

everyday life.”<sup>17</sup> He expanded on this definition, “The model here is not of communication as transmission and reception of information, but as transaction and the means to building relationships. In other words, the model links linguistic systems to the larger social and cultural systems in which communication is embedded.”<sup>18</sup> References to the terms “ethnolinguistics” or “ethnolinguistic groups” refer to this interaction between language and culture in a specific people group.

With ethnolinguistic groups in mind, reference will be made to certain groups in particular. The Zapotecs (*Zapoteca* in Spanish) and Mestizos are the predominant ethnolinguistic groups related to this study. Since these are the primary groups in the geographical area pertaining to this study, they will be the groups referenced most frequently. Zapotecs are a people group related to the ancient Maya people of the southern part of Mexico. Significant remnants of this people group are still extant in Oaxaca. The term “mestizo” refers to people of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry in Latin America in general and in Mexico specifically.

As pastor training is the focus of this study, it is important to understand what such training means. Pastor training, for the purposes of this study, refers to the instruction of a basic curriculum in pastoral studies which includes Old and New Testament Surveys as well as studies of Christian doctrines, church history, hermeneutics, missions and evangelism, homiletics, family ministry and counseling, and worship leadership.<sup>19</sup> This basic curriculum is intended to provide pastors a foundation upon which to build their further studies as well as tools for use in day-to-day ministry of the local church. The ultimate goal is to equip pastors and churches to disciple their congregations effectively leading to further evangelism, discipleship and church planting.

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<sup>17</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 96.

<sup>18</sup>Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 96-97.

<sup>19</sup>This list is drawn from the Training Schedule used by Reaching & Teaching International Ministries (RTIM) led by M. David Sills.

M. David Sills, in his book *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience*, focuses on the need to prepare pastors with a threefold emphasis. He describes holistic pastor training as that which impacts the *head* or academic studies based on the Bible, the *hands* or practical studies related to administration of the local church, and *heart* or personal studies designed to enrich the pastor's personal spiritual life and walk with the Lord.<sup>20</sup>

### **Background**

My personal interest in Mexico and the training of pastors in the nation began with a calling to go there as a missionary in 2006. My personal calling to missions began during childhood, but due to various circumstances, including some family health issues, I was unable to go to the mission field until later in life.

I became involved in 2007 with the Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association in Kentucky and its role as a Strategy Coordinator<sup>21</sup> Association in the state of Zacatecas in Mexico.<sup>22</sup> I was challenged by Rick Reeder, the Director of Missions, in a meeting in November, 2006, to consider taking part with the association in a strategy to saturate all the *municipios* of southern Zacatecas with the gospel. The International Mission Board was at that time offering training for Strategy Coordinator churches, associations, and individuals which included two segments: Frontliner Training, for the purpose of training individuals to relate appropriately to another culture, and Strategy Coordinator Training, which had as its goal the equipping of churches to develop and implement a careful

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<sup>20</sup>M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 52-58.

<sup>21</sup>The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention implemented a program whereby churches and associations could be trained to adopt a region or people group in order to focus personal attention on reaching that area or group with the gospel. Training for said churches or associations was provided. The current program that replaced the Strategy Coordinator program is explained in footnote 23.

<sup>22</sup>The Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association is an association of thirty-nine churches affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention with offices at 45 Old Connector Highway, Princeton, Kentucky.

strategy to reach a particular city, area, or people group with the gospel.

I received both segments of this training in January and February of 2007 in Leon, Mexico from IMB missionaries who were then serving in the MAC (Middle American Caribbean) region of IMB work in the world.<sup>23</sup> Though I was generally aware of the need to be sensitive to the culture where the gospel is being presented, the need to do so was impressed upon me more profoundly as a result of this training. Seeds were planted in my mind that produced the fruit of an awareness of the importance of cultural considerations when doing mission work. I was also developing a sense that if missions was to be done correctly, it would best be done by those equipped to do so in their own culture.

As the call to be missionaries in Mexico was impressed upon my wife, Beverly, and me, we began to prepare ourselves for service there. We were accepted for appointment as missionaries with Global Outreach International, a missions agency with headquarters in Tupelo, Mississippi.<sup>24</sup> After raising necessary support, we began Spanish language training at the Instituto de Lengua Española or The Spanish Language Institute in San Jose, Costa Rica.<sup>25</sup> After language school, we moved to Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico in 2012 where we served as missionary church planters and church workers for nearly three years.

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<sup>23</sup>The International Mission Board has changed from a regional approach to an affinity group approach to seeing and addressing the evangelism needs of the world. Most of the individuals in North and South America would currently fall under the “American Peoples” affinity group, though not exclusively. Missionaries with the IMB have lately been appointed with the targeting of a particular affinity group in mind and not according to a specific region necessarily, though some affinity groups are particular to a region of the world even now. Much of the training available at the time I described is now available under the “Partner Connect” church training program of the IMB. Details of this program may be seen at the International Mission Board’s website: Global Research: IMB Connecting, “Affinity Groups around the World,” accessed February 14, 2016, <http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Pages/MapAffinityGroups.aspx>.

<sup>24</sup>Sammy and Sue Simpson and L. D. and Elaine Hancock began Global Outreach International in Tupelo, Mississippi in 1970. Go Info: About this ministry, accessed March 31, 2015, [http://globaloutreach.org/go\\_info.html](http://globaloutreach.org/go_info.html).

<sup>25</sup>Information on the school may be found at The Spanish Language Institute: Equipping to Serve, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.thespanishinstitute.com/index.html>.

Over time the need as well as the lack of availability for pastoral training among the Mexican pastors became increasingly evident to me. After receiving training through Bible Training Centre for Pastors in El Paso, Texas, in March, 2013, I began to train some local pastors/leaders in Jerez.<sup>26</sup> I also became involved in pastor training that was being conducted by the Caldwell/Lyon Baptist Association in the state of Zacatecas. The need and desire for this training was evident in the students I have served and taught. I have known Mexican pastors who have struggled without adequate training and others who have gained training, often through considerable ingenuity and at great expense.

In 2013, I was invited to come to Pluma Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Mexico, to participate in a pastor training school by my missionary friend, Nathan Stanley. During my time there, I was impressed with the need and desire for training on the part of the pastors there. I realized that the key to impacting the strength of the churches in this part of the world to evangelize and disciple in their communities would be through providing basic pastor and leader training. I am now involved in a continuing project of pastor training in this part of Oaxaca

In 2013-2014, the call to be involved in pastor training in Mexico and beyond became clearer in my mind. In November 2014, I became part of Reaching & Teaching International Ministries (RTIM) under the leadership of M. David Sills.<sup>27</sup> I began with RTIM as the Mexico Field Coordinator, and in February 2015, I was asked to serve as Training Facilitator for Latin America. In this role, it is my responsibility to facilitate pastor-training projects through research, church team orientations, training site visits, and development of new training sites throughout Latin America. I also have

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<sup>26</sup>Dennis Mock began Bible Training Centre for Pastors or BTCP after he received a burden for the need for pastoral training in Nairobi, Kenya in 1988. He “wrote a comprehensive 10-course curriculum designed to equip pastors with essential Bible knowledge and basic pastoral skills.” Bible Training Centre for Pastors, accessed March 31, 2015 <http://bibletraining.com/get-to-know-us/who-we-are/>.

<sup>27</sup>RTIM was founded by M. David Sills, who serves as president. Information on this international ministry may be obtained at [www.reachingandteaching.org](http://www.reachingandteaching.org), accessed March 31, 2015.

responsibilities within the United States to promote RTIM and assist other staff with Spanish-speaking contacts.

While pursuing the Doctor of Missiology degree at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I have attended seminars and heard the heartfelt appeal of professor David Sills as he described the tremendous need for pastor training in the Majority World. This has played a significant part in the burden I currently have for indigenous pastor training and in my current role with RTIM.

During my studies in pursuit of the Doctor of Missiology degree, I was impressed by the realization that indigenization in each location is vital. Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson wrote of the need for indigenous equipping and control over the mission churches from as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Venn and Anderson are credited with the “three-self” principle of indigenous church planting.<sup>28</sup>

John Livingstone Nevius, a missionary in China with the American Presbyterian Mission, was asked by missionaries in Korea to advise them on methods of church planting. Nevius expanded on the “three-self” principles of Venn and Anderson. He stressed the need for indigenous churches calling their own pastors and these pastors receiving intensive training on a yearly basis.<sup>29</sup>

Roland Allen also stressed the need for the equipping of indigenous pastors. Serving as a missionary in North China with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Allen highlighted the need for training candidates for ordination but not prior to baptism, as was the practice of many of his contemporary missionary colleagues. In

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<sup>28</sup>Henry Venn, an Anglican clergyman with the Church Missionary Society, wrote various sermons and pamphlets on the subject, including “Colonial Church Legislation” (1850) and “Retrospect and Prospect of the Operations of the Church Missionary Society” (1865). Rufus Anderson, an American Congregationalist pastor and missionary, stressed the need for a “competent native ministry” which would equip national churches to be independent of the control of Western missions agencies. Anderson wrote numerous articles in *The Missionary Herald*. These two men are credited with the “three-self” principles of missions church planting, those principles being “self-propagation, self-government, and self-supporting.”

<sup>29</sup>John L. Nevius, *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (New York: Foreign Mission Library, 1899), 39-42.

*Missionary Methods*, Allen advocated for a rapid deployment of pastors, elders, and missionaries among the nationals, but stressed the need for the equipping of these men within a national context. He discouraged the “sending away” of young ministry candidates for foreign education that rendered them incapable of relating to their parishioners.<sup>30</sup>

Melvin Hodges, the missiologist and Assemblies of God missionary to Nicaragua, was also influential in the advancement of indigenous church principles. He, similar to some of his predecessors, stressed the need for trained local leadership. He stated that this training should be specific to the locale where pastors, elders, and leaders were serving.<sup>31</sup> In other words, indigenous leaders need to be trained to serve their communities according to biblical principles and not according to the background of the Western missionary.

More recently, other missiologists have debated the need for greater independence for indigenous or national churches in contextualizing the gospel in their own particular contexts. Alan Tippett expanded the “three-self” concept of Venn and Anderson to include six “selves.” He described them as “The Marks of an Indigenous Church” and they are: self-image, self-function, self-determination, self-support, self-propagation, and self-giving.<sup>32</sup>

Other missiologists have discussed the need for another “self”—“self-theologizing.” Paul Hiebert argued that this quality of indigenization was rarely discussed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>33</sup> The Dutch Reformed missiologist, David

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<sup>30</sup>Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 95-107.

<sup>31</sup>Melvin L. Hodges, *On the Mission Field: The Indigenous Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), 48-63.

<sup>32</sup>Alan R. Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1987), 378-81.

<sup>33</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 97.

Bosch, described the perceived need for “enculturation” of the Christian message, “a plurality of cultures presupposes a plurality of theologies and therefore, a farewell to a Eurocentric approach. . . . The Christian faith must be rethought, reformulated and lived anew in each human culture, and this must be done in a *vital* way, in depth and right to the cultures’ roots.”<sup>34</sup>

The ideas of “self-theologizing” and contextualization, in general, have been somewhat controversial historically. Questions have been raised as to whether permission to self-theologize is permission to change the biblical account and gospel message to accommodate the culture. However, M. David Sills, in his discussion of the controversy concerning contextualization noted, “The controversy is surprising, both because contextualization is as old as the Bible itself and because it is impossible to reach, preach, and teach the gospel among the nations faithfully without doing it.”<sup>35</sup> Based on Sills statement, missionaries and missiologists should seek to make the gospel and the claims of Christ understood in any culture, remembering that it is imperative that the message be biblical rather than based on the worldview and biases of a particular culture.

Current trends in global missions advancement reveal the need for more thorough preparation of the preachers of the gospel throughout the world. Cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses continue to have a considerable impact in Mexico and in Oaxaca in particular. The so-called “prosperity gospel” is gaining a strong foothold throughout the world. In many parts of Mexico, as well as the rest of Latin America and other parts of the world, various aspects of animism continue to be introduced even in the teachings of evangelical churches.<sup>36</sup> Besides these dangerous movements, the tendency for legalism

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<sup>34</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 463.

<sup>35</sup>M. David Sills, “Paul and Contextualization,” in *Paul’s Missionary Methods: In His Time and Ours*, ed. Robert L. Plummer and John Mark Terry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 196.

<sup>36</sup>Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, 154-63. In this section of chap. 8, Sills discusses the “Historical Dangers Avoided,” the “Historical Dangers Escaped,” and the “Historical Dangers Embraced,” addressing in detail the need for pastor training that exists today in the context of historical heresies and

and exclusivism exists even among relatively doctrinally sound churches. These facts, among others, point out the need for biblically based training of church pastors and leaders throughout the world today.

In my role as a trainer of pastors in Latin America, it is my desire to provide that training with the greatest skill and using the most effective methodology to produce the desired result. I hope to contribute to the ongoing work of indigenous pastor training in Oaxaca in Mexico and other parts of the world through this research.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

I recognize that this study is limited by several factors. While there are many ethnolinguistic groups in Oaxaca with evangelical churches and pastors who need to be trained, it will not be possible to be specific as to language, literacy levels, locations, and feasibility of travel as it relates to each one. Instead, it is necessary to limit my focus on a few groups and their cultural contexts, deriving generalizations that may be applied to other ethnolinguistic groups in Oaxaca.

Similarly, this study is limited by the fact that it is not possible to evaluate the results of research over an extended period of time. Pastor training projects that are studied are relatively new and do not have a demonstrated track record over time. The study is thus delimited to only one short-term project team training and the results that I was able to glean from this week of training.

This study is also be delimited by the ethnolinguistic groups chosen and the geographic locations visited. For example, I focus much attention on Mestizo and Zapotec pastors in the Costa and Central Valley regions of Oaxaca State in Mexico. This study is delimited to pastors of denominations with Baptist and Pentecostal traditions. Finally, this study is delimited to Spanish speakers exclusively. While the pastors may

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modern-day false gospels.

speaking an indigenous language such as Zapotec, they must also be able to communicate well in Spanish. Therefore, this study will not focus on monolingual indigenous pastors.

### **Methodology**

This study uses three sources of research data. Those sources include bibliographic sources regarding ethnography, historical background, and historical modes of training pastors in the region. A second source is data gained from a pastor training in which I participated. Results of the training are measured in order to determine the information received by the participants. Another source is interviews of actual missionaries on the field as to their experiences and attempts at providing training for pastors. From these sources of information, I have drawn conclusions as to the effectiveness of various modes of doing pastor training and made recommendations as to the most effective.

In order to conduct extensive study on the needs for pastoral training in the State of Oaxaca in Mexico it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of the history, geography, language, and culture of the region in the broader context of the history of Mexico. It is also necessary to study the history of evangelicalism in this part of the world, drawing from bibliographic sources as well as that of experienced missionaries and missiologists who have worked or done research in the area.

I also draw insights and lessons from actual experience of implementing pastor training in the region. Through my position with Reaching & Teaching International Ministries, I have launched a pastor-training project in the Costa region of Oaxaca State. This project is currently taking place in the cities of Pluma Hidalgo and Pochutla. The first training was held July 2015 and the second November 2015.

I also use the experiences of other missionaries and missiologists in the region. Oaxaca City is a regional headquarters for a number of missions agencies in Mexico including Reaching & Teaching International Ministries, Wycliffe Bible Translators, and

To Every Tribe. I have interviewed several missionaries from some of these and other pertinent missions agencies to determine what effective methods have been used in the area in order to accomplish pastor training.

The goal of this study is to describe and develop an effective and replicable method for implementing pastor training in Oaxaca state. Therefore this study incorporates theoretical as well as practical components that inform the overall goal of the study. Using the results from a training project in which I participated in Oaxaca and the experiences of other missionaries in Oaxaca, I make recommendations on the most effective modes of pastor training going forward.

Chapter 1 introduces the research question by providing an overview of the historical, political, cultural, educational and economic backgrounds of the target area of study—Oaxaca, Mexico. The research problem of the need for an effective pastor training module and the challenges in accomplishing it is introduced. The research methodology is explained and definitions provided.

Chapter 2 includes a brief discussion of the history, culture, and geography of Mexico in general and of Oaxaca state in particular, paying special attention to the factors that shape and inform the research problem of this study. Attention will be given to the themes of conquest, Catholicity, syncretism, and revolution. Economic and political factors will also be explored in more detail as background to the study. Finally, a history of evangelization in the region is explored to provide background to the current need for pastor training.

Chapter 3 deals with some biblical principles involved in a strategy for training pastors. Special emphasis is placed on the question of how to provide pastor training that is also biblical discipleship. The chapter also provides an overview of possible strategies for pastor training in the Oaxaca state. The intent of this chapter is to demonstrate an awareness of options and present these to the reader for consideration. Although one method—the Short-term Team Module approach receives special scrutiny in this study, I

share other approaches as well which may be implemented.

Chapter 4 is an overview of findings from a training event for pastors in the region according to the module approach using the Short-term Team Training Project model. These findings are based on a training event for pastors that took place in November 2015 in the Oaxaca Costa region of Mexico. The study includes measurements of the effectiveness of the chosen training model and evaluations of the results. The pastors involved in the case study include monolingual (Spanish only) and bilingual (Spanish and Zapotec) participants.

Chapter 5 provides concluding thoughts and recommendations for missionaries and missions agencies that have an interest in and a need for pastor training strategies in this region of the world. A discussion of generally applicable principles that may be duplicated in other regions of the world in mission work and pastor training is also provided.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF OAXACA: FROM PRE-CONQUEST THROUGH EVANGELIZATION

A basic understanding of the ethnological, political, and missions history in the nation of Mexico is helpful and necessary before investigating current needs for pastor training in Oaxaca state in particular. The history of Oaxaca, in many respects, parallels the history of the nation. What impacted Mexico in any period impacted Oaxaca as well. This chapter will attempt to provide an overview of that history and will attempt to bring the reader's understanding of the historical context of pastor training in the state of Oaxaca closer to the present day reality. What follows is a broad overview of a complex history. The scope of this research does not permit an exhaustive treatment of such a complex history. Hopefully, however, the reader will have a general understanding of historical contexts that shape the present day situation within Oaxaca.

#### **Pre-Columbian Oaxaca in the Wider Context of Mexico (c. 1,000 B.C.E. – 1519 C.E.)**

##### **Ethnological History in Mexico**

Long before the conquest of the Spaniards, independence struggles, or the development of a national republic in what is today known as Mexico, there were Mesoamerican civilizations and governments were present in Mexico and these still startle us with their complexities and advanced technologies. Merrill and Miró write, “The cultural heritage of the Aztec, the Maya, and other advanced civilizations, seen in the ruins of their temples and in their artifacts, bears witness to the achievements of the

early inhabitants of Mesoamerica.”<sup>1</sup> Charles Cumberland describes the settlement of the Valley of Mexico prior to conquest:

Pre-conquest Mexico was a mixture of societies, the majority linked by conquest and tribute payments as well as by trade with the central highland Aztecs. Into the Valley of Mexico wandering tribes of Nahuatl-speaking people had migrated from the north and west, and when they saw the beauty and the richness of the land, with the lake in the floor of the Valley, they had conquered its inhabitants and remained. Early in the fourteenth century the final Nahuatl remnant arrived and, finding all the rich Valley land occupied, settled on the barren islands in the lake. There in the succeeding century the island people—the Tenochca or the Mexica of Tenochtitlán—established a strong civilization.<sup>2</sup>

The history of civilization in Mesoamerica dates from the second millennia B.C.E., preceding the Spanish conquest by more than three thousand years. David Carrasco writes, “The social history of permanent Mesoamerican ceremonial centers begins around 1800 BCE with the rise of the Olmec Style of art and architecture found in a variety of sacred precincts and caves, originating in the lowland regions of southern Vera Cruz and western Tabasco near the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.”<sup>3</sup>

The Olmec people apparently preceded all other known people groups in Mexico. In the mid-nineteenth century, evidence of this early civilization was discovered in the Veracruz highlands. A monolith of a human head that appeared almost African was discovered indicating the presence of a rather advanced civilization prior to the Mayas and certainly the Aztecs in Mexico. Carbon dating of Olmec artifacts places the Olmecs in Mesoamerica to as early as the second millennia BCE. With what has been discovered thus far, there is no clear evidence that more recent civilizations descended from the Olmecs.<sup>4</sup> Though it is necessary to mention the existence of the Olmec civilization as a

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<sup>1</sup>Tim L. Merrill and Ramón Miró, eds., *Mexico: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 1997), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 17.

<sup>3</sup>David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica: Cosmology and Ceremonial Centers* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1990), 30.

<sup>4</sup>Jacques Soustelle, *The Olmecs: The Oldest Civilization in Mexico* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1984), 6.

part of an accurate ethnological history of Mexico, a detailed discussion of the Olmecs and possible links to the extant ethnolinguistic groups of Oaxaca will be left to another study.

Mexico's indigenous peoples prior to the arrival of the Spanish may be divided into two groups: hunter-gatherer peoples of the north and the more agricultural peoples of the south. The people groups of the north were generally grouped by those of the south in a group known as the *Chichimecs* – roughly the equivalent of “barbarians” in the *Nahua* language.<sup>5</sup> The regions in the south of Mexico were more heavily populated due to the prevalence of arable lands. The staple of the indigenous diet was maize and the ability to grow this crop in abundance led to the relative prosperity of the peoples of the south as well as a tendency to stay in place and develop more stable systems of governance and societal and religious infrastructure. Thus, the peoples of the south developed a pantheon of gods to protect their year-to-year agricultural interests.<sup>6</sup> The result was the development of relatively complex and stable societies in the central and southern portions of Mexico. Among these societies were the Maya of the Yucatan, the Totonacs of the gulf coastal regions, Mixtecs and Zapotecs of the southern highlands in modern day Oaxaca and Guerrero states, and, of course, the Aztecs of the valley of Mexico to name a few of the prominent groups. T. R. Fehrenbach, in describing Mexican civilization prior to the Spanish conquest writes, “This civilization had three great focal points: Teotihuacán in the Valley of Mexico, Monte Albán in the region of the Zapotecs, and a splendid series of Maya cities in the south, from Palenque to Copán.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Soustelle, *The Olmecs*, 18.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>T. R. Fehrenbach, *Fire and Blood: A History of Mexico* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973), 29.

## **Oaxaca's Inhabitants Prior to the Spanish Conquest**

Prior to the coming of the Spanish various groups were inhabiting the highlands, central valley, and coastal regions of what is today Oaxaca state in Mexico. These indigenous groups were many, but the predominant groups were the Mixtecs, and the Zapotecs. The Zapotec capital, Monte Alban, was located in the temperate central valley near modern Oaxaca City. Evidence of an advanced civilization still remains in the ruins of Monte Alban. The Zapotecs spread into the Sierra Madre Sur, that stretches to the south of the Monte Alban site, and all the way into the Pacific coastal regions south of the mountains. The Zapotecs left behind documentation of “conquests, alliances, and royal genealogies.”<sup>8</sup>

The Mixtec civilization was less centralized. Instead, “the Mixtec developed a system of *caricazgos* (semi-independent polities) in the smaller valleys of their rugged province.”<sup>9</sup> The Mixtecs also spread toward the coastal regions to the north of the Zapotec area (modern-day Oaxaca and Guerrero states).

The stability of the Zapotec and Mixtec civilizations may be derived partly from their ability and desire to live in villages and larger societies rather than live as nomads as other hunter-gatherer groups in Mexico tended to do at this time. Charles C. Mann writes of the Zapotecs in Oaxaca,

The Zapotec were based across the mountains from the Olmec, in Oaxaca's high Central Valley—three forty-to-sixty-mile-long bowls that intersect in a ragged Y. By about 1550 B.C., they were abandoning the life of hunting and gathering to live in villages with defensive palisades. These early villages had wattle-and-daub houses, fine pottery, and some public architecture. They were controlled by ‘big men,’ the social scientist's term for the alpha male who is able in informal settings to enforce his will through persuasion or force. Within a few hundred years, the big men

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<sup>8</sup>Richard E. W. Adams, introduction to *The Cambridge History of the Native American Peoples: Mesoamerica*, vol. 2, pt.1, ed. Richard E. W. Adams and Murdo J. MacLeod (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>9</sup>Joyce Marcus and Kent B. Flannery, “Cultural Evolution in Oaxaca,” in *The Cambridge History of the Native American Peoples: Mesoamerica*, vol. 2, pt. 1, edited by Richard E. W. Adams and Murdo J. MacLeod (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 360. Italics and parenthetical description are the authors.

acquired *rank*—that is, they began to wield power not only because of their personal charisma, but also because their societies had given them an elevated official position. . . . Soon the valley was dominated by three main chiefdoms, one at each endpoint of the Y. They did not get along; a thirty-square-mile buffer zone in the middle, Flannery and Marcus noted, was “virtually unoccupied.”<sup>10</sup>

Such were the realities politically and culturally in the region of Oaxaca just prior to the arrival of the Spanish in 1519. The “chiefdoms” that Mann describes were in place when the Spanish arrived and either interacted and negotiated with the Spanish or retreated into isolation to avoid them.

Religious similarities also existed between various groups in Mesoamerica, including the Zapotecs and others in the region of Oaxaca. Carrasco writes, “The Mesoamerican universe, in its various formulations, had a geometry consisting of three general levels: an overworld or celestial space; the middleworld or earthly level; and the underworld (Mictlan, Place of the Dead).<sup>11</sup> The religion of the Zapotecs centered on astrological signs and their impact on agricultural cycles similar to other groups in Mesoamerica and South America. Concerns for well-being in day-to-day life and survival among the Zapotecs led to the development of a pantheon and various rituals to appease their gods.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Spanish Conquest (1519-1810 C.E.)**

The Aztec capital at Tenochtitlán (current-day Mexico City) was an impressive site to Hernán Cortés and the Spanish conquistadors when they arrived November 8, 1519. Dirk Van Tuerenhout wrote that population estimates of Tenochtitlán at that time range from 150,000 to as much as one million and that the city was of such sophisticated

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<sup>10</sup>Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, Vintage Books, 2006), 241-42. Regarding his date of 1550 B.C., Mann wrote in a footnote, “Here, as elsewhere in this book, I am being chronologically inexact. The oldest Zapotec palisade Flannery and Marcus excavated yielded calibrated radiocarbon dates in the range between 1680 and 1410 B.C., which for brevity’s sake I render as ‘about 1550 B.C.’”

<sup>11</sup>Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*, 51.

<sup>12</sup>Mann, *1491*, 242-52.

construction and organization that Cortés' men were impressed with the infrastructure and mobility of the population within the city.<sup>13</sup> The Spaniards would soon see evidence of the same level of sophistication among other civilizations in Mexico, such as those already established in the region that is Oaxaca.

### **Colonization of Mexico and Oaxaca**

The Spaniards quickly began interacting with indigenous groups within Mexico. The motivations of colonial territorial expansion and the search for treasures to return for the Spanish Crown produced a desire either to exploit relations with indigenous societies or to subjugate them toward that end. At the same time, an already extant history of conquest and negotiation between indigenous groups within Mexico made such conquest and subjugation on the part of the Spaniards somewhat possible.

After Hernán Cortés conquered Mexico, Carlos V, Emperor of Spain, named him the Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca (Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca), taking claim of the riches of Oaxaca.<sup>14</sup> The Spanish came into Oaxaca seeking gold and the other treasures of the region, claiming them for the Crown of Spain. Murdo J. MacLeod, describing the Spaniards introduction into the lands of the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca, wrote,

Native peoples of Oaxaca retained their lands and languages far more than elsewhere, in part because Spaniards were relatively few in number. More importantly, however, was that the sought-after local products, silk and, especially later, cochineal, were luxuries requiring intricate processes and specialized manual labor, not tasks to

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<sup>13</sup>Dirk R. Van Tuerenhout, *The Aztecs: New Perspectives* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 147.

<sup>14</sup>Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, eds., "Hernán Cortés's Brief to Carlos V Concerning the Injuries Done to Him by the Viceroy of Nueva España, June 25, 1540: AGI, Patronato, 21, N.2.R.42," in *Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539-1542: "They Were Not Familiar with His Majesty, nor Did They Wish to Be His Subjects"* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 242.

which elites were likely to flock.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Oaxaca's indigenous groups seem to have adapted to Spanish encroachments on their territory more than perhaps others in Mexico did, though they suffered the same abuses of conquest as other parts. This uneasy symbiotic relation between the Spaniards and the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca described by MacLeod perhaps sets a pattern of cooperation between governing and governed observable throughout the history of the people of Oaxaca. It may also somewhat provide an explanation of the durability of the languages and culture of the indigenous peoples who dwell there.

### **Catholicism and Syncretism**

With the Spaniards came Catholicism. Catholic missionaries (usually Jesuit), seeking to convert the natives of the New World, frequently accompanied the Spanish Conquistadors. Cortés is viewed by tradition and even by some Catholic scholars of his time as, not only the conqueror of New Spain, but as God's divinely chosen instrument for converting the New World.<sup>16</sup>

The indigenous peoples of Oaxaca, as in other parts of Mexico, adapted to this new religion over time. Frequently, however, they only replaced the names of their native gods with those of Catholic saints and native religious amulets with crucifixes and rosaries producing a syncretism that may be seen in Mexico and other parts of Latin America to this day. Dinorah Mendez noted that there is a strong corollary between the violence of the Conquistadors and the syncretism seen in Mexico today. Mendez writes, "The Indians preserved their old religion at the level of ritual and to the extent where the

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<sup>15</sup>Murdo J. MacLeod, "Mesoamerica since the Spanish Invasion: An Overview," in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15.

<sup>16</sup>Charles S. Braden, *Religious Aspects of the Conquest of Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1930), 76.

new religion guaranteed their survival, they were taking some of its symbols and its supposed magical success.”<sup>17</sup>

## **Independence and Revolution (1810-1910)**

### **Independence and the Early Years of the Republic**

Under the leadership of two priests, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and José María Morelos y Pavón, who inspired a grassroots rebellion among the indigenous Mexicans, Mexico began a pursuit of independence from Spanish control in 1810. After the deaths of Hidalgo and Morelos at the hands of the Spanish, General Agustín de Iturbide led a second wave of rebellion that resulted in Mexican independence in 1821 with the agreement to the “Plan of Iguala” establishing an independent “monarchy” in Mexico.<sup>18</sup>

This monarchy or “Primer Imperio Mexicano” (First Mexican Empire) only lasted two years when the emperor Iturbide, or “Agustín I,” abdicated. Since then, except for a brief failed attempt to establish the second Mexican empire during the French occupation of Mexico (1862-1866), Mexico has been an independent republic with an “imperial presidency” somewhat beyond the limits of the constitution here and there.<sup>19</sup>

### **Benito Juárez: Rebellion and Reforms**

The fledgling republic went through a series of presidents, many who were only in office for months or days. Benito Juárez served as president as he led the country

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<sup>17</sup>Dinorah B. Mendez, *Evangelicals in Mexico: Their Hymnody and Its Theology* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 80. Mendez also cites Jacques Lafaye’s book, *Quetzacoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness 1531-1813*, Benjamin Keen, transl., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), which deals extensively with religious syncretism in Mexico after the introduction of Catholicism.

<sup>18</sup>Although complete independence from Spain was not fully achieved until September 27, 1821, with the “Plan of Iguala,” Mexican Independence Day is celebrated on September 16 to recognize the “Grito de Dolores” (Cry of Dolores), when Hidalgo called for Mexicans to revolt in 1810.

<sup>19</sup>Merrill and Miró, *Mexico*, 19-20.

to restore the republic after the French invasion and the attempt by France's Napoleon III to establish the Second Mexican Empire under Maximilian I. Juárez was the first indigenous president, describing his parents as "*indios de la raza primitiva del país*," or "Indians of the original race of the country." Juárez was from a small village in Oaxaca and became a lawyer when he reached adulthood.

Juárez, a liberal, instituted reforms that would solidify the power of the Republic albeit in the midst of challenges to the authority of his government. He also worked against the well-established Catholic Church in Mexico, returning many lands and institutions in the hands of the church to the indigenous peoples of Mexico. His determination to grant equal democratic rights to the native peoples of Mexico made him a favorite among the majority of the poor of Mexico. This was especially true among the poor of his home state of Oaxaca. However, his somewhat naïve attempts to restore land rights to peasants who did not understand what it was to own and manage land only hardened an elite opposition against him.<sup>20</sup> This opposition found its voice in a politician known as Porfirio Díaz.

### **The Porfiriato**

The next prominent president of Mexico was José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz Mori who came into power during a rebellion against Juárez after a contested election and was in office for nine different terms between 1876 and 1911. His extended time in power over thirty-five years is known in Mexico as the "Porfiriato." This name is either one of endearment or insult, depending on who uses it.

Porfirio Díaz ruled during a time of governmental stability that has been called the "Paz Porfiriana." His time in office also included economic growth and industrial advancement in Mexico in which Porfirio Díaz courted foreign business investment in

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<sup>20</sup>Lesley Byrd Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 243.

order to put Mexico on the world stage. These economic advances, however, had negative impacts on the poor. The wealthy benefitted greatly and resentment on the part of the poor set the stage for the Mexican Revolution.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Mexican Revolution**

The abuses of constitutional principles during the Porfirio Díaz administrations, especially in the areas of ceding Mexican sovereignty in the interest of foreign investment, granting new powers to the Catholic Church, and enriching the “hacendados” (wealthy owners of haciendas), unsettled a large portion of the peasantry of Mexico and made conditions for revolution ripe. An outcry against the Porfirio Díaz regime began to grow including the publication of liberal ideas in *Rendición*, published by liberals in exile in St. Louis, Missouri in the United States and then smuggled across the border into Mexico.<sup>22</sup>

The cry for revolution found its heroes in the political leader, Francisco I. Madero, and other regional leaders such as Pascual Orozco and Francisco “Pancho” Villa, who started uprisings in the north starting in Chihuahua, and Emiliano Zapata, who inspired peasants on haciendas in Michoacán to revolt. The outcome of the revolution was the resignation of Porfirio Díaz and the election of Madero as president. However, the ideals of the revolution were not realized during the Madero administration leading to some years of political unrest in Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

### **Modern Mexico (1910-Present)**

Since the Mexican Revolution, Mexico has gradually moved toward the modern state that is today, passing through attempts to establish dictatorships, dealing

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<sup>21</sup>Merrill and Miró, *Mexico*, 32-35.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 35-36. The use of the terms “liberal ideas” and “liberals” are original in the citation and are understood as relative to the official policy of the Porfirio Díaz government.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 36ff.

with outbreaks of violence and cartel activity related to the trafficking of drugs to the United States and Europe, establishing trade agreements with the United States and Canada and other nations, and developing to become one of the influential economic powers in the world. The inequities of the past between rich and poor still exist to some extent in Mexico and those affected still have those who voice their disquietude. Resentments and mistrust directed toward the Mexican government, the Church, and foreign nations—especially the United States—still exist among the populace. However, Mexico enjoys an economic prosperity unequalled in its history and is experiencing many of the same social upheavals seen in other Western nations today.

### **Historical Conclusions**

In this brief and rapid overview of the historical context of Mexico and Oaxaca in particular, we have seen several realities and developments of note that impact the task of pastor training in Oaxaca at present. Over thousands of years, multiple ethnic groups have developed and, amazingly, many of them still exist in Mexico, especially in Oaxaca. As we have previously noted, Oaxaca is a state with sixteen recognized ethnolinguistic groups and over 170 extant indigenous language forms. The challenge of reaching each of these language groups with the gospel has been and remains formidable and now the same is true for those who seek to train among them.

Conquest and colonialism of Mexico at the hands of the Spanish and with the blessing of the Catholic Church has left some bitterness toward the Church and deep theological consequences. Attempts at “evangelization” on the part of the Catholic Church included practices and concessions that led to religious syncretism that exists to this day. Ancient indigenous and pagan beliefs and practices within Mexico still exist often cloaked in Catholic names and rituals.

Various political alignments by the Catholic Church with oppressive regimes in the history of Mexico have gendered mistrust of institutions within Mexico. This

mistrust of the government and the Catholic Church has produced openness to other ideas, including other religious ideas. Mexicans pride themselves in the freedoms that are guaranteed to them in their constitution—freedoms that have been won with much blood and struggle. These freedoms include the freedoms of speech and religion. The love of these freedoms opens some doors to evangelism and discipleship.

Mexico's history of revolution has left the enduring thought in the minds of a number of Mexicans that only through revolution will the nation advance. Thus, revolutionary forces still exist in Mexico that wield significant power and influence within their regions of influence and even within the federal government of Mexico. This includes the Zapatistas (named after Emiliano Zapata, leader during the Mexican Revolution) who have considerable influence over sizable areas of Chiapas and Oaxaca states. Any attempts to train pastors in remote parts of Oaxaca must consider this political reality.

Any attempts to implement pastor and leader training in Oaxaca must not only take into account the religious and political history of Mexico, but also the history of evangelicalism within the nation and the state. The next section will take a brief look at this history.

## **History of Evangelicals in Mexico and Oaxaca**

### **Early Beginnings**

Baptists made early efforts to evangelize Mexico, shortly after the beginning of the modern missions movement. Justice Anderson wrote, “Coporteurs of the British and American Bible Societies, commercial engineers from England, and military chaplains formed the team of evangelical antecedents which subsequently planted the Baptist form of faith in Mexico.”<sup>24</sup> Anderson notes that these early efforts by Baptists would not bear

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<sup>24</sup>Justice C. Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga: Baptists and their Precursors in Latin America* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 77.

much fruit due to “its heterogeneity, its lack of compatibility with Mexican culture, and its lack of a definite missiological strategy.”<sup>25</sup> Some of the individual missionaries among this group of colporteurs include James Thompson, James Huckins, William Tyron, W. H. Norris, James Hickey, and John Westrup, Sr.<sup>26</sup>

Hickey, Westrup and his son, Thomas, pioneered work in the northeast of Mexico in the city of Monterrey, starting several Baptist churches and missions. Although there were several works begun by the Baptists which eventually failed, the First Baptist Church of Monterrey, on a marble slab in the vestibule dates its founding to “January 30, 1864, by the Rev. James Hickey.”<sup>27</sup> However, the church reorganized in 1870 after a controversial period of some Baptist churches converting to Presbyterianism while Melinda Rankin was working in the area.

Several sources name Melinda Rankin as a pioneer of protestant and evangelical missions in Mexico. She was a single woman, born in Littleton, New Hampshire on March 21, 1811, who sensed a calling to educate on the frontiers of the United States and Mexico. She went out as a missionary with the American and Foreign Christian Union and embarked on a journey through the American south and into Mexico, starting schools in Kentucky, Mississippi, and Texas. She made attempts to set up schools in Brownsville, Texas and in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico and Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. Though these schools ultimately failed, at times due to lack of funds and at other times due to attacks or circumstances related to the French Invasion of Mexico or the American Civil War, she realized a number of converts in the areas where she worked.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 77.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 77-79.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 82. Anderson also writes about Hickey that “contemporary Mexican Baptists consider him the founder of their denomination,” 79.

<sup>28</sup>Laurie Peterson, “Melinda Rankin,” McLean County Museum of History, accessed December 11, 2015, <http://mchistory.org/perch/resources/melinda-rankin-2002-and-2004.pdf>.

Of particular interest to this study is a request from an unknown individual from Oaxaca. It is “an invitation,” as she calls it, to form a society in the city of Oaxaca to teach the gospel, which she quotes at length in her memoirs:

Oaxaca, May 24, 1868

Sirs:

Jesus Christ, in establishing his religion, had for his object the moralization of mankind and we know how much civilization has already advanced in consequence of the promulgation of His doctrines, both in Europe and America. But in Mexico our conquerors brought us Catholicism—that is, the doctrine of Jesus Christ disfigured—fitted rather to brutalize than to moralize and civilize. Now, that beautiful system of free examination is presented to us—a system which so well harmonizes with the democracy that rules us—the doctrines of Jesus Christ should be at once adopted without any mixture or interpretation, but pure as they came forth from His Divine lips. We ought to do this, because we see that the nations that have done this are in the vanguard of civilization, England in Europe, and the United States in America.

Look at our country! What has Catholicism done for us? Transformed the greater part of our people into fanatics, ignorant and foolish, and the rest into indifferent philosophers. . . . Therefore every Mexican who desires the good of his country should labor by every means with his reach that every shadow or regression disappear (*sic*).

In order to obtain it, and that all this may not be purely visionary, it is necessary to establish a society which has for its object to instruct us in the doctrine of Jesus Christ; having its meetings on the Sabbath; and its secretary to open communication with other societies of this kind.

This society, once established, liberty of worship in Oaxaca will be a reality, and, without doubt, if we are firm, consistent, and self-denying, our people will progress.<sup>29</sup>

As mentioned earlier, there was considerable controversy regarding the work that Baptists started in the area of northern Mexico—particularly in Monterrey. Anderson noted that there were reports of proselytism and even character assassination directed toward Thomas Westrup on the part of Rankin in attempts to convert Baptist churches to “pedobaptism.”<sup>30</sup> Westrup himself, in an article in *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly*,

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<sup>29</sup>Melinda Rankin, *Twenty Years among the Mexicans: A Narrative of Missionary Labor* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall Publishers, 1875), 157-58.

<sup>30</sup>Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 82-87.

rather graciously confirms these reports without mentioning the attempts by Rankin to injure his reputation.<sup>31</sup>

As of 1885, William C. Wilkinson offers the following timeline for Protestant missions history in Mexico:

1847 – During the Mexican-American War, army chaplains and agents of the Bible Society distribute Bibles in Mexico.

1861 – James Hickey, Baptist minister from Texas, preaches the gospel in Mexico.

1862 – Hickey joins Thomas Westrup in Monterrey, preaches and makes several converts.

1864 – The new converts in Monterrey are organized in the first Baptist church in Mexico.

1865 – Francis Aguilar, a reform-minded catholic priest, organizes his followers under the name “The Church of Jesus.”

1866 – Presbyterian missionary, Linda Rankin, sent to Brownsville, Texas by The American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU).

1870 – The American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) appoints Thomas Westrup as a missionary.

1872 – The Presbyterians begin their work in Mexico with works beginning in the state of Zacatecas in 1873 and in Monterey (*sic*) in 1877.

1872 – The Friends have a mission established in Matamoras (*sic*).

1872 – The American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions (Congregational) starts a mission in Guadalajara.

1873 – The Episcopal Church, under the leadership of a Rev. Mr. Riley adopts the work started by Francis Aguilar after his death.

1873 – The Methodists, north and south, begin mission work in the city of Mexico.

1882 – The American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions (Congregational) start a mission in Chihuahua.

1883 – Southern Baptists begin their work in Mexico in Saltillo, Coahuila.

1884 – The [ABHMS] occupies offices in Mexico City.

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<sup>31</sup>T. M. Westrup, “The Beginning of Baptist Missions in Mexico,” *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 7, no. 10 (October 1885).

1885 – The [AFCU] opens a printing-press in Mexico City.

1885 – The M. E. Church North reports mission stations at Mexico City.<sup>32</sup>

Justice Anderson notes three significant events among the Baptists in Mexico before the close of the Nineteenth Century. The first was the appearance of the first self-supporting church in Saltillo, Coahuila. The second was the publication of *El Expositor Bautista* that was edited by D. A. Wilson in Guadalajara. This was a quarterly publication that, Anderson wrote, “was to become the Sunday School literature for Baptists in some forty Spanish-speaking countries.”<sup>33</sup> The third significant event was the International Conference on the Holy Spirit held in 1895 in Toluca. W. D. Powell, another prominent Baptist leader in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century invited the then famous evangelists D. L. Moody and Ira Sankey. Anderson cites James Chastain concerning this significant conference:

Besides the sermons of Moody, some twenty-four papers were read on the presence, power, and work of the Holy Spirit. The last meeting was a true ‘pentecost.’ The Mexicans present that knew no English were amazed. The congregation wept, laughed, cried out, and hugged each other, overcome by Christian joy. The influence was permanent and significant. It was a milestone in Mexican missions. In subsequent years thousands were converted as a result.<sup>34</sup>

## Twentieth Century

The Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Friends (Quakers) would move into the twentieth century as dominant Protestant or evangelical missionary-sending denominations in Mexico. The next section will deal with developments within each of these denominations (in reverse order) and their missions sending agencies as the century

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<sup>32</sup>William C. Wilkinson, “Our Next Door Neighbor,” *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 7, no. 10 (October 1885): 251-53. The timeline given was written by the author in prose form and edited into the form of a list by me. Spelling errors were left as originally published.

<sup>33</sup>Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 99.

<sup>34</sup>James Garvin Chastain, *Thirty Years in Mexico* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board SBC, 1927), 133-34, cited by Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 100.

moved forward. Besides the denominations mentioned, attention will be given to an overview of the rise of Pentecostalism in Mexico. Special attention will be given to developments related to theological education within Mexico and Oaxaca in particular.

Before beginning a discussion of denominational missions in the twentieth century, it is helpful to note decisions made at a conference of missions agencies in 1914. Missions agencies expressed concern about the ineffectiveness of evangelizing Mexico at this time and the so-called “Cincinnati Plan” was developed. Deborah J. Baldwin describes the agreement and its development:

The mission boards met in Cincinnati to plan a cooperative venture for the mission work in Mexico. Sixty delegates from eleven mission boards were present at the meeting's opening session. The delegates decided to organize four committees to deal with important issues: press and publications, theological education and training schools, general education, and territorial occupation. Although all concerns received attention, territorial occupation was the issue that had the most pronounced impact. The unequal distribution of missionaries in Mexico prompted the mission boards to divide the Mexican territory among the boards so that all parts of the nation could be evangelized. The resolution for this division was passed by the delegates with little opposition.<sup>35</sup>

Although the mission boards at the time were in relative agreement over the plan, Mexicans received it much less enthusiastically. The movement of missionaries from one place to another within Mexico and then out of Mexico in connection with the Pershing invasion during the Mexican Revolution (1916), resulted in more Mexicans in positions of responsibility in the churches and in missions work in the nation.<sup>36</sup>

**Friends (Quakers).** The Friends concentrated their work primarily in the area of the states of Tamaulipas and San Luís Potosí as a result of the agreements reached in the Cincinnati Plan. With the guidance of missionaries such as Samuel and Gulielma

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<sup>35</sup>Deborah J. Baldwin, *Protestants and the Mexican Revolution: Missionaries, Ministers, and Social Change* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 157.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

Purdie, schools were started to help educate the poor population of Mexico. As Mexico developed its system of public education, these schools became unnecessary. Friends missions have focused on refugee ministry in Mexico in recent years and they report meetings in three locations in Mexico annually.<sup>37</sup>

**Methodists.** According to the website for Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, the Methodist Church of Mexico (IMMAR) became autonomous in 1930 and became a Concordat Church in 1975. Today the Mexican Methodist Church has six annual conferences and around 80,000 members. Five Methodist missionaries serve in Mexico in various ministries.<sup>38</sup> There is a Methodist seminary in Mexico City named Seminario Metodista Doctor Gonzalo Báez Camargo.<sup>39</sup>

**Presbyterians.** Presbyterians in Mexico have been steadily developing their own institutions and national identity apart from the influences of their counterparts in the United States since early in the Twentieth Century. The first synod held meetings in Mexico in 1901 and a constitution was written and adopted in 1937. As of 2011, with close to two million members, the Mexican National Presbyterian Church (Iglesia Presbiteriana Nacional Mexicana or IPNM) voted to sever ties with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) over decisions by that body to ordain sexually active gays and lesbians.<sup>40</sup>

The IPNM has two seminaries operating in the nation of Mexico, the

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<sup>37</sup>Quakers in Latin America: Friends Historical Collection Resources, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://library.guilford.edu/c.php?g=111809&p=723697>.

<sup>38</sup>Global Ministries: The United Methodist Church, "Mexico," accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.umcmission.org/Explore-Our-Work/Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean/Mexico>.

<sup>39</sup>Seminario Metodista Doctor Gonzalo Báez Camargo: Inicio, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.baezcamargo.org>.

<sup>40</sup>"Mexican Presbyterian Church votes to end 139-year-old relationship with PC(USA)," accessed December 17, 2015, <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2011/8/23/mexican-presbyterian-church-votes-end-139-year-old/>.

Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Mexico (Seminario Teológico Presbiteriano de Mexico A. C. STPM), founded in 1882,<sup>41</sup> and the Saint Paul Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Seminario Teológico Presbiteriano de San Pablo A. R. or STPSP) which opened in 1981 in Mérida, Yucatán and has graduated over 700 students in its thirty-two year history.<sup>42</sup>

The Center for the Planting of Churches (Centro para la Plantación de Iglesias or CPI), located in Monterrey, Nuevo León, exists for “pastors and leaders who want to prepare themselves to plant churches,”<sup>43</sup> with a vision to plant churches in the north of Mexico, Latin America, and the United States.<sup>44</sup>

**Baptists.** On September 13, 1903, messengers met in the facilities of the First Baptist Church in Mexico City and voted to form the Mexican Baptist Convention with Alejandro Treviño being elected the first President. Justice Anderson noted that the Mexican Baptist Convention experienced rapid growth between 1903-1910 and attributed this growth to three factors. These factors included: increased involvement by the ABHMS and the FMBSBC in the expanding work in Mexico; the rapid construction of railways in the country facilitating a national missions movement; and the growing emphasis on theological education.<sup>45</sup>

Mexican Baptists founded two seminaries that are still in operation. These are the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary (Seminario Teológico Bautista Mexicano or

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<sup>41</sup>Semblanza Histórica del STPM, accessed December 17, 2015. <http://stpm.org.mx/home/historia>.

<sup>42</sup>Historia, accessed December 17, 2015. <http://www.stpsanpablo.org.mx/historia/>.

<sup>43</sup>Quiénes Somos, accessed December 17, 2015, <http://cpimonterrey.com/vision/quienes-somos/>. I visited this center in March, 2014 and had the opportunity to speak with the leadership there. They screen and train church planters as well as providing continuing education, working closely with Mission to the World, the international mission arm of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Translation is mine.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 103-4.

STBM)<sup>46</sup> and the Dr. G. H Lacy Baptist Theological Seminary (Seminario Teológico Bautista Dr. G. H. Lacy or STBDGHL).<sup>47</sup> The former is located in the Mexico City suburb of Naucalpán and the latter is located in Oaxaca City. These seminaries are currently attempting to increase their impact through satellite campuses and online courses.

Justice Anderson writes that he feels that the challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for Mexican Baptists is a “re-integration” of efforts between nationals and missionaries to face the challenges of the new century.<sup>48</sup> He noted that strong growth among evangelicals would likely continue and that a concerted effort on the part of both would be needed to confront these challenges. He writes, “An evangelical explosion is occurring in Mexico among Evangelicals and Pentecostals . . . . Only an integrated, indigenous Baptist constituency will be able to have a redemptive role in this great evangelical advance.”<sup>49</sup>

**Pentecostals.** It is important in this study to give some attention to the rise of Pentecostalism in Mexico and Oaxaca. Pentecostals have also made evangelical inroads into remote regions of Oaxaca as they have in all of the country. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise in the Pentecostal movement with the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, California.

Several scholars have attributed the beginnings of Pentecostalism in Mexico to the efforts of Romana Valenzuela who was in attendance and was converted during the Azusa Street Revival.<sup>50</sup> Valenzuela took her newfound evangelical fervor into Baja

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<sup>46</sup>Seminario Bautista Teológico Mexicano, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://www.seminariostbm.org.mx>.

<sup>47</sup>Seminario Bautista Dr. G. H. Lacy, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://www.seminariolacy.com>.

<sup>48</sup>Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 126.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>50</sup>Joel Morales Cruz, *The Histories of the Latin American Church: A Handbook* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 418.

California and started the Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús (Apostolic Church of the Faith in Jesus Christ), the oldest Pentecostal Association in Mexico. Valenzuela was bold in her efforts, starting Pentecostal churches in Chihuahua state during the Mexican Revolution. Daniel Ramírez, discussing the void left when missionary agencies vacated portions of northern Mexico during the revolution, writes, “Romana Valenzuela rushed in where and when missionaries feared to remain.”<sup>51</sup>

The Pentecostal movement has spread throughout all of Mexico in ensuing years. Any efforts to train indigenous pastors in Oaxaca will confront the same need for training among Pentecostals as among Baptists. Because of an historical emphasis on spiritual experience above biblical truth, Pentecostal pastors often minister out of a deficit of biblical understanding

### **Conclusion**

The historical context of the evangelical movement in Mexico is critical to understand as any discussion of pastor training needs is commenced. This chapter has been an attempt to provide a broad historical background to that discussion.

It is important to understand the impact of indigenous religions on the psyche of the Mexican population that lingers from before the time of the Spanish Conquistadors. The Roman Catholic Church in many instances chose to “convert” some of the symbols and practices of these indigenous religions creating a syncretism that has confused the gospel in the minds of many. In Oaxaca, the vestiges of this syncretism may still be seen to this day and must be confronted in any effort to preach and teach biblical truth there. Because Roman Catholicism enjoyed an early start and a consequential long history in Mexico, it has a hold on the minds and hearts of the Mexican people. At the same time, Mexicans possess a willingness to consider other points of view and other

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<sup>51</sup>Daniel Ramírez, *Migrating Faith: Pentecostalism in the United States and Mexico in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 69.

religions. Rebellion against the Catholic establishment can be seen at various points in Mexican history. The willingness to consider other beliefs besides Catholicism exists among a number of Mexicans as is demonstrated by rapid evangelical growth in Mexico recently.<sup>52</sup> Openness to other religious viewpoints is growing among Mexicans, but adherence to long-held traditions remains strong. Thus, if you ask the vast majority of Mexicans what their religious affiliation is, they will reply that they are Catholics even if they have attended evangelical churches or other Protestant churches or other religions.

The growth of evangelicalism in Mexico from its beginnings in the nineteenth century to this day has been remarkable in such a traditionally Catholic nation. This growth, however, has been accompanied by various missteps in evangelism efforts, creating confusion as to what is the gospel. Often evangelical growth has been measured primarily in numbers of conversions, leading to a very shallow emphasis on biblical truth and, consequently, poor discipleship. Confusion about the nature of the gospel may lead at times to very legalistic, works-oriented preaching and even a continuation of the syncretism that has long been a part of the fabric of Mexican religious life. Because of such confusion, the need for proper biblical training is paramount. The next chapter will deal with the question of what such training looks like.

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<sup>52</sup>Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga*, 127. Anderson cites current figures (as of 2005) of one and one half million evangelicals in Mexico. David Barrett and others project a 2030 evangelical population of two and one half million. David B. Barrett, George Thomas Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 495.

## CHAPTER 3

### LEADER TRAINING AND DISCIPLESHIP

When we think of what effective pastoral training on the mission field looks like, we need to ask ourselves a number of questions. To what end do we train? Is a basic theological education the goal? Is the imparting of academic content enough? When are we finished? These and other questions occupy the minds of those who serve on the mission field and want to be faithful to the Lord's command. Jesus gave us his command to make disciples in what we know as the Great Commission.

The question of when and how the Great Commission will be fulfilled is one that requires a complete understanding of what *is* the Great Commission. It is not the purpose of this research to do an exegetical study of Matthew 28:18-20, but the passage is of vital importance to the task of missions and to how strategies are developed for being obedient to the Lord's command. That obedience does not depend on what we think the Great Commission is or should be, but on what the Lord commanded us to do by giving it.

The verbs in the Great Commission are telling. Often the emphasis has been placed on the verb "go." Certainly there has been an emphasis among evangelicals on "baptizing." However, in order to be true to the heart of the Great Commission, the church and those who serve as missionaries or missiologists must consider what it means to "teach" and "make disciples." Teaching and making disciples is at the heart of this study and must be the focus. Certainly making converts and baptizing them comes before making disciples of them. However, just "winning souls" does not encompass nor take the place of what is "making disciples" in the task of the Great Commission.

This chapter will attempt to determine how the training of pastors and church

leaders might move us closer to fulfilling the heart of the Great Commission—making disciples. In order to do this, it is necessary to determine what are the biblical components of true discipleship and then to begin to consider what training models are true to these biblical requirements.

### **Elements of Biblical Discipleship**

A number of authors have attempted to determine what is the true nature of biblical discipleship. Perhaps the most obvious models are drawn from the life and teachings of Jesus and examples or principles drawn from the book of Acts and the epistles. Richard Longenecker writes, “What is needed for most of our theories about Christian discipleship, however, is a firmer rootage in the biblical materials. And what is needed for our practice is a clearer grasp of the patterns of discipleship set out in the New Testament.”<sup>1</sup>

Though agreement may be widespread that our efforts at discipleship must be biblically grounded and comprehensive, many missionaries find it difficult to do the complete job and often focus on a portion of the task. M. David Sills describes the problem this way:

Part of the problem may be that we have had too few doing too much. Those whom God has called as missionaries know that they are laboring in a world where everyone will perish apart from hearing the gospel and being born again. Realizing that there is a lot more to be done than they can do, the temptation is to streamline the task to make it manageable. Little by little, well-intentioned but overwhelmed missionaries have reduced the task of missions to proclaiming the gospel message to everyone who has never heard it. Of course, that is an essential aspect of the Great Commission, but it is not all. Jesus did not commission us to go and get decisions from all men, and he certainly did not command us to preach the gospel and leave before they understood and truly received it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 1.

<sup>2</sup>M. David Sills, “Mission and Discipleship,” in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 186-87.

The confusion over the ultimate goal of missionary work, thus, may be attributable to a misunderstanding of what it is to make disciples in the sense of the Great Commission. If it is merely the process of producing converts, perhaps the job is being well done. However, if teaching and disciple making is required, quite a bit may be lacking in the work of missions. It is possibly something most missionaries can agree upon that, if we are making disciples as Jesus did, we *are*, in essence, fulfilling the Great Commission.

### **Jesus' Model in the Gospels**

To illustrate this point a bit further, it may be beneficial to take a look at some distinctions drawn by David Bosch between Jesus' approach to making disciples and the practice of instructing *talmidim*<sup>3</sup> among Jewish rabbis in Jesus' day. Bosch makes the following contrasts: "In the Judaism of Jesus' time it was the *talmid's* prerogative to choose his own teacher and attach himself to that teacher."<sup>4</sup> He noted that this was not true of Jesus' disciples. Jesus chose his disciples instead of them choosing him.<sup>5</sup>

Bosch also notes, "In the case of late Judaism, it was the Law, the Torah, that stood in the center."<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Bosch noted, Jesus "expects *his* disciples to renounce everything not for the sake of the Law, but for his sake alone."<sup>7</sup>

The third contrast that Bosch draws is concerning the purpose of discipleship for the rabbis and for Jesus and his disciples. He notes, "In Judaism discipleship was

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<sup>3</sup>*Talmidim* in Jesus' time were essentially apprentices who studied under a Jewish rabbi with the intention of becoming rabbis themselves by the age of 30. This apprenticeship usually began when a Jewish boy was 13-15 years of age.

<sup>4</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 37. Italics are original.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. Italics are original.

merely a means to an end.”<sup>8</sup> By stating this, Bosch recognizes that, “For the disciple of Jesus, however, the stage of discipleship is not the first step toward a promising career. It is in itself the fulfillment of his destiny. The disciple of Jesus never graduates into a rabbi.”<sup>9</sup>

As a fourth distinction, Bosch notes a difference between the *talmidim* of Jesus’ day and the nature of the disciples of Jesus. He writes, “The disciples of the rabbis were only their *students*, nothing more.”<sup>10</sup> Bosch continues, “Jesus’ disciples are also his *servants (douloi)* something quite alien to late Judaism.”<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the disciples of Jesus were his servants. Bosch notes that in washing their feet, Jesus indicated to his disciples the reciprocal servanthood involved in being his disciple. He also taught them that suffering (something also modeled by Jesus) was part of being his servant disciple.<sup>12</sup>

The fifth distinction Bosch notes related to the purpose behind being a disciple of Jesus. He writes, “What, however, do they become disciples *for*? First, as Mark puts it, they are called to be disciples simply ‘to be with him.’ (3:14).”<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Bosch writes, “Another, and final, difference between the *talmidim* of the Jewish teachers and the disciples of Jesus is that the latter are the vanguard of the messianic people of the end-time.”<sup>14</sup> He further explains, “The gospel of Mark, in particular, puts discipleship within the force field between the passion of the earthly Jesus and the parousia of the coming Son of Man; to be a disciple means to follow the suffering

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<sup>8</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 38.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. Italics are original.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. Italics are original.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 39. Italics and quotes are the author’s. Reference is made to Mark 3:14. In the context of the quote it appears that by “first” Bosch means “primarily.”

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. Italics are original.

Jesus *and* look forward to his return in glory.”<sup>15</sup>

Through these distinctions made by Bosch, we can see that the nature of discipleship as taught and practiced by Jesus himself was to *choose* disciples, to *call* them to follow him alone, in order to *serve* Jesus and one another, and to *live* in a relationship with him, *suffering* with him until he comes again. Michael Goheen writes concerning the preceding reference in Bosch’s book, “A contrast between the notion of discipleship in the Gospels and in the first-century Judaism shows how radical is this call to bind oneself to the person of Jesus.”<sup>16</sup>

If we make disciples as Jesus did, they will be learning to know, serve, and imitate Jesus, leading others to do the same. Jesus chooses his disciples as he chose the twelve and as he has chosen each of us who follow him. Evangelism makes it clear who they are. When we know those whom Christ has chosen, it is the responsibility of the disciple-maker to teach and model these characteristics of the follower of Jesus.

Perhaps the greatest example of a disciple of Jesus was Paul the apostle. He was the only apostle who had the boldness to say, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” (1 Cor 1:11)<sup>17</sup>

### **Paul’s Model in Acts and the Epistles**

A famous work (besides the Bible itself) that missionaries and missiologists look to in order to discover Paul’s ideas on missionary methods, church planting, and discipleship is *Missionary Methods: Saint Paul’s or Ours*, which Roland Allen published over one hundred years ago. Allen dedicates much of the book to the geographical and methodological approaches of Paul in planting and establishing churches. However, he

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<sup>15</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 39. Italics are original.

<sup>16</sup>Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 86.

<sup>17</sup>All Scripture references are ESV unless otherwise indicated.

devotes a portion of his book to how Paul equipped leaders in each locality where churches were planted. It is that area of his book from which it is helpful to draw some principles for this study.

Allen notes that Paul established churches, leaving them with a basic understanding of the nature of the gospel and giving them sufficient tools to begin to preach it themselves. He opens his chapter on “Teachings” with this statement: “From what has already been said it is manifest that St. Paul did not go about as a missionary preacher merely to convert individuals: he went to establish churches from which the light might radiate throughout the whole country round. The secret of success in this work lies in beginning at the very beginning.”<sup>18</sup>

Allen sums up the basic necessary elements Paul left at each church he started: “Thus St. Paul seems to have left his newly-founded churches with a simple system of Gospel teaching, two sacraments, a tradition of the main facts of the death and resurrection, and the Old Testament.”<sup>19</sup> Besides this, Allen notes that Paul often left assistant missionaries such as Silas or Timothy to provide guidance to the fledgling churches and, of course, wrote letters and made return visits to the churches when possible to strengthen his teachings among them. Paul moved quickly to establish churches wherever he went and yet attempted to leave them as strong as possible in the understanding of the Gospel and the practice of evangelism and discipleship he desired for them to copy.

John W. Mehn, in his comparison of Roland Allen’s description of Paul’s methods to the historical practice of church planting in Japan, sums up Allen’s points:

First, the primary role of the leader is facilitating and catalyzing ministry to take place in the lives of other leaders, including the rapid expansion of churches. . . .

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<sup>18</sup>Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 81.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 90.

Second, lay elders are to be selected and developed to share in church leadership. . . . Third, churches were founded in every sense indigenous. . . . Fourth, leaders catalyzing others for ministry, mobilizing and sharing leadership with lay people, and emphasizing the full authority of the independent local church, infused with the power of the Holy Spirit, would lead to ‘spontaneous expansion.’”<sup>20</sup>

The point made on indigeneity is vital. There has been much writing and debate among missiologists on the subject of contextualization. While contextualization at the expense of biblical truth is detrimental and destructive, church planting and leadership development without an attempt to contextualize is ineffective. M. David Sills puts it this way, “Critical contextualization provides a culturally relevant understanding of the gospel, while also ensuring checks against syncretism, and it has a high regard for the authority and sufficiency of the Bible.”<sup>21</sup> Missionaries fail when they have taught or modeled a Western style of being church or training leaders that cannot be understood or reproduced by indigenous believers

### **Biblical Conclusions**

The principles of disciple-making and leadership development that have been mentioned from the models of Jesus in the Gospels and of Paul in Acts and the epistles may be combined and distilled into basic principles that may be put in place in training leaders in Oaxaca or any other part of the world. These biblical principles should be emphasized and remembered in any leader training.

First, as Jesus emphasized, the goal of discipleship is a relationship—specifically a relationship with Jesus himself. As Jesus chooses his disciples—calls people to himself—he calls them into relationship with himself. Discipleship or leadership development fails when it does not call people into an ever-deepening relationship with Christ. An intimate, personal relationship with Christ is the goal of

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<sup>20</sup>John W. Mehn, “Leaders Reproducing Churches: Research from Japan,” in *Missionary Methods: Research, Reflections, and Realities*, ed. Craig Ott and J. D. Payne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 160-61.

<sup>21</sup>M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 211.

discipleship.

Discipleship does not reach a concluding point as with the Jewish *talmidim*. There is no graduation from being a disciple. Leadership development that is biblical recognizes that discipleship is not the imparting of a finite amount of information which, when completed, allows the disciple to go on “automatic pilot” using only what he has learned up to that point. Instead, it is a lifelong pursuit—a career in itself.

Second, making disciples is something believers, missionaries, pastors, etc. should and will be doing until the return of Christ. This is lifetime and career-long work that is required of faithful servants of Christ. Stan Guthrie notes that there has been a shift away from “process” to “project” approaches on the mission field. He writes, “Indeed, in many churches and organizations the paradigm has shifted from the traditional long-term culture- and language-learning for church planting to short-term tasks often involving novices. As might be expected, superficial ministry is sometimes a result of “project” missions.”<sup>22</sup> What is true of church planting is also true of leader training and disciple making.

Third, as Paul modeled, disciples must be developed in the time that we have with them and then entrusted with the work of making disciples of others as soon as possible. Paul was constantly on the move starting churches in various cities. He always left behind trained leadership in each location. Missionaries should constantly be looking for the next horizon in disciple making, entrusting the work to competently trained and growing disciples in each location he is leaving.

Fifth, an effort to maintain contact with those whom we train must be made to ensure that they are continuing in the faith and practice of making disciples themselves. In doing this, the trainer can certainly trust the Holy Spirit to continue the work.

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<sup>22</sup>Stan Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000), 114.

However, conscientious trainers of leaders recognize that the human heart and mind is fallible and capable of being led astray and need biblical correction along the way.

Finally, leadership development should be indigenous. That is to say that the way leaders are developed and trained should fit their context without diluting biblical principles or truth. When missionaries contextualize correctly they have set in motion a reproducible pattern of disciple making and leadership development that nationals can replicate and repeat indefinitely.

These biblical principles that have been set forth may be used to evaluate our approaches to providing leader training—both those practiced historically and those we propose to put into practice. The goal of making disciples who also make disciples must be kept in mind in any scheme of leader training.

### **Evaluating Selected Models of Leader Training**

#### **The Residential Academic Model**

As was observed in the previous chapter, one of the traditional ways of training leaders in Mexico, as well as in other parts of the world, has been the residential academic model. This model includes the establishing of seminaries or Bible colleges, usually on a physical plant for the purpose of educating pastors and church leaders. Most of the denominations which did evangelism and church planting work in Mexico attempted to establish a formal system of pastor training following the same model historically put in place in the United States and Great Britain.

**Advantages of the residential academic model.** The seminary model has demonstrated its effectiveness in Western contexts for centuries and it is for good reason that it is repeated in all parts of the world. Providing a “seed bed” for developing aspiring pastors, evangelists, church leaders and theologians has great benefit. The time spent sitting under the teaching of godly and experienced professors who have a respect for the

Word of God and the local church can be invaluable.

Also, the “iron sharpening iron” experience of studying with others who are delving deep into biblical and theological studies can be gained in few other contexts. Often relationships built during seminary training last a lifetime and continue to produce growth both personally and theologically.

This model usually has the side benefit of access to a number of valuable resources. Most seminaries attempt to provide a quality library as well as exposure to a number of biblical scholars and lecturers experienced in effective pastoral leadership that may be difficult to obtain in other training models.

Another benefit of this model is the ability to devote concentrated effort to the study of the disciplines of theological and biblical study. It can be argued that many would not devote the time to study theology, biblical languages, pastoral counseling, and other specialized studies on their own. The seminary or Bible school experience provides that opportunity as well as the motivation to complete these studies.

**Limitations of the residential academic model.** While there has been a level of effectiveness in this type of model, there is also a limit to the number of leaders who can be trained. This limitation is due to the difficulty for many leaders to move to the seminary and pay for the instruction they would receive there. It is not the purpose of this research to devalue the seminary approach to training leaders. I have benefitted greatly from this traditional approach and see the value in receiving a formal theological education. It can be documented in the literature alone that many graduates of seminaries go on to have vital ministries and to lead strong churches. Formal seminary education certainly has its place. The purpose of this research, however, is to evaluate the effectiveness on the mission field, and in Oaxaca in particular, of this model in reproducing and sustaining leader training.

One of the most critical shortfalls of the formal seminary education approach

on the mission field is its availability to all who desire to be trained. This is true because of limits on the ability of students to leave jobs and homes to attend seminary and because of limited financial resources. M. David Sills notes the same factors in his dissertation regarding attempts at training Highland Quichuas in Ecuador.<sup>23</sup> As in this area of Ecuador, the same limitations exist among those pastors and leaders seeking training in remote areas of Oaxaca state in Mexico.

Another limitation of the formal seminary approach may be in the area of personal discipleship on an ongoing basis. Certainly seminaries can encourage and provide opportunities for personal discipleship for those who attend and live on their campuses.<sup>24</sup> However, these groups are most accessible to those who live on campus and are difficult for commuter students or students on satellite campuses to attend and participate.

Another concern for this approach is the difficulty of maintaining contact with alumni in order to assure that principles taught during a student's time in seminary are being implemented in the local church setting. Many seminaries, including those in Mexico, make efforts to maintain contact with their alumni and to provide continuing education through classes and seminars. However, those who take advantage of these offerings are often limited by the same factors mentioned earlier that keep many from receiving formal seminary training.

The temptation exists for seminary or Bible school students to isolate themselves in their theological studies and receive their education in ministry with very little opportunity to put it into practice. Some schools impose requirements of local

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<sup>23</sup>Michael David Sills, "Highland Quichuas: Discovering a Culturally Appropriate Pastoral Training Model" (Ph.D. diss., Reformed Theological Seminary, 2001), 107.

<sup>24</sup>On a recent visit (November, 2015) to the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary (STBM), I had the opportunity to preach to such a discipleship group for the men on campus. I was also made aware of the existence of the same type of group for the resident women. These groups met weekly and were led by students with a faculty sponsor.

church involvement and practicum in ministry during the seminary or Bible school experience to avoid this.

Finally, the sad tendency for seminaries to degenerate in doctrinal and biblical fidelity is a concern. This has proven true in all parts of the world where seminaries have been founded. A seminary is only as good as its teaching. If seminaries produce pastors and leaders who question or reject the divine revelation, written or living, the churches in which they serve are ill served if not damaged.

### **The Missionary Mentor Model**

A method of training that is perhaps the most effective in personal discipleship and yet the most demanding in time requirements is what this researcher has named the Missionary Mentor Model. This model occurs as missionaries, whether they be Western or indigenous, take on an individual or group of individuals to train to become pastors, church leaders, missionaries, church planters, etc. With this model, the missionary is able to model as well as instruct various elements of training. The effectiveness of this model lies in the “better caught than taught” dynamic of personal discipleship. Sills, in his dissertation on a training model among the Highland Quichuas, spoke of the advantages of training through mentors as well.<sup>25</sup>

**Advantages of the missionary mentor model.** Carson Pue, in his book *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency*, stresses the importance of the mentor developing in his own life the character and qualities of leadership which may be observed and put into practice by those he is training. The place to begin is with the mentor himself. Pue outlines five phases of what

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<sup>25</sup>Sills, “Highland Quichuas,” 250-52. Sills cites John Mallison’s definition of mentoring as “a dynamic intentional relationship of trust in which one person enables another to maximize the grace of God in their life and service.” John Mallison, *Mentoring to Develop Disciples and Leaders*, (Lidcombe, NSW, Australia: Scripture Union, 1998), 8.

the calls the mentoring matrix that not only prepare the mentor but also guide the process of mentoring. These phases are: (1) *Awareness*—by which he means the self-awareness of who we are in God; (2) *Freeing up*—that is, freeing ourselves from the characteristics of our lives that inhibit our ability to lead; (3) *Visioneering*—understanding the vision of God in the mentees life and ministry; (4) *Implementing*—putting into practice the results of visioneering; and (5) *Sustaining*—helping leaders understand how to lead and maintain the vision.<sup>26</sup>

Pue’s matrix of mentoring entails a serious commitment of time and personal investment of one’s life experience with others over that time. There is simply no way to cut short the process. If missionaries seek to mentor others in their sphere of ministry, it must be done patiently and consistently and it must be done toward a goal. Pue indicates that the time comes when the mantle is passed to the mentee (or disciple) with the encouragement to go the distance.<sup>27</sup>

George Barna, in his book *Growing True Disciples*, also emphasizes the point that discipleship is a long-term commitment. Arguing the point that discipleship is a process, He writes, “Discipleship is not a destination but a journey. We will never achieve complete spiritual maturity this side of heaven. We may, however, enjoy the journey, note progress, and continue to grow as we pursue spiritual completeness.”<sup>28</sup>

Unlike the model of apprenticeship in which the goal is that the apprentice learns a particular occupation, trade, or skill, discipleship involves mentoring, teaching and modeling a way of living. Barna also emphasizes that discipleship is by nature a lifestyle. He writes, “Discipleship connotes that you are being prepared for a particular

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<sup>26</sup>Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 20-23.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>28</sup>George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 109.

lifestyle more than for a specialized occupation.”<sup>29</sup> As was noted in the biblical portion of this chapter, lifestyle discipleship is that which Jesus modeled for his disciples. Unlike the rabbis of his day who were seeking to make more rabbis, Jesus was making disciples in his image. That is the goal and work of the disciple maker in any time.

Missionaries who embark on leadership training on the mentoring or discipleship model are taking on a long-term commitment. It is important to count the cost of this approach, but it is equally important not to substitute a lesser model in place of this approach. Tony Payne and Colin Marshall put it this way, “The deceptively simple task of disciple-making is made demanding, frustrating and difficult in our world, not because it is so hard to grasp but because it is so hard to persevere in.”<sup>30</sup>

**Limitations of the missionary mentor model.** As missionaries envision a lifetime or extended career on the mission field mentoring others, it probably will become obvious to them that there are difficulties and barriers that arise in trying to do it consistently and effectively. One of the most critical elements is time. It is difficult to carve out the time out of busy schedules to do the work of discipleship. Missionaries often become busy doing good things to do at the expense of the best things. Among missionaries who desire to discipleship effectively that this researcher has known there is a strong desire to do it well. However the challenges of time available to do the job well are often overwhelming. Missionaries must consider prioritizing the activities that find their way into their routine schedule and put the emphasis on that which has the most benefit long-term and that which fulfills the Great Commission mandate.

Another difficulty in many places on the mission field is that often missionaries serve in areas where the people that they want to disciple are spread out over

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>30</sup>Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 151.

a large area. The geographical barriers to effective training and discipleship can be overwhelming. This is especially true in places like Oaxaca. There are remote villages secluded in mountains and valleys that are often hours of long and dangerous driving away from where the missionary lives. It is difficult for missionaries to commit this amount of time on a consistent basis to train individuals in the communities where they live. This research will seek to address some of these difficulties later.

### **The Short-term Team Project Model**

What I have named the Short-term Team Project Model is practiced more and more by missionaries and missions agencies that desire to train the most leaders as possible with the least time commitment. Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, for which this researcher works, practices this model with significant effectiveness.

**Advantages of the short-term team project model.** In this model, teams travel to strategic locations, inviting pastors and other leaders to come to these locations to receive the training. This training takes place over the period of a week or two or a few days or perhaps even one intensive day of study. The period and date of the training is chosen based on what is the timing most likely to allow the most learners to attend and participate.

Training teams may be made up of short-term missionaries from churches in Western countries such as the United States. These teams could also consist of missionaries in a particular region on the mission field. The ultimate goal should be to train trainers so that ultimately training teams would be made up of nationals or indigenous trainers who have received the knowledge and skillsets to do the training among their own people groups.

The team approach is not a novel one. It is contained in the very DNA of

biblical discipleship that the formation of teams of disciplers will be the outcome of any effective approach. As M. David Sills writes concerning the approach of the apostle Paul,

Paul understood that responsible missions work would not allow his desire to move quickly to new areas to jettison his duty to train trainers, educate educators, and disciple disciplers. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:2, “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Paul understood that he would not live on earth forever and that the churches needed sound teachers of the truth. Therefore, he knew that it was not enough to train the pastors; he also needed to train trainers and instill in them an awareness of the need to train still more.<sup>31</sup>

**Limitations of the short-term team project model.** Perhaps the most evident limitation to the short-term team project model is the difficulty in maintaining a deeply personal level of interaction with each person being trained. Discipleship, as has been noted, is by nature a relationship-oriented process when it is done most effectively and most biblically. The ideal is for the discipler and the disciple is to be meeting on a routine and frequent schedule, not only to train, but also to model and implement the training.

Another limitation to this model is that it may be difficult to get all of the pastors needing training to every scheduled training event. The constraints of time, work, church schedules often make finding a convenient time for everyone to train extremely difficult. Even in remote areas of the world, where one would think the hurried pace of the modern world has not had much impact, there are obligations that keep individuals from attending.

One limitation among indigenous pastors is that they often simply do not have the financial resources to travel to a training site. The desire to be trained is often there, but the wherewithal to attend is not. This is a limitation that is difficult to overcome for missionaries. Often the kneejerk response is just to pay the way of these poor pastors, but this necessarily requires that it be done for all attendees in order to be fair. Besides that,

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<sup>31</sup>Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, 100. According to the copyright page of Sills’s book, all scriptural references are from the ESV.

the practice of paying everyone's way produces dependence that is and should be the bane of any thoughtful missiological approach.

Overcoming these challenges and limitations is difficult and perhaps in some sense impossible. However, any approach will have its limitations and will also have its benefits. Missionaries with a desire to mentor and disciple others will seek the most effective approach or approaches to get the job done.

### **The Local Church Training Center Model**

Before leaving the survey of various training models a fourth should be considered. This is the local church as a training center. This is a model that is being used in many parts of the world. It is also a model that one may argue should be our ultimate goal—churches equipping their own leadership.

Daniel A. Rodriguez dealt with this approach in his book *A Future for the Latino Church: Model for Multilingual, Multi-generational Hispanic Congregations*. Rodriguez notes that traditional training models do not always fit the context of churches in Latin America:

One key to the rapid and sometimes phenomenal growth of the churches highlighted in this study is an emphasis on discipleship programs and leadership development in the context of the local church. There are numerous contextual factors that force many urban and inner-city Hispanic churches to bypass the traditional role of Bible colleges, universities and seminaries in most Protestant and evangelical denominations. Many would-be ministers and pastors in these churches do not qualify academically for admission to most institutions that train men and women for ministry. More importantly, family obligations and the ongoing needs of the local Hispanic church will dissuade aspiring leaders from taking anywhere from two to seven years away from the ministry in order to obtain the training and minimum credentials required of ministers and pastors in most denominations. Furthermore, many of the most respected and influential church leaders have followed a process into pastoral leadership that has relied on competencies gained at the level of the local church.<sup>32</sup>

The observations outlined above by Rodriguez are evident in the context of

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<sup>32</sup>Daniel A. Rodriguez, *A Future for the Latino Church: Model for Multilingual, Multi-generational Hispanic Congregations* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 128-29.

Latin America. The model of the local church as a center for training perhaps should not be viewed as a fallback model for Latin America or other areas of the world, but as the goal of any scheme for doing leadership training in any context. If leadership training and discipleship is not being accomplished on the local church level, one might ask, where then could it be done better? Missions practitioners in the vein of Rodriguez would advocate that missionaries seek to augment the role of the local church rather than replace it. Also, since the goal of this research is to propose a leader-training model that works in a particular Latin American setting, the points that Rodriguez makes should be taken into consideration with all seriousness.

### **The Content of Pastor Training**

Before we leave the discussion of effective pastor training, a discussion of what should be the content of this training is necessary. With the understanding that discipleship is more about relationship than about a specific body of knowledge, the content of what is effective training is difficult to discern. However, we cannot train unless there is something to teach or model. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to what is this corpus of information we desire to impart as missionaries. Sills has considered this very question in his book *Reaching and Teaching*. He divides his concept of what is required in a holistic approach into three basic categories: *head*, *hands*, and *heart*.<sup>33</sup>

The *head* portion contains basic biblical and theological content including, most important of all, the very nature of the gospel. This training must include, wrote Sills, not only what the Bible says but how to interpret and share what it says.<sup>34</sup> In some

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<sup>33</sup>Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, 52-62. These broad categories are not only included in Sills's book cited here, but also included in the methodology of training used in the missions agency founded by Sills, Reaching & Teaching International Ministries.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 52-53.

contexts, such as among primary oral learners, the process of deciding what is necessary to teach and what is not may be difficult. Sills writes, “Some missionaries graduate from rigorous seminary training and then go to work among cultures with low literacy levels. The process of rethinking three years of theological training that came to them in abstract conceptual forms only to present it to others in concrete narrative forms is arduous and draining.”<sup>35</sup>

The *hands* portion of training includes, according to Sills, the practical implementation of what is learned in the *head* portion. How to make the information gained through training practical and applicable to a specific context must be considered. Sills writes, “Since missionaries received their training in practical theology in Western systems, they often have to rethink how this information will find expression in the new culture.”<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the *heart* portion in Sills’s approach is that which addresses the personal character and spiritual development of those being trained. Sills writes,

Those preparing new generations of ministers and leaders should not assume the presence of these characteristics in the lives of young leaders, nor should they assume that they will automatically appear upon instruction in other areas. While only the Lord can look on the heart, those involved in leadership training should seek to ensure that they are training and recommending meet the qualifications of leaders with hearts after God’s own heart.<sup>37</sup>

The consideration and implementation of the *heart* portion of training or the personal spiritual disciplines helps move basic theological training in any training model more toward the goal of providing well-rounded discipleship.

Sills’ holistic approach to pastor training attempts to provide a well-rounded and comprehensive approach that considers not just the knowledge that pastors obtain,

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 59. In the approach used by Reaching & Teaching International Ministries, the heart portion is composed of the teaching of various personal spiritual disciplines.

but the lives that they live as well. Such an approach fits well with the biblical patterns of discipleship that were addressed earlier in this chapter.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to deal with the question of what is a biblical discipleship and training approach as seen in the practice of Jesus and the apostle Paul. It has also been the goal of this chapter to present some basic ways training and discipleship can be accomplished on the mission field with the inherent limitations and challenges of each method. Finally my goal has been to delineate the basic content of pastor training. These goals were attempted using a survey of pertinent bibliographic material. This chapter considers the overarching question as to what extent pastor training models fulfill the goal of performing basic biblical discipleship.

While missionaries who desire to be effective pastor trainers should avail themselves of much more in the way of valuable resources and insights than is offered in this research, it is hoped that the thoughts presented in this chapter will serve as an effective springboard toward accomplishing that goal. A prayerful consideration of how missionaries can accomplish the Great Commission in its fullest sense is the ultimate aim.

It is also arguable that one might see in the efforts of Western missionaries to “win the world in our generation” an unspoken and perhaps unrecognized premise that “if it is to be done, we must do it.” While such a desire may be admirable and may provide a good catchline for recruiting more missionaries, its implementation may fall short of the mandate of the Great Commission—“make disciples.” One may argue that if we desire to make disciples, we are, by definition, taking on a collaborative task. This collaboration in the work of the Great Commission understands that our work is not complete until those who are becoming disciples under our ministry are themselves becoming disciple-makers.

In the next chapter, the effectiveness of one model, the Short-Term Team

Project Model will be evaluated based on actual data gained on the field in a project in Oaxaca state. The next chapter will also consider input from some missionaries who are actually serving in the role of training pastors in Oaxaca. This will be done through the evaluation of responses given in interviews conducted among these missionary trainers

## CHAPTER 4

### PASTOR TRAINING IN OAXACA: EVALUATING ONE MODEL WITH OTHERS CONSIDERED

As has been noted earlier in this research, Oaxaca state in Mexico presents some unique challenges to missionaries seeking to train pastors and other church leaders in the region. Due to the rugged topography of Oaxaca, historically sixteen different ethnolinguistic groups have developed with 173 distinct dialects of indigenous languages native to the area. There are remote villages strewn throughout the topography of Oaxaca. Within these communities are often small struggling churches with pastors or pastor-like leaders who have little access to training resources or consistent training opportunities. Missionaries who would desire to train these individuals and strengthen these churches find it difficult, if not impossible, to travel to these communities on a consistent basis for training or discipleship purposes.

The methodology of this research includes a review of bibliographic material on pastoral training models (see previous chapter) and the use of two research instruments to attempt to measure the effectiveness of training models already being used in Oaxaca. Through these three sources of data, it is hoped that insights may be gained as to the most effective approach(es).

It has been the purpose of this research to explore ways in which training of indigenous pastors may be done on a consistent basis. In this chapter, the application of the Short-term Team Project Model in one particular location during a recent week will be evaluated for its effectiveness. This chapter will also include an evaluation of some insights gained by a number of missionaries who train pastors in Oaxaca in response to

an interview instrument designed by this researcher. It is hoped that through these instruments of research, insights to conducting pastor training in Oaxaca that is both accessible to trainees and reproducible in various parts of the state may be discovered.

### **Results from One Short-term Team Project Training Event**

The week of November 9-13, 2015, a pastor training was held in Pochutla, Oaxaca, Mexico, during which a Survey of the New Testament was taught which included an overview of the content and purpose of each of the books of the New Testament. This was the second training event among this particular group of pastors in which this researcher has been involved. Because of the previous meeting with this group, a rapport with these pastors in the training had already been established with a general understanding of how the training would go. Also, during the first training I gained confidence that this project would serve for the purposes of this research.

### **Description of the Setting of the Training Project**

Pochutla lies in the Costa region of Oaxaca near the Pacific coast. The coastal region of Oaxaca is low in elevation, but the mountains rise quickly from the coast. The mountains begin to rise within 15-20 miles of the coast, therefore it is a relatively short drive from the coastal areas to elevations of 3,000 feet or more.

This area of Oaxaca is part of the ancient habitation of the Zapotec people. As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this research, the Zapotecs had their pre-Columbian capital in Monte Albán (near modern-day Oaxaca City, but had gradually moved into and over the mountains. This migration was in part to isolate themselves from other competing tribes and in part to escape the invading Conquistadors. The result is a large number of Zapotec communities that are still extant in both mountainous and coastal regions of Oaxaca.

In modern-day Mexico there are also a large number of Mestizos who are descendants of both native Mexicans and Spaniards. The Mestizos in Oaxaca live near

and interact with indigenous groups such as the Zapotecs both economically and socially. This same dynamic is observed among the churches within Oaxaca also. As a result of these realities, the training discussed in this chapter included both Mestizo and Zapotec pastors. Present at the training were Mestizos who speak only Spanish and Zapotecs who speak a dialect of Zapotec as well as Spanish. The training was conducted in Spanish.

### **The Design of the Training Survey Tool**

I developed a tool to measure the level of knowledge of some basic facts about the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> It included some questions from all parts of the New Testament. The questions were kept relatively simple in order to allow for the possibility of some knowledge that trainees may have had prior to the training and also to allow that during the training the areas of knowledge would be covered. The instrument was administered to participants before and after the training to compare pre-training results to post-training results. Students were notified that their participation was strictly voluntary and that all results would be anonymous. They were also told that they could withdraw from the research at any time they wished.

Within the group of trainees were included some Pentecostal pastors and leaders as well as the majority Baptist group. The aim was to distinguish and compare results from both denominational groups to try to determine if there existed a difference in previous training level between the two. Thus, participants in the survey were asked to identify their denominational background.

Another question was related to ethnolinguistic background. Participants were asked if they knew another indigenous language besides Spanish. They were asked to indicate any other language that they knew. This was included to determine if there were

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<sup>1</sup>This instrument may be seen in English in appendix 1 and in Spanish in appendix 2. The instrument was issued to participants in Spanish, but the results are evaluated using the English equivalent in this dissertation.

any prior difference in training level based on ethnolinguistic background. It was also asked in order to determine the effectiveness of training offered in Spanish only for individuals who speak another language besides Spanish.

It is difficult if not impossible to say if the Zapotec speakers in the sample were primary Zapotec speakers. In many communities, indigenous languages are barely hanging on. Often the native indigenous language is taught in the home or in the schools to keep them alive. In Mexico, however, Spanish is taught in all schools and often spoken in homes even where another indigenous language is known. I also did not try to measure literacy levels among the participants. To do so, I felt, would limit participation and embarrass a number of the participants.

A total of twenty students were asked to participate in the exam if they chose and were assigned numbers prior to the exam. A total of eleven turned in exams. All of the eleven participants took both the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 1. Denominational and indigenous language background of exam participants in Pochutla, Oaxaca, November 9-13, 2015

Participant Number	Denominational Background	Zapotec Speaker
2	Pentecostal	Yes
3	Baptist	No
4	Baptist	No
5	Baptist	No
6	Baptist	Yes
12	Baptist	No
16	Baptist	Yes
17	Pentecostal	Yes
18	Baptist	No
19	Baptist	Yes
20	Baptist	No

Thirteen questions were on the instrument and a letter identified each of them. No names—only student numbers—were placed on the exams in order to preserve the participants’ anonymity. On the exam there were a total of eighteen answers. Some questions were multi-part and had a higher value than others. Question A had a value of 4 points. Questions F and H had a value of 2 points. All other questions were valued at 1 point each.

Although the exam was limited in its scope of New Testament knowledge to a few basic questions, the week of training included a relatively thorough survey of the New Testament over five full days. The instruction included teaching on the content and purpose of each New Testament book. The pre-test was given on Monday before any instruction took place, and the post-test took place on Friday after the conclusion of all instruction.

### **The Results Analyzed**

**Results in general.** Of the eleven participants who took the pre- and post-test on New Testament knowledge, most were Baptist, although two self-identified as Pentecostals. Also, there were five native Zapotec speakers. The results of the pre- and post-tests may be seen in table 2 below.

All participants demonstrated improvement between their respective pre- and post-test results on the exam. All participants as a group scored an average of 67 percent prior to the training and an average of 87 percent after the training—a 20 percent improvement. Thus, the instrument, at minimum, demonstrates learning of basic New Testament knowledge that was covered in the exam. The time constraints of the administration of the instrument and the publishing of the results did not allow for the follow-up I would have liked. These constraints also limited the ability to measure the effectiveness of the training in practical ministry in each of the participants respective communities. It is hoped that, over time, the results of the training will not only be

measurable, but also demonstrated in stronger churches in the area of Oaxaca where the participants live.

Table 2. Pre- and post-test scores from Pochutla, Oaxaca training survey November 9-13, 2015

Particip. Number	Pre/Post-	Question indicated by letter (see Appendix 2)												Total Correct	Score %	
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L			M
2	Pre-	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	17
	Post-	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	39
3	Pre-	4	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	15	83	
	Post-	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	17	94	
4	Pre-	4	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	13	72
	Post-	4	0	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	17	94
5	Pre-	4	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	78	
	Post-	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	18	100	
6	Pre-	4	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	10	56	
	Post-	4	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	16	89	
12	Pre-	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	15	83	
	Post-	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	18	100	
16	Pre-	4	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	15	83	
	Post-	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	18	100	
17	Pre-	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7	39	
	Post-	4	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	10	56	
18	Pre-	4	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	15	83	
	Post-	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	17	94	
19	Pre-	4	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	14	78	
	Post-	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	18	100	
20	Pre-	4	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	12	67	
	Post-	4	0	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	16	89	

**Results by denomination.** In general, the Baptist participants fared better on the exam. From my knowledge of the students who were present for the week of training, all of the Pentecostals were from one particular remote village in the mountains above the

coastal areas. A Pentecostal missionary had traveled to their village a few years ago, and they were only recently converted. It is not surprising that their grasp of even basic New Testament knowledge was fairly limited. On the other hand, it is likely that most of the Baptist participants had been exposed to at least a Sunday school level of training in the New Testament. Table 3 below compares average results based on denomination:

Table 3. Results compared by denomination

Denomination	Average Score (%)	
Baptist	Pre-test	76
	Post-test	96
Pentecostal	Pre-test	28
	Post-test	48

Although the Pentecostal scores were significantly lower than the Baptist scores both before and after the training, the improvement shown by both denominational groups was 20 percent.

**Results by language.** In order to fairly compare results between Zapotec speakers and non-Zapotec speakers, I am using only the data from the Baptist group. This is because the two Pentecostal participants were both Zapotec speakers. Due to their limited previous exposure to New Testament knowledge, I feared the results would have been skewed for the purposes of demonstrating the effectiveness of the training. Among Baptists, three spoke Zapotec and Spanish and six spoke only Spanish. Table 4 below compares the pre- and post-exam scores between the two groups:

Table 4. Comparison of scores between Baptist Zapotec and non-Zapotec speakers

Languages	Average scores (%)	
Zapotec/Spanish (three participants)	Pre-test	72
	Post-test	96
Spanish only (eight participants)	Pre-test	78
	Post-test	95

The results indicated in Table 4 demonstrate relative parity between the Baptist participants who were Zapotec speakers and those who were not. This is true both in the pre- and post-test results. These results seem to indicate that the week’s training increased New Testament knowledge between both groups by a comparable margin. It appears that both groups began and ended the week of training in practically the same place.

#### **Conclusions from Pre- and Post-Training Exams**

The results obtained from the pre- and post-training exams were for one selected week of training only over one subject—New Testament Survey. It is difficult and probably impossible to say that results would be similar with all possible training weeks dealing with all subjects. Many variables enter into the effectiveness of a training week including but not exclusive of the number and makeup of participants, the training team, the week chosen, climate and comfort considerations, the subject matter being taught, etc. Although this research was limited by the constraint of timing and planning, the results reveal something about the effectiveness of one week of training with the group of students and teachers and the subject matter taught in the week in question.

Although a larger sample over a longer period of time would have yielded results that may have been different and perhaps more accurate, the results of this grounded participation research do reveal something. Roughly an average of 20 percent

improvement over pre- and post-training results was demonstrated. This was true among Zapotec speakers or non-Zapotec speakers. This was true with Pentecostal participants or Baptist participants and was also true when viewing the results of all participants as a group.

The purpose of the evaluation tool just described was to measure the effectiveness of the training in terms of information given and received. It would have been desirable to measure the effectiveness of the training over a period of time including how the training was reproduced in the local church setting. The reality is that this research did not allow the time to do a long-term study of the effectiveness of this or any other particular week of training. However, I hope that I have demonstrated in terms of information sharing the effectiveness of one particular week of training in Oaxaca.

Much more is a part of effective pastor training than the imparting of information. The data given demonstrates little or nothing as to the level of commitment to discipleship on the part of the participants either before or after the week of training. In order to effect true discipleship or measure the growth in discipleship of those we are training would require means of measure to which we may not have access. In the next section of this chapter, I hope to draw some further principles of how discipleship may be done through training. This will be attempted through interviews with a number of missionaries who are involved in pastor training in Oaxaca.

### **Interviewing Selected Missionaries in Oaxaca about Effective Pastor Training**

In this section, it is my aim to gain insights from some missionaries about pastor training in Oaxaca. An interview instrument (see appendix 3) was sent to six missionaries with whom I had become acquainted who either presently or in the past have worked in Oaxaca training pastors. Of these six, I received responses from four. In this section, I analyze their responses and draw conclusions from them.

As may be seen in the interview instrument, missionaries were asked about

their role on the field, their previous or present involvement in pastor training, the effectiveness of the methods they have tried, other methods they have considered, the usefulness of training methods they have tried, and the challenges they have experienced in attempting their preferred model(s) of pastor training.

### **The Interviewees**

The interviews were conducted with a pledge of anonymity. I will honor that pledge identifying them by a letter and number as follows: source number 1 (S1); source number 2 (S2); source number 3 (S3); and source number 4 (S4). Using these identifiers, I will share their responses to each of the questions on the interview questionnaire. All of the interviewees live and work in Oaxaca state. Two live in the capital city, Oaxaca City. The others live in more remote towns in the state. All have an interest and desire to do effective pastor training and have thought about ways to do it. As I will demonstrate in the responses to question 1, the interviewees have the opportunity to conduct training with a number of pastors from different indigenous groups.

### **Question 1**

The first question asked each interviewee to indicate their particular role. The answers were as follows. S1 identified as a missionary and an educator. S2 wrote that he was a missionary and a trainer. S3 described himself as a missionary. S4 also indicated that he was a missionary.

Of interest to this study is the involvement of each of these missionaries with indigenous groups within Oaxaca state. From my personal knowledge of each of the missionaries who participated in the interview, I know the following: S1 has worked or is working with Mixtec and Zapotec groups; S2 has also worked and is working with Mixtec and Zapotec pastors; S3 has had experience working with Chinantec, Chontal, Mixtec and Zapotec groups (specifically Chinantec Chiltepec, Chinantec Ojitlan, Chinantec Central, Chinantec Northwest, Chontal Sierra, Chontal Coastal, Mixtec NW

Tlaxiaco, Mixtec SW Tlaxiaco, Mixtec Atlatlahuca, Zapotec Tlacolula Valley, Zapotec Ocotlan, and Zapotec San Bartolo Yautepec<sup>2</sup>); and S4 has been working with Zapotec Xanica and Zapotec Magdalena.

## Question 2

This dissertation is written with the desire to understand how to better train pastors within the state of Oaxaca in Mexico. It was my desire to limit the responses of the interviewees to their experience within Oaxaca alone. Their answers have been more or less true to the intent of the question. Question 2 was phrased: What has been your involvement in pastor training in Oaxaca?

In answer to the question of pastor training in Oaxaca, S1 writes,

I have been involved in missions/pastor training since I came to Mexico in 2006. Since I arrived in Oaxaca (2010), my involvement in pastor training has included preaching, teaching, and training of pastors and other men of their congregations who have been placed in a preaching or teaching role.

The primary training up to this point has been basic hermeneutic studies in an effort to help equip the local leaders and pastors with basic tools/guidelines that they can put into practice so they can study the Bible more accurately in the proper context. The ultimate goal is true worship as they study, interpret, preach God's Word better and make disciples (of all Nations) and encourage them better in their leadership role found in Ephesians 4:11-16.<sup>3</sup>

From his response, S1 seems to be focusing on biblically centered pastor training that becomes reproducible. He speaks of taking a hermeneutic approach that enables trainees to understand how to draw principles for leadership in the church setting directly from the biblical text. I am not sure to what he refers when he says "the proper

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<sup>2</sup>Names such as Chinantec, Chontal, Mixtec, and Zapotec indicate broad ethnolinguistic groups within Oaxaca state. Because people from these groups have migrated over the centuries to various locations over the centuries, they have developed distinct dialects, vocabularies, customs, etc. that are observed in a particular location. Thus, different groups are often identified not only by an ethnolinguistic name, but also by a location name which further identifies and distinguishes them from others in the same ethnolinguistic group. Though there are similarities, for instance, between different groups of Zapotecs, there are also distinguishing differences that make each local group distinct. It is not uncommon that Zapotecs from one region have trouble communicating with Zapotecs of another region.

<sup>3</sup>S1 lives and works in a Mixtec village in the northwestern part of Oaxaca state.

context,” but, if he is referring to contextualization of biblical principles, he makes an important point. As has been discussed previously, a level of contextualization is vital to making the Word of God applicable to any particular people group. This is important among the indigenous groups of Oaxaca as well as anywhere in the world. The goal is to help people grab the concepts presented in the Scriptures in ways that they can understand it without compromising the message.

In response to the same question, S2 indicated that he had been training pastors in Mexico since 2004, but that his experience in Oaxaca was limited to the past three years. He did not provide further detail in response to this particular question.

S3 has had experience with pastor training in Oaxaca personally as well as through the use of teams from the United States who have specifically come for the purpose of pastor training. S3 also indicates that they have sponsored pastors for training providing materials and funds. It was not clear from his response what the funds were for beyond the general need of training.<sup>4</sup>

S4 offered considerable detail regarding his involvement with pastor training in Oaxaca. He writes,

We came to Oaxaca in 2012 with a goal of reaching the unevangelized. It became quickly apparent that much of Oaxaca had a fledging (*sic*) church presence but that it was rife with doctrinal error, division, and immaturity because of a lack of discipleship and pastoral training. With that in mind we began to recalibrate our ministry plans to focus more on equipping local churches/bodies of believers & training pastors/church leaders. In 2013 I began to systematically visit indigenous Zapotec communities located in the Sierra Sur Mountains to find believers and assess the needs of the local body, incorporating the data into a database that could be used to orchestrate training and aid. In 2014, . . . I held a couple of sessions to meet with the pastors together and discuss training possibilities and needs. From this we launched our seminary in January of 2015. Every month we meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday for 8-10 hours. When the pastors and church leaders arrive for the training they have already completed their assigned lessons & reading based on Grudem’s Systematic Theology<sup>5</sup> (15-20 lessons/month). During this time we discuss the

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<sup>4</sup>S2 and S3 live and work in the Central Valley area of Oaxaca. This area includes the capital, Oaxaca City and other cities and villages in the valley. It also includes some foothill areas on both sides of the mountains. Both S2 and S3 have visited villages in these areas.

<sup>5</sup>S4 here refers to the magnum opus written by Wayne Grudem in the Spanish version. Wayne

lessons from the prior month and I lecture on additional material. This portion of the seminary will take between 3-4 years for each pastor to finish.<sup>6</sup>

When S4 speaks of “our seminary,” he is referring to the training he provides on a regular basis. I have had the opportunity to meet with the groups that S4 is training. In fact, the project described earlier in this chapter was with a group of these same pastors as he indicates in the latter part of his response.

The doctrinal error to which he refers among the churches is an important point. The truth is that, without training, pastors and churches quickly move into error. Also, there are others who seek to train in a way of their choosing that may or may not be biblical. Error is the outcome of both a lack of training and poor training or training with a purpose besides the sharing of biblical truth.

Of note in the response of S4 is the fact that he has chosen to do systematic (monthly) training with the Zapotec pastors. They are studying a particular resource and completing homework assignments. The meetings are academic in nature, but there is also time for sharing as S4 indicates that he has assessed “the needs of the local body.” It is an important component of pastor training to know that to which we are training. Again, as with S1 so with S4, contextualization appears to be a strategic component of the pastor training that is done.

### **Question 3**

Question 3 was phrased: What in your opinion is the most effective way to train pastors that you have tried in Oaxaca? This question and the others that follow were asked of the missionaries to allow them to assess what they have attempted as to its effectiveness. It was my desire to learn not only from the successes of those who have

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Grudem, *Teología Sistemática: Una Introducción a la Doctrina Bíblica* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>S4 works in the “Costa” area of Oaxaca. This is the area along the Pacific coast from the Guerrero border to the area where the isthmus “Istmo” region begins. It includes coastal areas and also the foothills of the mountains that rise from the coast.

attempted pastor training in Oaxaca, but to learn from their perceived mistakes as well. This is a valuable missiological principle. Not all of what missionaries attempt will be successful. At times missionaries experience more failures than successes. It is important to remember that sometimes as much or more can be learned in missions from failure as from success.<sup>7</sup>

This question as well as the ones that follow will allow an assessment of that which has proven successful and that which has not. It is hoped that the investigation of these successes and failures will provide valuable insight into the best practices in the doing of pastor training.

**S1's response.** In response to this first evaluation question, the missionaries interviewed had some interesting insights. S1 gave a lengthy answer to this particular question that is worth sharing:

In my opinion, the most effective way to train pastors in Oaxaca is to actually LIVE in Oaxaca. Living in the general vicinity of the pastors (in this case the state of Oaxaca) allows me much more "possible" access to the pastors and allows the pastors and leaders much more access to me and the team. I have had opportunities to model a different kind of preaching and teaching that hopefully can later be referenced in the training sessions as a "good" or "better" example. Living in the vicinity allows for more flexibility with regard to the types of training, the frequency of training and the depth of life-on-life relationships with the pastors and leaders.

Living near the pastors/leaders also allows for trying different models/methods of training. If I see that one model is not being effective, I can make some changes and try something else. I can engage the men on a more natural level and get more useful feedback with regard to the training and what they need. Living near the pastors allows me to have more natural and life-on-life conversations with the men. This by itself allows for more opportunities to be speaking God's truth into these men and to teach them how to do the same with their people.

As the studies become more regular and the men learn more, living near the pastors allows me to invite them to give summary explanations to new participants about what they have been learning, thus giving them opportunities to teach what

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<sup>7</sup>An historic illustration of this is seen in what John Barker writes, "In the mission fields the pioneers largely invented through trial and error basic practices and standards." John Barker, "When the Missionary Frontier Ran Ahead of Empire," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005), 86.

they have been learning. This tends to help them learn even more. And then, as new training sessions take place, those pastors that have been through the training can help teach in the new training session. The idea is duplication and training them to do the same. Eventually, the pastors themselves can provide this type of training on their own.<sup>8</sup>

Here S1 is advocating for what might be called an incarnational approach to pastor training. He makes a strong case for living near the pastors in training. This appears to be a discipleship approach in perhaps the strictest sense. By that, I mean that the missionary is the discipler over an extended period of time of a group of pastors in a community or region. This approach seems to be near to the model of Jesus, but also seems to be limited in its scope as there is one missionary trainer in one locale for a significant amount of time. The question remains as to how this can be multiplied to impact more places over a similar amount of time with more trainers and more trained. This is a question worthy of more consideration.

S1 continues,

As for the actual structure of the training (what it looks like), I currently work only with two groups of men. One group meets once each week. The other group meets twice each week. These regular meetings allow for a smaller, more intimate group and allows (*sic*) for more personal conversation and greater confidence among the men. The small group and "men-only" environment also creates opportunity for these men to return to their homes and their congregations in order to teach their wives and the other men and women what they have been learning in the studies. This gives the men in the study the teaching opportunity to put-into-practice what they have been learning, thus allowing them to learn even better. This philosophy depends much on the hope that the men will return home and teach their wives and other women in the congregation. I have seen varied results with this philosophy. I am not opposed, necessarily, to conduct a training session for a larger, mixed group but will continue to proceed with the men until I see the need for another approach.

In addition to the weekly meetings, I am fond of the idea of shorter (perhaps long weekend) but more frequent training "seminars." Shorter seminars (perhaps once-a-month or every two months) are more easily attended by the trainees (since they do not need to miss several days of work and be separated from their families) and hopefully more impactful. This might also allow for the coming together of leaders from different congregations for this more intensive/special training session. This is much more possible if there are trainers living in the general area of the pastors. We, my team and I, are currently brainstorming the idea of organizing such "long-weekend" seminars.

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<sup>8</sup>Emphasis is original.

Here, S1 speaks of the structure of his training approach. Again, he takes a strong discipleship approach in the sense of a mentor/mentee relationship. Also, his might be called an apprenticeship approach where the trainees are given the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned by teaching the same material in turn to others. He again makes the case for his approach that it works best when the missionary or mission teams live in close proximity to those being trained.

Finally, S1 concludes with a comment as to the content of the training:

The general method that encourages me the most is to teach the pastors the importance of understanding the “BIG PICTURE” (by means of story-telling) showing them how the Bible is one book, written by one author with one main story-line . . . and to encourage the pastors [to] teach new testament letters from start to finish instead of thematic or reactionary preaching (which, by and large, is the great majority of preaching).

S1 is here advocating for a chronological approach to Bible teaching that fits well in primary oral cultures. He is also concerned that this approach be translated into the preaching of the pastors he is training. Whether “thematic or reactionary preaching . . . is the great majority of preaching” is true or not in S1’s context or in others is difficult to ascertain. It is not clear whether this is an observation from what he sees in the setting he is describing or whether he states this as a personal observation or belief about preaching in general. However, he indicates his preference for “story-telling” preaching. This is worth considering if the desire is to train pastors contextually in Oaxaca.

**S2’s response.** In response to the question, S2 also gave a detailed response. He begins by describing two approaches that he has personally used in the past. He provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of these two approaches in the context of Oaxaca:

In the past I have observed and been directly involved in Pastoral training using two primary approaches: (1) institutional (seminary/Bible institute) and (2) extension (periodic seminars and classes over an extended period of time. My experience with these two approaches has led me to some new approaches this past year. The “institutional” approach, although potentially helpful for young men hoping to enter the ministry in the future, is very difficult for pastors already in the

ministry.

The extension approach is a far better alternative for pastors because it provides training that is far more accessible. However, my observation is that the periodic extension approach is also very limited for the following reasons:

- Too much info in a short [time] to really process.
- Not highly relational. Pastors, like disciples, need relational mentors to experience deep transformation and high-impact personal and ministry change.
- Tends to be too infrequent.
- Does not seem to result in long-term, deep life and ministry impact.

Here, S2's experiences with these two approaches are brought into sharp contrast. We gain insight as to their effectiveness from this missionary's personal experience. Of note, is the value he ascribes to each approach for different types of students/trainees. While what he calls the institutional approach (virtually the same as what I refer to as the residential academic approach in the previous chapter) is beneficial to younger—often single men, the periodic extension approach, he feels, has more value for pastors who are already serving and perhaps already have families. However, S2 desires a deeper connection with those whom he is training as evidenced in his continuing remarks:

My conclusion has been that while periodic extension courses provide pastors with a few “nuggets” of information that prove helpful for their life and ministry, they do not tend to result in long-term deep ministry transformation. The periodic extension course approach is important and very valuable as a stop-gap method of providing training in areas where there is no training on the ground, but can be phased out as full-time personnel arrive on the field.

Consequently, I have come to the following conclusions.

- High-impact ministry transformation requires relational mentoring that not only communicates theological, biblical, and ministerial truth but that allows time for the mentor-mentee relationship to develop and yield fruit.
- Although there is some benefit that comes from having a multitude of different teachers, having the same teacher(s) over the course of several months or years results in better learning. This is due to the impact that the mentor-mentee relationship is able to have.

- The more frequent the interaction, the more productive the training. Shorter but more frequent class-times produce better results.<sup>9</sup>

S2 makes an interesting point here when he states essentially that the depth of relationship impacts the effectiveness of the training. In the previous chapter we discussed when pastor training is discipleship. This seems to be the concern S2 has for the training he desires to provide as well. Apparently his experience has been that the “mentor-mentee” relationship produces a better result. S2 continues to write his personal conclusions based on his experiences:

Based on these observations, this past year I have taken a new approach to pastoral training. I have begun to work with small groups of no more than 5 or 6 church leaders. We meet weekly for 2-3 hours of class instruction time. These times are highly interactive and relational. Here are some of the things I’m trying to do:

- I encourage pastors to bring one or two lay leaders so that the mentoring can be multiplied in the local church.
- We begin our time with a ministry report, prayer requests and prayer. My goal is to create a “safe” environment of gospel-transparency where the men can learn to love and encourage each other. I want leaders to be able to share with our group things that they might not be able to “unload” on people in their own local church context.
- The training focuses on “how-to” over just information dump. At the heart of my training is help on how to exegete, expound, and apply scripture. The focus is on Bible interpretation and content. I’m trying to teach them to fish, rather than just giving them fish. Because of this focus, I forego many other elements that are part of a traditional western seminary/institute curriculum. As we work systematically through books of the Bible, basic issues of Systematic and pastoral theology are dealt with as well as a plethora of life and ministry issues.
- Personal interaction with the pastors outside of official class-times is encouraged and sought after.
- Homework is an important part of the training.

The use of the training session as a time of sharing of personal and ministry concerns, prayer requests, and personal applications of what is being taught turns the training into a group designed for personal spiritual growth, i.e. discipleship. Rather than being strictly an academic class setting, the group takes on a family or brotherhood feel

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<sup>9</sup>Quotes and bullets are original.

that promotes growth, not only in knowledge, but also in relationships. This in turn strengthens the bonds between the pastors involved and increases the likelihood of working together in the future for ministry and outreach.

S2 has developed strategies for converting his pastor training sessions into discipleship opportunities. Of particular interest is the attempt to jumpstart training in the local church through his pastor training. The hope is that the training will be reproduced in the local churches of the pastors involved. Through the inviting of select lay leaders to be involved, there is the chance that training will enter the DNA of the local congregation and become a part of the churches ongoing discipleship efforts.

**S3's response.** S3 offered some suggestions on how to use and reproduce oral training methods:

Indigenous pastors who train other pastors is (*sic*) the most effective way to train pastors. They know the culture and can keep the training focused. Keeping the training focused on oral methods has been a slow but effective method. We began a Story Together model this past year with 5 key people groups where they are trained to translate the Bible in their own dialects. The next phase is to offer training for church leaders.

Of interest here is the attempt to train leaders to do Bible translation work into the dialects of the trainees. Based on the context of his answer, it seems that this translation work is of an oral nature.

**S4's response.** In response to the question, S4 offered the following suggestions:

The pastors are spread throughout a very large region and getting them all together is a difficult proposition. Many have to travel 4-6 hours via multiple vans, trucks, and taxis. However, trying to go out and train each of them every month would be an impossible task for one missionary, or even 10. The ideal way to train them is to bring them to a central location and to use short (i.e. 1 week), intense training sessions on a regular basis. This allows for wise use of the missionary and educators time and resources while also respecting and understanding the limitations of the local pastors. They are almost all bi-vocational with families to support so they cannot be away from their jobs for long periods of time to attend a traditional seminary, even if they could afford it, which they cannot. Of course, this format is not without its drawbacks. During the sessions the pastors have to be housed, fed,

etc. Our long-term goal is to build a training center to facilitate this type of short-term, intensive training in an economically responsible manner.

S4 prefers the weeklong training method in the interest of the wise use of time and resources. He seems to differ from other approaches such as those advocated by S1 and S2 or else his experience has been limited to the approach he advocates. The building of a training center appears to be a large investment in infrastructure that will be of use for the long term. Whether that use will be of long term benefit would seem to depend on the tenure of the missionary on the field and/or the commitment of the pastors to this model of training.

#### **Question 4**

Missionaries who seek to do their work most effectively often consider other options for accomplishing tasks. In preparing the questionnaire, I thought it would be best to give the missionaries the opportunity to share some ideas not yet implemented. All four missionaries who participated in this interview gave responses that will now be considered. Question 3 is phrased: Have you considered trying other models for pastor training in Oaxaca? If so, please describe.

**S1's response.** S1, without providing detail as to models he has considered, stressed the necessity of simplicity, reproducibility, and mobility being built into any model. He writes,

Yes I have considered trying other models for pastor training here in Oaxaca. I hope to always be open to the idea of different models since the primary goal is to encourage and equip other pastors and leaders and trainers (2 Timothy 2:2). However, the driving concept for training in my mind is that it be something simple, reproducible and mobile. The idea of seminary institutions and "formal" Bible classes is not something that encourages me and not is easily reproducible in the region where I am located. We must be careful to not cause unnecessary mental speed bumps in the minds of the local men we are training. If the pastors believe that the training is beyond them, they may think that the training is not something they can do and most likely will not pass it on to others. This is counter-productive to the idea of 2 Timothy 2:2 and making disciples that make other disciples.

Keeping it simple is a driving principle and one that is always in process.<sup>10</sup>

S2 writes as one committed to his present model as well as to the principles he has outlined as being part of an adequate training model. Given the setting in which he works, his model is probably very beneficial.

**S2's response.** S2 expressed frustration over the difficulty in reaching pastors in outlying areas and offers a suggestion that requires more personnel to accomplish. He writes,

Yes. The model that I am currently following works well for Pastors that are in my immediate area. It will not, however, work for pastors that live further away. The situation in Oaxaca requires a way to provide pastoral training to pastors in outlying areas. So the question before me is, "how do we provide extension training for pastors that doesn't sacrifice the convictions outlined above?"

As our team on the ground here grows (we will be joined by two more families in the next two years, Lord willing), I hope to be able to reach out into outlying areas more. My plan is to work with networks of pastors throughout Oaxaca. The goal would be to have 1½ to 2 day classes (10-15 hours) every 4 to 6 weeks. Between these meetings homework would be assigned to prepare them for the next training session.

I also hope to begin to focus specifically on national trainers. As I work with pastors a few (maybe 1 out of 5) stand out as potential trainers of others. My goal is to begin to develop a team of national pastors who, along with their church, will commit to train a group of pastors somewhere else in Oaxaca.<sup>11</sup>

The response that S2 gives indicates a thoughtful consideration of ways to train pastors who live in the outlying areas. The emphasis on equipping national trainers is valuable as a means of multiplying the work. Also, it is of note that the basic structure of the classes he suggests having is similar to some ideas expressed by S4 previously.

**S3's response.** Presented with this question, S3 offers a model that has been tried, but apparently with limited success in his mind. He also emphasizes that the desire

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<sup>10</sup>Emphasis is the author's.

<sup>11</sup>In writing "the convictions outlined above," I assume that he is referring to his response to the previous question in which he stresses the importance of having a training model that most closely accomplishes personal discipleship using a relational strategy. The small number of pastors who he felt were capable of training others ("maybe 1 out of 5") was not explained.

to be trained by national pastors sometimes overrides their scrutiny of what is being offered them.

We have tried bringing a large group of pastors into a central location but the training has to be so broad that it is shallow.

Pastors love to go to training events. It really does not matter to some of them what is being presented—bad theology or whatever—they will attend. This has been a problem. So, I have tried to find USA churches that would go out to the areas that need training most and spend time with small groups of leaders.

Missionaries training in this part of the world or others need to keep in mind that not all training is equal. S3 emphasizes a point that would suggest that training needs to start out as “un-training” in some contexts.

**S4’s response.** S4 stresses the difficulty of reaching some pastors in remote villages. This is a common concern in Oaxaca. As was discussed in the history and background segment of this dissertation, Oaxaca’s topography and the nature of migration of indigenous groups historically lend to the difficulty in reaching some pastors and churches. S4 writes,

I have tossed around a few ideas in my head and even tried one or two. I have tried going out and meeting with the pastors one-on-one (I still do this with one man who is not able to make the regular trainings every month) but many of the communities are very remote with poor roads making this unpractical on a large scale. I think an area of great potential in the future is in videoconference training via Skype, etc. Once we have the training center done I hope to be able to leverage pastors and teachers in the United States to help with training in this manner.

Again, S4 has hopes that a centrally located training center will solve some of the problems of reaching pastors in far-flung areas of Oaxaca. Whether this is the case or not remains to be seen.

## **Question 5**

To allow the missionaries to discuss any models that have proven to be successes or failures in their experience, Question 4 was posed to the interviewees: Are there any methods that have or have not proven useful in your experience?

Again, learning from failure is an important tool on the mission field. On the other hand, that which proves to be successful is useful for all who seek to learn from the experience of others.

**S1's response.** S1 describes an issue that is common among several of the missionaries interviewed. That is the availability of pastors to attend a training event of any length of time due to work schedules and responsibilities at home.

Weeklong conferences, while a neat idea, seem to be less effective (practical) simply due to scheduling conflicts, which affects attendance rates. It is hard for many pastors to take off for an entire week. Many pastors/leaders are laymen also and not supported fully by the congregation. Some are not supported at all by the congregation. So, for a lay pastor to take off from work for an entire week is not something they believe they can do on a practical level.

Even though these excuses are logical, it is hard to know whether or not they are valid. Regardless, if I can structure training seminars in order to minimize such excuses, then I want to do all I can in order to make it work.

The more natural-feeling and intimate I can make the training sessions, the easier it may be for the local pastors to reproduce them and pass the teaching on to others.

Of the two training groups I have going right now, the group that meets twice a week seems to be more useful. The sessions are 45 minute to one-hour sessions with a little bit of time before and after for discussion and/or questions/comments. If one of the sessions needs to be canceled or if some of the men are not able to make it to one of the sessions, they can easily be caught up in the next session. The group that meets only once a week is taking longer to walk through the training material for the simple reason that if the men are not able to make it to the training session, we must wait a full week for the next meeting.

Again, S4 expresses his preference for training that is more frequent and allows for greater interpersonal relationship time. This also is a preference in that, as he indicates, the more frequently a group meets the sooner the group comes together again if one session is missed. Meeting regularly with a group of pastors is easier when they are in close proximity to one another.

**S2 and S3's responses.** S2 and S3 gave brief responses to this question. S2 referred back to his comments in the previous question. S3 only noted, "the large group,

broad audience [approach] has not produced visible results.”

**S4’s response.** S4 expressed the concern that training models be tailored to the way pastors in Oaxaca learn. He writes,

Most of the leaders have a low level of education so I have found that methods heavy on reading (especially technical reading) are too over their heads to be effective. Also, long lecture sessions are not very helpful if they are not broken up by opportunities for them to ask questions and process the materials. They don’t have the experience of a college graduate who can sit and listen to a lecture while pulling out and synthesizing the information. Q&A sessions, case studies, small group discussions, short (1 hour) lectures followed by questions & recap, etc. are all highly effective.

An attempt to contextualize the training of the pastors with which he works has led S4 to seek a method of presenting the material in the manner that can most easily be grasped by them. This manner of contextualization is very important to the trainer who desires to have a significant impact.

### **Question 6**

Question 6 was phrased: What have been the greatest challenges/difficulties in using the method(s) you have tried? This question was included to allow the missionaries to reflect on the difficulties they face in training pastors. The hope was that their responses would provide insights into the most effective models in Oaxaca.

**S1’s response.** S1 provided a lengthy answer to this question. His concerns center on the receptivity to the material of the pastors being trained as well as interpersonal conflicts within the groups as a whole. He writes,

One of the challenges that I have seen that is directly related to the method I am using (once per week Bible studies) is the slow pace of going through some of the training material. The other group that has chosen to meet twice a week is proceeding much more quickly through the material and even seem to be grasping the material more deeply.

I am not sure if the following challenges are caused by the methods I have tried or are more due to the mentality of the local pastors and leaders.

- some leaders and pastors do not feel they need the training. They seem to be

content with what they are already teaching or perhaps they are fearful of putting themselves in a position of being challenged to examine more deeply the Scriptures.

- some leaders and pastors do not have the time for training (busy schedule). Their work, family and pastoral schedules are so full, they find it difficult to even consider taking time out in order meet together. Perhaps they do not value the idea of meeting together or perhaps they believe they have nothing new they can learn.
- many leaders and pastors do not “mix” well with leaders from other denominations. The us-and-them mentality is strong here where I am and there seems to be much fear of “sheep robbing”.

Where I am located, there seems to be a history of rivalry and competition in regard to how many people congregate with what pastor and jealousy and fear among the pastors seem to be a problem. If this were a Biblical attitude of protecting the sheep, that would be one thing. However, I am finding it quite difficult to believe that this is what is going on. I have even been accused of undermining authority and causing division from one of the local pastors and his wife (who is American) because they are egalitarian and I am complementarian. I just recently heard (from a trusted source) that this pastor made an announcement to the congregation that he was prohibiting anyone from the congregation to attend the Bible studies I am holding.

So what this is beginning to look like is a Bible study for each individual group or congregation, however, I will continue to look for opportunities to encourage joint Bible studies.<sup>12</sup>

The circumstances S1 describes are not uncommon in many places in Oaxaca. The same may be said of many places in the world. Overcoming the tendencies of sinful human nature will be a challenge for all missionary trainers.

**S2’s response.** Like S1, S2 notes some similar pitfalls to pastor training in his context and experience. He writes,

Like discipleship, relational training is messy and time-consuming. It’s much easier to swoop in and teach for a few days and leave and not get really entangled in the lives and struggles of local pastors. Relational training, on the other hand is emotionally costly and time consuming. But it is hugely rewarding.

The other challenge is that it makes it harder to multiply my efforts. Using a traditional extension course approach allows for training many more men than the relational training approach. However, this is counterbalanced, I believe, by two convictions. First, maximum impact in discipleship and training takes place when a few are trained extensively rather than when many are trained superficially

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<sup>12</sup>Bullets are original.

(consider, for example, Jesus' approach with the twelve). A second, corollary conviction is that by more fully training a few, you are actually training trainers who will, in turn, be qualified to train others (2 Tim. 2:2).

S2's emphasis on personal discipleship as a key component of training comes through again in his response. This emphasis is not only "rewarding," as he says, but it is scriptural as was noted in the treatment of Jesus' model in chapter two.

**S3's response.** S3 expressed concerns about the type of training models Western missionaries and "traditional" pastors in Mexico bring to the field in general. He also emphasizes the importance of respecting and using oral formats in training. He writes,

Our models tend to be very literate when led by USA churches and by traditional Mexican pastors. To get the training to an oral format has been very difficult because many confuse oral with 'not educated' and this is simply not the case. Indigenous pastors are VERY intelligent and capable of learning when implemented in their learning style.<sup>13</sup>

**S4's response.** S4, as earlier, expressed concerns over logistics for training. He also emphasizes, as did S1, the complications that arise from training pastors from different denominational or doctrinal backgrounds. He writes,

Getting the pastors into on location for the training can be complicated. Bad weather, transportation system breakdowns, etc. can really mess things up. Also the cost to the leaders and to us in transportation, lodging, food, etc. can be high. In addition, trying to work with leaders from a variety of denominational backgrounds in one setting can be very difficult and presents many complications.

### **Conclusions from the missionary interviews**

The missionaries interviewed in this study have provided valuable insights into the realities on the ground in Oaxaca state. These missionaries draw from a wide and varied experience with different indigenous groups and various denominations of pastors. They have conducted trainings in urban and rural settings. They have used a variety of

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<sup>13</sup>Emphasis is original.

formats and models to train pastors in Oaxaca.

It is striking to hear the similarities between all of the missionaries. They all speak of the challenges of logistics and contextualization in one way or another. Some have focused their efforts on small groups that meet weekly. Others have focused on larger groups that gather on a less regular basis.

Practically all speak of the challenges of poverty, the need to work, and the difficulty of travel among the pastors in committing to attending the trainings. These challenges will not be easily overcome in Oaxaca.

The importance of contextualization in training pastors has been emphasized by all of the missionaries interviewed. They make strong cases for such contextualization as a means to get the material to the pastors in a way that they can process, assimilate, and put into practice that which they are learning. They stress the importance of looking beyond the way Westerners learn to try to help Oaxacans learn in their own way.

### **Overall Conclusions**

In the discussion of the short-term team project in Pochutla, the results of the week's training demonstrated a clear improvement in understanding of the material presented. This was true across the board, whether among Zapotec-speakers or Spanish-speakers, Baptists or Pentecostals. The results demonstrated a 20% improvement in all categories. These results were personally rewarding to me as a Western missionary who likes to measure results quantitatively. However, I recognize that quality surpasses quantity in the doing of anything worthwhile. Anyone who teaches desires to see progress in the apprehension of the material taught.

Yet, the question remains as to whether the gaining of factual knowledge constitutes effective pastoral training. Certainly it should be the aim of anyone conducting pastor training to teach the truths, principles, background and structure of the Scriptures. However, as was noted, the head knowledge of the Scriptures must be

translated into heart knowledge as well. Sharing insights, information, and personal experience about the doing of ministry is a worthy endeavor, but there is a deeper level of training than just the sharing of good ideas or correct information. Discipleship should be the goal of training, not just education in the traditional sense. The frustration of this research has been the limitations on time to conduct long-term research on the effectiveness of each model of training presented to effect the desired aim of discipleship.

By and large, the missionaries who were interviewed as part of this research placed a strong emphasis on personal discipleship. The very structure of their training approaches was often dictated by their strong desire to affect personal, reproducible, and life-changing discipleship as a result. This desire to make disciples of the pastors in any training setting is worthy of honor and replication. For those who love, preach and teach the gospel, there can be no short cut to discipleship. Jesus invested three years in preparing his disciples to change the world and he commanded them to do the same. He left them and he has left each of us in the person of the Holy Spirit the ultimate Teacher to equip us to make disciples in obedience to the Lord's Great Commission.

The next chapter offers some conclusions and some recommendations about pastor training that are specific to the chosen setting of Oaxaca state in Mexico. I also hope that these conclusions and recommendations can be put into practice in settings far beyond.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this dissertation, I have attempted to research the most effective approaches for doing pastor training in the state of Oaxaca in Mexico. It has been my hope that what I discover through this study would be of benefit to missionaries, mission boards, and nationals who have a desire to train pastors in this part of the world. It is also my desire that some principles may be drawn from this research that will be of benefit in other parts of the world. In this chapter, I will draw some conclusions from my research and make recommendations that may be put to use by others.

To reiterate a basic premise of this research, it is of greater benefit to train nationals to do the work of evangelism, church planting, discipleship and, ultimately, pastor and leader training in their own communities and countries. To fail to do so is to fail to obey the Great Commission.

#### **Oaxaca's Uniqueness**

Through the discussion of the historical and geographical realities in the state of Oaxaca, I attempted to demonstrate the existing difficulties for planning and implementing any pastor training within the region. A region with such rugged topography and isolated communities poses a significant challenge to missionary trainers. I have discussed various attempts to confront this challenge, sharing the benefits and shortcomings of each one. Any effective pastor-training model must take into account the unique challenges that exist in Oaxaca. By way of reminder, I will review some of these particular challenges.

## **Ethnolinguistic Challenges**

Oaxaca has been home to numerous indigenous groups for centuries, if not millennia. In the discussion of the history of the region, we identified some of the groups that have lived in Oaxaca historically and discovered that these groups have often moved from one place to another for various reasons. These migrations were often for the purpose of protecting the community from other indigenous peoples or from foreign invaders such as the Spanish conquistadores. The rugged topography of Oaxaca provided havens within the mountains and valleys for this protection. Sometimes people groups moved within the region to increase opportunities to make a living for their families and communities.

As groups located themselves in the isolated parts of the region, they began to develop cultural and linguistic differences that distinguished them even from others of the same ethnolinguistic group. Hence, it became common to have multiple dialects of Zapotec, Mixtec, etc., often identified by the areas where these groups settled. In the interviews with missionaries some of these people groups with places included in their names were identified.

At an earlier time in Mexican history these differences would have provided challenges to any level of communication with the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca or any other part of Mexico. To evangelize, plant churches, translate the Bible, or train pastors among these people groups necessitated learning each language along with its regional idiosyncrasies. However, since Mexico has improved its national education system, all people groups have the opportunity to learn Spanish and have begun to use Spanish as the principle language of education, commerce, and law.

Because of this fact that Mexico has become a modern nation with educational objectives for all people within the nation, the playing field has been somewhat leveled. The nation's high literacy level in Spanish makes it possible to use Spanish as a training language. Those pastors who preach or teach in an indigenous language may share what

they have learned in pastoral training with their own people in the language of their people group and community.

The challenges of training within primary oral cultures must also be considered. Though many Mexicans are able to read in Spanish, it is also necessary for those who seek to train pastors within Oaxaca to learn methods such as Chronological Bible Storying (CBS) to be able to evangelize and disciple persons within their communities who choose not to read.<sup>1</sup> Missionaries must not only consider how best to train pastors, but also consider how pastors are to be equipped to train others within their churches and communities. This objective requires sensitivity to the ways in which the people within various ethnolinguistic groups in Oaxaca have traditionally learned, received, and passed on information.

### **Geographical challenges**

As I have often noted, Oaxaca's topography has proven to be a challenge to numerous groups trying to spread their influence in the region. This has been true for other indigenous groups expanding their territory, for Spanish Conquistadors with intentions to exploit the riches of the land and establish colonies within the New World, for Jesuit priests seeking to evangelize indigenous peoples, and for modern Mexican government agencies seeking to bring basic services to the people of the region. It is also a challenge for any missionary or missions agency attempting to provide training for pastors in Oaxaca.

Because of the isolation of many communities within mountains and valleys of Oaxaca at the end of long dirt roads, missionaries face considerable challenges reaching them. Getting to each community on a consistent basis for the purposes of doing training

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Unesco Institute for Statistics, "Country Profiles: Mexico," accessed February 14, 2016, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=MEX&sector=lit>.

or discipleship is practically impossible for one missionary or even a team of missionaries to do with consistency.

In the discussion of Jesus' approach to discipleship, we noticed that Jesus' model for discipleship required significant time spent with the disciples in an incarnational relationship. Jesus modeled the truths he was teaching his disciples. To make disciples as Jesus demonstrated for us, we must find ways to do so with a similar investment of time. Therefore, missionaries must consider and seek to overcome the geographic challenges of a place such as Oaxaca as much as is possible. Any attempt to provide such consistent training at the level of personal discipleship is daunting, but the challenges must be overcome by creative approaches guided by the Holy Spirit.

### **Political and Economic Challenges**

Because of the difficulties that exist to reach many of the indigenous communities within Oaxaca state, even the government of Mexico has been faced with challenges in governing these communities. In many cases the governing of many local communities has been left to groups such as the Zapatistas that historically developed from adherence to the ideas and practices of Emiliano Zapata. While some would question the legitimacy of Zapatista rule, the government of Mexico often views it within the realm of *Usos y Costumbres* which was discussed briefly in chapter one. The basic reality is that groups such as the Zapatistas *are* the government in many remote communities of Oaxaca. These groups often rule with the threat of violence—especially to outsiders—in order to maintain their control over a region.

Missionaries who seek to enter indigenous communities to evangelize, plant churches, or train new believers or pastors must confront the realities of control by groups such as the Zapatistas.<sup>2</sup> Westerners, in some areas governed by such groups, are

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<sup>2</sup>Gustavo Esteva is an advisor to the Zapatista Army for National Liberation as well as the founder of the Universidad de la Tierra in Oaxaca, Oaxaca. Excerpts from his lectures on the status and aims of the Zapatistas in Oaxaca are found here: Gustavo Esteva, "The Revolution of the New Commons:

sometimes viewed as a threat. The very existence of groups such as the Zapatistas within communities can stymie the efforts of missionary trainers, which is another challenge that missionaries in Oaxaca need to face and seek to overcome. However, missionaries may put themselves or their families at risk if they travel and/or live in such remote communities.<sup>3</sup> Seeking options for interacting with those being trained and disciplined in locations outside of their communities may be the better part of wisdom.

Besides these political realities that exist in Oaxaca, pastors are often required to be bi-vocational, working a secular job to provide for their families. If they have land, they must work to plant and harvest an income-producing crop and then travel to a district market city (*distrito*) in their region in order to sell their product on market days. Those without land and the opportunity to farm must seek other means of making a living. In many such communities, those other means simply do not exist.

Such economic challenges limit the ability of pastors to travel to a central location in order to receive the training they require and the discipleship experience they desire. Missionaries who want to train these pastors will struggle to find options for providing the training and discipleship experience for pastors in such economic straits.

### **Educational Challenges**

Another challenge in Oaxaca that must be considered is the possible inequity of educational levels among the pastors and leaders that missionaries are seeking to equip. While education is available to all in Mexico through the secondary level, many have not availed themselves of the opportunity, either choosing or being forced to quit

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Beyond Development, Beyond Economy, Beyond the Individual Self, Beyond the Nation State,” accessed February 14, 2016, [http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/gest\\_int\\_4.html](http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/gest_int_4.html).

<sup>3</sup>I traveled with one of the missionaries interviewed in this dissertation to the community of Santiago de Xánica in July 2014. We met with some believers and talked with them about training opportunities. The believers we met with faced some questioning about our presence there after we left and have experienced some harassment since then as well. I base my statements regarding the threats in such communities on personal experience as well as citations such as the one in n. 2 above.

school early in order to work.<sup>4</sup> While many are able to read at some level, it is often less than adequate for the standard pastor training approach. Missionaries cannot assume that all of the pastors they are training are at the same levels of literacy or education. This fact often makes it difficult to place a number of individuals in the same group.

As is true among many indigenous groups worldwide, in Oaxaca some groups prefer to learn through oral methods. Missionaries who desire to provide an effective pastor-training model will need to assess these preferences among those they train. While maintaining a goal of leading pastors to be able to achieve a greater literacy level and thus having opportunities to access more advanced training resources, trainers could begin with using narrative methods such as CBS to reach the primary oral learners.. Then, among those who have achieved proficiency with reading, trainers could lead trainees in a more in-depth level of pastor training, teaching general theological studies on a more academic level.

### **Research Findings**

I will now summarize what I have discovered about various approaches to pastor training in the state of Oaxaca before moving on to recommendations. There are at least four training models available to pastors who live in Oaxaca state, but it is necessary to determine which of these are the most feasible and accessible to them. We will consider each model again for the purpose of review.

#### **The Residential Academic Model**

In the discussion of the history of evangelical work in Mexico, we observed that several of the major missionary-sending denominations made attempts to provide

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<sup>4</sup>Mary Ann Zehr writes an excellent article on the current status of education in the mountains of Oaxaca. Mary Ann Zehr, "Educating Mexico: Mexico's president campaigned on a pledge to provide greater access to schools, but the obstacles ahead are monumental," in *Education Week* 21, no. 27 (2002), accessed February 14, 2016, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/03/20/27mexico.h21.html>.

theological training within the country of Mexico. This is true of the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, as well as other denominations and independent agencies. The majority of the denominations mentioned have national denominational offices and seminaries that are now mostly independent of their counterparts in the United States or other countries. The seminaries that exist in Mexico are training called individuals and providing theological education and training for them. These seminaries are also often seeking ways to reach more through satellite campuses and online classes. However, there are limitations to the ability of a seminary or Bible school to train all who desire an education. If potential students in remote areas cannot physically travel to a central or satellite location, the seminaries or Bible schools still face challenges meeting their objectives in providing the training opportunity for such students.

Seminaries and Bible schools often seek to keep costs down for students, but they must charge for their instruction and services. Denominations are often unable to raise the funds necessary from their national churches to provide a significant portion of the cost of education. Independent schools are even less able to do this without a large infusion of funds from related agencies or groups within the United States or other countries. Without stipends or scholarships from their home churches, many Mexican pastors who desire training, including those in Oaxaca, cannot afford to attend these schools. The call to serve often comes to individuals who already have families and church responsibilities. They find it a very difficult challenge to move to a larger city where a seminary may be and start as full-time students. While individuals who may benefit from a seminary or Bible school experience should be encouraged to pursue it, many pastors in Oaxaca will find this to be an impossible option, humanly speaking.

One of the Mexican Baptist seminaries is in Oaxaca state—Lacy Seminary (SBTDGHL). Lacy Seminary is located in Oaxaca City, the capital of the state. It is a fine school that is currently struggling to maintain a student body at levels they desire to serve, however, they are seeking to expand their services through online courses and

satellite campuses.<sup>5</sup> For poor pastors in remote areas of Oaxaca state without sufficient resources for attending seminary classes, the school may as well be in another part of the world. The seminary is conscious of these needs, as I discovered having discussed them with some of the staff. However, they are limited in their ability to reach pastors in remote parts of Oaxaca who cannot afford the instruction they provide nor have consistent access to computers or the Internet for the online courses.

### **The Missionary Mentor Model**

Several of the missionaries interviewed for this research indicated a preference for what I have called the Missionary Mentor Model. This is the model that requires the greatest investment of time on the part of the missionary, but also provides the most personal discipleship experience for those being trained. In the discussion of the biblical models of training and discipleship, this model comes most closely to that which Jesus demonstrated with his own disciples. Several of the missionaries interviewed also indicated that this model yielded the greatest results in terms of recall and application of the material taught.

The shortcomings of this model lie in the difficulty for one missionary to impact many pastors or locations at the same time. One of the interviewees indicated that he believed it was most effective for the missionary to live in the same community as those whom he is training. In Oaxaca state, a missionary force committed to training all pastors in all communities would need hundreds of missionaries to provide this level of personal attention. No missions agency in Oaxaca currently has such resources or personnel to devote to a relatively small geographical area.

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<sup>5</sup>In November 2015, I visited Lacy Seminary and became familiar with the struggles to attract students to the central campus. I also observed the construction of a classroom/studio that was underway at the time. This studio was being built for the purpose of recording classroom instruction that could be offered online. The seminary is to be commended for its visionary attempts to meet the needs for training in Oaxaca. However, it remain to be seen how effective these measures will prove to be in such a challenging part of the world.

Also to be considered are the dangers of sending missionaries to live or travel in communities where their presence is not desired by groups such as the Zapatistas. I have traveled in some of these areas and have heard of the threats of expulsion or violence by some of the community members. Missionaries may also put in jeopardy the very pastors they are training as well as their families and churches. Often the knowledge that evangelical missionaries are working in a community will produce a negative reaction from Catholics as well as government officials in that community.<sup>6</sup>

The Missionary Mentor Model likely produces the greatest long-term results and provides the experience of discipleship that is most like that modeled by our Lord. However, putting this model into practice in Oaxaca may prove to be difficult except in some communities and larger cities where the missionary can live and impact a significant number of pastors. Beyond that, it will prove very difficult to reach pastors in remote communities that may be difficult and unsafe to travel on a routine basis.

### **The Short-term Team Project Model**

The Short-term Team Project Model was the model that was evaluated for its effectiveness in the first part of the previous chapter. To review, this model involves the use of a team coming to a chosen central location where pastors may also come to receive an intensive period of training, usually over a week.

A benefit of this training in Oaxaca is that a number of pastors and leaders may be trained in a relatively short amount of time allowing for maximum impact with comparatively small time investment. Though the idea here is for a team to do the

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<sup>6</sup>One of the missionaries interviewed for this research faced considerable opposition from leaders and other members of the community when they first moved. During a particularly contentious mayoral race, the missionary family had to take a furlough in the states as they were being accused of supporting one particular candidate with funds from the United States—an accusation that had no basis in truth. I also visited a community where evangelicals faced opposition because a local man was killed in a vehicle that was driven by a member of the evangelical church in the community. These are a couple of examples of the opposition that can arise in remote communities of Oaxaca.

teaching, it may be possible for one missionary trainer to conduct the entire training event. However, for the sake of avoiding fatigue and burnout, the team approach is advisable.

Another benefit is that the pastors being trained can experience a level of collegiality in sharing ideas and learning from one another. Problems that pastors are experiencing in their own churches can be shared and discussed and this often provides encouragement for all involved.

This model usually requires a significant investment of money, especially if teams are flying to the site from other countries. However, it can be argued that if the number of trainees is large enough that the investment is worth it. Again, the economic impact on those coming for training is significant as well, especially for poor pastors. In remote areas of Oaxaca, pastors struggle to make a living. Coming to a regional location three or four times per year may or may not prove to be a burden too great to bear for these pastors, but such concerns should be addressed as needed.

A possible disadvantage of this model is the difficulty in providing consistent and routine discipleship of the pastors in attendance. Some of the missionaries interviewed in this study indicated that the greatest results came from meeting on a routine—even weekly—basis. They also stressed the importance of having regular time for sharing burdens and prayer requests along with time for studying the theme of the training. The necessity of discipling those whom we train must not be swept aside lightly. Discipleship is a valuable aspect of any training program and it must be understood as a holistic process that affects the whole man. The stress on discipleship, as has already been discussed, is not only productive, but also biblical. If we utilize the Short-Term Team Project Model, there must be an effort to address the need for discipleship. As noted earlier, Sills addresses this need in his book.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 52-62.

## **The Local Church Training Center**

In chapter 3, I noted that the ultimate aim is that every church becomes a center for equipping and training leaders. If pastors receive training to become trainers and are disciplined to become disciplers, this model will prove to be a very biblical one. Again, according to Daniel Rodriguez, this is a model being used widely in evangelical churches in Latin America.<sup>8</sup>

This model is meeting a need in many parts of Latin America, but obviously assumes a preliminary level of training that the local pastor has already received. In Oaxaca, the majority of churches have not attained the proficiency to provide such a level of training among their own members. Any training model should aim at the goal of seeing many local churches training their own people

A current concern in Mexico and other parts of Latin America is that governments are moving toward requiring evidence of pastoral training in every evangelical church. Without demonstrating such credentials the potential threat is that churches would be required to close their doors. Such governmental requirements are a form of soft persecution that is causing concern among evangelical denominations and independent churches. Missionaries and agencies face the challenge of providing a means for pastors to obtain required training. If governments require an accredited degree for all pastors, the task of training these pastors in countries such as Mexico will take on considerable urgency and increased scrutiny of curricula and the qualifications of trainers.

### **Recommendations**

With the challenges outlined above, the need for pastor training in Oaxaca is urgent. A number of missionaries and missions agencies are beginning to focus

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<sup>8</sup>Daniel A. Rodriguez, *A Future for the Latino Church: Model for Multilingual, Multi-generational Hispanic Congregations*, (Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2011), 128-29.

personnel, resources, energy, and attention on equipping pastors to equip others.

Reaching & Teaching International Ministries asserts that it has come into existence for the express purpose of providing such training opportunities.<sup>9</sup> This is also the stated purpose and vision of Training Leaders International.<sup>10</sup> The IMB has recently renewed a focus on training worldwide, naming a vice president for Global Training.<sup>11</sup> If these goals are realized, national churches will be strengthened and become training centers providing training for future pastors and leaders.

Since there are already a number of seminaries and Bible schools established in Mexico and in Oaxaca, every effort must be made to sustain and promote the valuable work of instruction that they are performing. Denominations should encourage their churches to strengthen their support through prayers, finances, and students to sustain the work of these schools.

Recognizing that not every Oaxacan pastor will be able to take advantage of a seminary or Bible school education, other means must be sought to fill in the gap. Missionaries who have a heart for training pastors will seek ways to accomplish this on the most personal level possible such as using a mentoring model. Discipleship should be the goal of the missionary who recognizes the need for pastor training. Wherever and whenever possible, missionaries should look for opportunities to train pastors, investing in their students' lives in ways that match our Lord's model of discipleship.

Oaxaca is a challenging place to accomplish this goal. Based on research findings, missionaries have a few options. One is choosing a strategic location to live and work where they can impact the lives of pastors and leaders, providing training over an

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<sup>9</sup>Reaching & Teaching, "About Reaching and Teaching," accessed May 1, 2016, <http://reachingandteaching.org/reaching-and-teaching>.

<sup>10</sup>Training Leaders International, "Mission, Vision, and Values," accessed May 1, 2016, <http://trainingleadersinternational.org/about/mvv>.

<sup>11</sup>The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, "Zane G. Pratt," accessed May 1, 2016, <http://www.sbts.edu/academics/faculty/zane-g-pratt/>.

extended period of time, keeping the goal in mind of training pastors to train others as well. Missionaries may also travel to meet pastors where they are, but it is difficult to go to all of the churches and communities where pastors serve. There are market centers (*distritos*) where many people travel to buy and sell goods on a regular basis.

Missionaries can opt to live in or travel to these market centers where they will be able to schedule periodic trainings with pastors. Since pastors are likely traveling to these locations as a natural part of their routine, this seems to be a workable solution.

Missionaries should consider the Short-Term Team Project Model to supplement the training that they are providing. This is a model that provides a significant amount of training in a relatively short amount of time. Many churches in the United States and other parts of the world may be mobilized to bring valuable training resources to the mission field to train pastors in strategic training locations. Missionaries could be of considerable help to the team of trainers by providing some advance preparation for the weeklong project. It would also be helpful to leave behind a supplemental curriculum that the missionary could continue to teach and reinforce with the pastors. Missionaries should focus as much time as possible on discipling the pastors to be men of God as well as effective leaders. The Short-Term Team Project Model is an excellent way, it appears, to engage missionaries, churches, and pastors for the completion of the task of discipling the nations through effective pastor and leader training.

Missionary wives or other female missionaries may desire to do the same with pastors' wives and other women of the church. Those conducting Short-term Team training projects should seek ways to incorporate women's studies into the training they provide as well. Not only should pastors be equipped to train disciples within their churches, but also pastor and wife teams could work together within their own churches to make disciples. To train in this way will strengthen the marriages of the pastors as well as increase the likelihood that the entire church—both men and women—will receive a

strong level of discipleship.

When pastors and churches are trained in this way, the likelihood is increased that local churches in Oaxaca will become training centers themselves. Pastors should be consistently challenged as well as equipped to make their churches training centers. When churches are training their own members and doing an effective job of making disciples, the Great Commission will be obeyed within these churches. We should also desire that the training lead to a missionary vision within the churches. Churches who catch the vision of evangelizing, planting churches, discipling others, and multiplying themselves in the world will be a powerful force for producing more churches who are trained and equipped to do the same.

### **Conclusion**

I have attempted in this dissertation to do a thorough study of the need for pastor training in Oaxaca state in Mexico. Through a survey of the history of Mexico, including the history of evangelical missions, I have tried to help the reader understand the context of Oaxaca. By an investigation of the nature of training as discipleship through biblical sources and a survey of the relevant literature, I have sought to remind the reader of the ultimate goal of pastor training. Through the findings of a research project with a particular group of pastors in Oaxaca, I have attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Short-term Team Project Model, at least in terms of teaching information. Through interviews with missionaries actually serving as pastor trainers in Oaxaca, I have sought provide their insights from personal experience relative to pastor training in the region.

While it would have been desirable to have the leisure of more time to study and measure the effectiveness of various types of pastor training in Oaxaca over a period of years, that time was not available for this research. It was my hope that the interviews with other missionaries who have worked in Oaxaca for a few years would provide

somewhat of a track record that would provide a clearer picture of the benefits of various types of training. I believe the reader can glean some helpful ideas from the research I have presented and make informed decisions, through prayer, as to the best approach or approaches to training pastors in this diverse part of Mexico.

The modern missions movement has progressed over the last two hundred years with Western missionaries and agencies making great strides in taking the gospel to the world. The focus of missions has shifted at various times as missionaries and missiologists have learned from failures and successes in implementing missions strategies. Over time, a greater sensitivity has developed in the study of missions as to how the presentation of the gospel should be contextualized. The contextualization of training models should be a focus of study as well.

In a day when more are recognizing the value of national partners throughout the world in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, perhaps it is time for Western missionaries to fix our eyes on the goal of equipping these nationals to finish the task of global evangelization and discipleship. I hope that this will be the outcome in Oaxaca. I also hope that ideas and principles gleaned from this study will be of benefit in many parts of the world.

I hope we have long outgrown the notion that only those in the West must take the gospel to the entire world. I hope we in the West are recognizing now that Christians everywhere can and should be equipped to do the work of making disciples of all nations. The call to “evangelize the heathen” or “win the world in our day” has historically served as a motivation to many to hear the call of God to career missions. It is not my aim here to criticize any such motivation past or present. It is my hope that we as Western missionaries will see the tremendous opportunity that is ours to not only evangelize the world, but to disciple the world. Through investing our time and efforts in making disciples and equipping them to make others, we will be multiplying our efforts and conceivably be advancing toward the goal of evangelizing the world faster than we

dreamed possible.

We currently live in what has been described as the “information age.” The world is sharing information faster than ever before. The sum total of knowledge in the world used to double over centuries or even millennia. Now it is doubling in less than decades.<sup>12</sup> Many voices are being heard and many ideas are being shared. The church should certainly make it a goal to share the good news of Jesus Christ as rapidly and as effectively as the world shares other types of information. People throughout the world are rapidly becoming disciples of the world through the transfer of information. The church must invest resources, both human and material, in the sharing of the greatest knowledge of all—the gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Word of God. As long as we are in the world, we have time to do more. Yet, time rushes on.

Nearly two thousand years ago, our Lord gave his church the mandate to make disciples. We call it the Great Commission. However, the means to the fulfillment of the Great Commission often have been illusive. Whatever the emphasis du jour in missiological studies or strategies will be at any given time in the years to come, we must keep the focus on discipleship. We must see the value that lies in training trainers and making disciple-makers of all disciples. Of all the methods that work on the mission field, certainly we must assume that the method Jesus modeled for us with his disciples still works. I pray that in Oaxaca and in all other places in the world where a pastor longs to be equipped and encouraged, the challenge of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2 becomes ours as well: “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

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<sup>12</sup>Buckminster Fuller is generally credited with the concept of the “Knowledge Doubling Curve” (Buckminster Fuller, *Critical Path*, [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981].) IBM has projected that “the buildout of the ‘internet of things’” will soon double every 12 hours. (“Knowledge Doubling Every 12 Years, Soon to be Every 12 Hours,” Industry Tap (into news), accessed February 14, 2016, <http://www.industrytap.com/knowledge-doubling-every-12-months-soon-to-be-every-12-hours/3950>.)

## APPENDIX 1

### BASIC NEW TESTAMENT KNOWLEDGE SURVEY

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure participants knowledge of the New Testament. This research is being conducted by Anthony Steele for purposes of dissertation research. In this research, you will answer an anonymous questionnaire about basic knowledge of the New Testament. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

A. The four gospels of the New Testament are:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. The book which records the history of the day of Pentecost and the early church is: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Who wrote most of the books of the New Testament?

1. Peter
2. John
3. Paul
4. James

D. The epistle of Paul which deals the most with spiritual gifts is:

1. Romans
2. Philippians
3. 1 Corinthians
4. Philemon

E. The epistles of Paul which deals the most with the return of Christ is:

1. 1 and 2 Thessalonians
2. 1 and 2 Corinthians
3. 1 and 2 Peter
4. Jude and Revelation

F. Name two prison epistles:

\_\_\_\_\_

G. The book of Revelation was written by:

1. Peter
2. Paul
3. Daniel
4. John

H. Name two pastoral epistles

\_\_\_\_\_

I. The epistle of Paul which encourages the reader to rejoice is:

1. Colossians
2. Philippians
3. Titus
4. 2 Timothy

J. The epistle which lists the fruit of the Spirit is:

1. James
2. 3 John
3. Galatians
4. Romans

K. The epistle gives a thorough explanation of human sin and the need of salvation is:

1. Luke
2. Jude
3. Romans
4. 2 John

L. The epistle which is anonymous (author unknown) is:

1. Hebrews
2. Philemon
3. James
4. Jude

M. The book of the New Testament which contains a warning not to change or add to what is written in it is:

1. Matthew
2. Acts
3. Revelation



2. 1 and 2 Corinthians
3. 1 and 2 Peter
4. Jude and Revelation

F. Nombre dos epístolas de la prisión:

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G. El libro de Apocalipsis fue escrito por:

1. Pedro
2. Pablo
3. Daniél
4. Juan

H. Nombre dos epístolas pastorales:

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I. La epístola de Pablo que anima al lector a regocijarse es:

1. Colosenses
2. Filipenses
3. Tito
4. 2 Timoteo

J. La epístola que enumera el fruto del Espíritu es:

1. Santiago
2. 3 Juan
3. Gálatas
4. Romanos

K. La epístola que da una explicación detallada del pecado humano y la necesidad de la salvación es:

1. Lucas
2. Judas
3. Romanos
4. 2 Juan

L. La epístola que sea anónima (escritor desconocido) es:

1. Hebreos
2. Filemón
3. Santiago

4. Judas

M. El libro del Nuevo Testamento que contiene una advertencia de no cambiar o añadir a lo que en él está escrito es:

1. Mateo
2. Hechos
3. Apocalipsis

## APPENDIX 3

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PASTOR TRAINERS

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to investigate various forms of pastor training. This research is being conducted by Anthony Steele for purposes of dissertation research. In this research, you will answer questions based on your knowledge of pastor training in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

1. What is your role? \_\_\_\_\_ (missionary, educator, pastor, etc.)
2. What has been your involvement in pastor training in Oaxaca?
  
3. What in your opinion is the most effective way to train pastors that you have tried in Oaxaca?
  
4. Have you considered trying other models for pastor training in Oaxaca? If so please describe.
  
5. Are there any methods that have or have not proven useful in your experience?
  
6. What have been the greatest challenges/difficulties in using the method(s) you have tried.

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## ABSTRACT

### IMPLEMENTING A GENERALLY ACCESSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE TRAINING MODEL AMONG INDIGENOUS PASTORS IN MEXICO'S OAXACA STATE

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016  
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Oaxaca is perhaps the most diverse state in the nation of Mexico in terms of ethnicity with 16 ethnolinguistic groups and 173 distinct dialects of indigenous languages. The terrain of Oaxaca is rugged and makes travel a challenge in many parts of the state. Oaxaca has communities that are within sight of one another yet are hours of driving time between. These factors and others make it a difficult task for missionaries to provide training for pastors and leaders in remote communities. This dissertation seeks to explore manners to provide theological training to these leaders in the face of such challenges. Through a survey of the history of Oaxaca, methods of pastor training, both theoretical and those that have been attempted in the state, this research seeks to evaluate the approaches to training that fit within the context of Oaxaca and make recommendations for missionary practices in the region going forward.

Chapter 1 introduces the context of Oaxaca state and the aims of the research project. The challenges of doing pastor training and making disciples in this region of the world are presented. Steele spells out the methodology of the research and his plan for evaluating the results.

Chapter 2 discusses the history of Mexico in general and Oaxaca in particular. Through a survey of history from the times of pre-conquest Mexico to present-day

developments among evangelicals in Mexico, this history provides a background for the challenges and needs for pastor training in Oaxaca.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the relationship between pastor training and discipleship from a biblical and practical standpoint. The goals of pastor training and their relationship to the biblical models of making disciples are surveyed and evaluated.

Chapter 4 presents the results of a recent training project in which a survey of the New Testament was taught. Using an instrument to evaluate the effectiveness of the course, results of the training are evaluated. The chapter also presents the results of a number of interviews with missionaries in Oaxaca who currently do pastor training in the region.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings. It also presents conclusions and recommendations for those doing pastor training in Oaxaca.

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