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EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY AT RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH IN MIAMI, FLORIDA

A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

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Julio Cesar Salas

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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY AT RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH IN MIAMI, FLORIDA

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To my parents Julio and Alicia, faithful servants of God.

To my wife, Dady, thank you for your love and support.

And to my children, Julito and David, may you both

grow in stature, attaining to the whole measure

of the fullness of Christ.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES ix

PREFACE x

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 1

Context 4

Rationale 6

Purpose 7

Goals 7

Research Methodology 8

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations 9

Conclusion 10

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY 11

God Loves the World and Wants People of Every Nation, Tribe, and Language to Come to Faith in Christ 12

The Attributes and Character of God 13

God Does Not Have Love—He Is Love and Loves the World 14

Perfect Love, Perfect Justice, Perfect Mercy 15

Mercy Is a Manifestation of God's Love 16

Human Beings Are the Crown of All Creation and the Church the Firstfruit 17

The Church Has Been Commissioned by Christ to Proclaim the Gospel and Make Disciples 18

Chapter Page

The Church: Commissioned by Christ 20

The Church: The Vehicle of Salvation 21

The Proclamation of the Gospel 22

Equipping Leaders to Disciple 23

The Local Church Must Be Equipped to Effectively Engage in Cross-Cultural Ministry as It Makes Disciples of All Nations 24

Spiritual Maturity Precedes Equipping (Col 1:28–29) 25

Making Disciples of All Nations 26

A Ministry of the Holy Spirit 27

The Church Is Meant to Be Cross-Cultural 28

Conclusion 30

3. THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL ISSUES RELATED TO CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY 31

Understanding the Dynamics of the Heart 32

The Connection of the Human 34

Ministering in a Cross-Cultural Context 34

Entrusted with the Gospel 36

Commanded to Go to the Nations and Make Disciples 38

Understanding the Purpose, Identity, and Mission of the Church 39

Equipping Church Leadership for Cross-Cultural Ministry 41

Applying Leadership Theory to Cross-Cultural Ministry 42

Servant Leadership 45

A God-Centered Vision of Discipleship 48

A Biblical Perspective of Spiritual Parenting 49

Growing in Christ through Practicing Spiritual Disciplines 50

Equipping the Church in Meaningful Educational Ministry 51

Chapter Page

Examining Educational Philosophy 51
The Science of Learning 52
Educational Ministry in the Church 53
Conclusion 56
4. DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT 57
Pre-implementation: Project Planning and Preparation 57
Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic 58
Website Development 59
Training Delivery Formats 60
Training Structure 60
Training Cohorts 61
Student Handbook 61
Pre- and Post-training Assessment Development 62
Implementation of Training in Cross-Cultural Ministry Skills 63
Curriculum Development 63
Curriculum Evaluation 65
Promotion and Marketing 65
Curriculum Delivery 66
Post-implementation Activities 68
Post-implementation: Data Collection and Analysis 69
Conclusion 71
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT 72
Evaluation of the Project's Purpose 73
Limitation 73
Delimitation 74
Evaluation of the Project's Goals 75

Page

The First Goal 75

The Second Goal 76

The Third Goal 78

The Fourth Goal 78

Strengths of the Project 80

Educational Delivery Method 80

Participant Diversity 81

Systematic Learning Approach 82

Weaknesses of the Project 83

Flaw in Pre- and Post-Training Assessment Development 83

Limited Curriculum Content 84

Brevity of the Training Program 84

Extended Duration of Training Sessions 85

What I Would Do Differently 85

Administer Short Quizzes 85

Submission of Lesson Notes from Each Video Session 86

Increase Curriculum Requirements and Commission Participants 86

Theological Reflections 87

Personal Reflections 88

Conclusion 89

Appendix

1. COMMITMENT CARD 90

2. PRE-TRAINING ASSESSMENT 92

3. POST-TRAINING ASSESSMENT ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS 101

4. PRE-TRAINING ASSESSMENT SCORES 105

5. POST-TRAINING ASSESSMENT SCORES 107

Appendix Page

6. PRE- AND POST-TRAINING MEAN SCORES 109

7. T-TEST RESULTS 111

8. CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC.....112

9. CURRICULUM RUBRIC EVALUATION RESPONSES 115

10. INVITATIONS TO CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY SKILLS TRAINING 116

11. CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY SKILLS CURRICULUM 118

12. CERTIFICATE OF COURSE COMPLETION.....184

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 187

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Cross-cultural seminar cohort breakdown 68

2. Results of *t*-test dependent samples for increase in cross-cultural ministry skills 70

3. Number of participants completing cross-cultural training 76

4. Pre-training assessment, selected questions 76

A1. Pre-training assessment scores, questions 1 to 12 105

A2. Pre-training assessment scores, questions 13 to 22 106

A3. Post-training assessment scores, questions 1 to 12 107

A4. Post-training assessment scores, questions 13 to 22 108

A5. Pre- and post-training mean scores 109

A6. Results of *t*-test for dependent samples 111

PREFACE

Working on this ministry research project has given me tremendous joy and satisfaction (Ps 119:72). First, as the project gained substance, the providence of God became manifest through the spiritual support of wise men and women who helped me through my research journey (Rom 8:28). As the project started to build momentum, a growing number of ministry leaders became interested and started to offer valuable insight and even book recommendations to help expand my knowledge. Such contributions not only provided great academic input for study and theological reflection, but also provided the collective wisdom and practical insight needed for success (Prov 11:14). These men and women were instrumental in my experiential understanding of leadership at the local church level. Such collective insights on leadership and cross-cultural ministry were simply providential as they became instrumental in the process of developing sections of this ministry research project. I am grateful to God for these amazing brothers and sisters in Christ. For this reason, to God be the glory (1 Cor 10:31)!

Second, not only joy came from gaining precious leadership insight and cross-cultural wisdom, but an even greater kind of joy came from the teaching and the empowering of other leaders in their ministries (2 Tim 2:3). It was a rewarding experience to see church leaders and staff eagerly absorbing these insights and wisdom so they may put it into practice in their own ministries. It was like implanting a piece of spiritual DNA into their own DNA as my lectures served of spiritual influence on them, and, in turn, through them to others. Such experience produced that special kind of joy and peace that can only come from the Holy Spirit of God.

Lastly, the greatest joy and satisfaction came from understanding that the knowledge, wisdom, discoveries, and insights revealed through this ministry research

project will serve as knowledge, inspiration, and help to other ministry leaders as they seek to serve peoples of other cultures within their own local church contexts. As such, I pray that this ministry research project serves as a source of knowledge and understanding both of culture and cross-cultural ministry, whether we do ministry "reaching the nations" within the boundaries of our local contexts, we live in a cosmopolitan city, or we are just trying to reach the nations beyond our local contexts through traditional international missionary efforts to other nations.

And, as in the early days of the church after Pentecost when the church "filled Jerusalem with the gospel" (Acts 5:28 NIV), it is my genuine desire that the church of the present day may fill the nations with the glorious message of the gospel through a better understanding of cross-cultural ministry. For these reasons and many more, to God be the honor and the glory! Amen!

Julio Cesar Salas

Miami, Florida
May 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Riverside Baptist Church (RBC) of Miami, Florida, is a centenarian Southern Baptist church located in the southern part of Miami-Dade County. RBC originally began its ministry on October 13, 1921, as a small church in the Riverside area near downtown Miami, close to what is known today as Little Havana. During its early years and before any immigration would be foreseeable, RBC experienced tremendous growth among the local English-speaking community.

Soon after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, immigration changed the social outlook of quiet Miami. A large influx of immigrants from many parts of the world, particularly Latin America, began populating larger areas of Miami. This presented a need for local churches to take on the challenge of serving these immigrants and their children. However, this demographic shift produced a sudden decline in church membership at RBC and other English-only ministries, as the number of Spanish speakers began to surpass the number of English-only speakers. Established English-only churches were slow to develop Spanish ministries, which delayed building a much-needed cultural bridge with the Spanish-speaking population. Second-generation Hispanics who were born in America and spoke English and Spanish began to build that bridge. During this demographic shift, RBC faced the difficult decision of moving from its original downtown campus into the suburb of Kendall, its present location, in 1974. Though moving from downtown Miami to Kendall at the time may have been seen as a ministry setback, God had greater plans for RBC.

Today, RBC is a multicultural congregation with members from many nations and languages. We are a microcosm of our community and are devoted to reaching our

community and city for Christ, one person at a time.[1] Our present location in South Miami-Dade was once considered a distant, almost-rural area. Today, it is a vibrant and affluent prime location connected to Miami via expressways that convey thousands of people by the church's front doors.

As we recently celebrated 101 years in ministry, we start our second century of church life by reflecting on our history and seeking to learn from our past successes and failures. We realize more than ever the need to be sensitive to demographic and cultural changes in our communities and to see these changes as God-sent opportunities to develop cross-cultural ministries. We want to serve people of other nations, languages, and cultures by creating cross-cultural bridges for the purpose of sharing the gospel, discipleship, and integration into our local church family.

The RBC story is one of many stories that reflect the mission and the nature of the church as it strives to fulfill the Great Commission. The church has always been a multicultural institution by virtue of its unique mandate given by our Lord Jesus Christ, who commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19).[2] This mandate has been God's plan "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). God promised Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his seed (Gen 22:18; Gal 3:6–9). The church is the fulfillment of this glorious promise. As such, the mission of the church is to make disciples of all nations by faithfully proclaiming the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, as we "teach them to obey everything He has commanded" (Matt 28:20). Consequently, we must recognize that God has willed and commissioned his church to engage in cross-cultural ministry with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all people. As Duane Elmer says, "God's

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[1] Riverside Baptist Church, "About Us," accessed March 15, 2022, https://www.riversideonline.org/about-us/.

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

grace is present in all people and cultures."[3] God yearns for everyone to be saved (1 Tim 2:4).

The church encompasses people of all nations and ethnicities. God is worshipped in many languages and cultural expressions. The Holy Spirit is actively convicting people of sin even in remote places where the church has not yet arrived. The use of technology is helping to spread the gospel and disciple people in places where it is still not possible to plant a church, thus making cross-cultural interaction possible. By God's design, the church is a true multicultural institution. However, much of the Christian universe remains culturally homogeneous. Much work remains to equip the church, especially its leaders, to reach people of all nations and cultures.

In the early days of the church, Christ sent the church to the nations; today, immigration creates the phenomenon of the nations coming to the church. Hence, churches are called to become more cross-culturally sensitive if they are to become more ministry effective. Though demographic shifts present great opportunities for church growth and expansion, these shifts also present great challenges for church leadership. God is stretching our comfort zones. As such, church leaders must quickly learn how to serve peoples of different countries, cultures, languages, and ethnic backgrounds, not only for the purposes of evangelism and discipleship, but also for the purpose of future strategic missionary efforts.

Cross-cultural ministry is one of the most complex efforts of the church. The church must continue to "learn to relearn" from prior experiences and case studies, as cultural values, social norms, and trends are constantly changing. Ministry strategies that were effective fifty years ago are no longer effective or need adjustment. Church leadership must invest time and effort to develop strategies for building the cultural bridges that will allow us to go to the nations. Pastors, staff, lay leaders, and local church

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[3] Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 13.

members must be trained to be culturally sensitive in order to effectively interact with people of other cultures. Secular organizations are making focused efforts to understand and even master the art of cross-cultural relations. How much more should the church, which Christ ordained and blessed to make disciples of all nations, be the prime source of true salvation and godly influence in the world? As Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck note in *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development*, "The church should be the locus of leadership."[4] It should take every opportunity to understand and develop cross-cultural bridges.

The church of Jesus Christ has a clear mission and command to fulfill the Great Commission. It has been equipped with spiritual gifts and empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to go to all of the *ethnē* (ἔθνη), the "races, tribes, and cultures."[5] As such, this ministry research project focused on equipping and empowering church leadership in cross-cultural ministry.

Context

This ministry research project took place within the context of Riverside Baptist Church in Miami, Florida. Before the project began, I had to meet several criteria to earn the support of the church leadership. First, the project was aligned with the church mission statement: "Riverside Baptist Church exists to INVITE people to Christ, GROW them in Christ, and SEND them for Christ."[6] Aligning the project with the church mission statement provided the assurance that there was no conflict with the church's vision, objectives, and ministry values. Inviting people to Christ was and continues to be understood as engaging in evangelism. This project sought to enhance the evangelistic

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[4] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), "Introduction," para. 2, Kindle.

[5] LogosKLogos, "Biblia Interlineal de Nuevo testament," accessed March 15, 2022, https://www.logosklogos.com/interlinear/NT/Mt/28/19.

[6] Riverside Baptist Church, "About Us." Emphasis original.

efforts of the church by equipping its leaders, and ultimately its members, with the necessary tools to better develop cross-cultural bridges to invite people of other cultures to Christ. To grow them in Christ means engaging in discipleship with these individuals. Not only do we share the gospel and invite people to Christ, but we also invite them to our church and disciple them, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20). Sending disciples for Christ, once they mature in their faith, continues to be understood as commissioning them to go "to the ends of the earth," whether it be abroad or locally to their own social contexts.

Second, the project considered the current demographic composition of our church membership. Our "About Us" page states, "Riverside is a multicultural congregation whose members come from many nations speaking various languages. We are a microcosm of our community, and we are devoted to reaching our community and city for Christ, one person at a time."[7] Our church is already a multicultural, multiethnic, and multilanguage church body. Our worship services and ministry programs are offered in English and Spanish. Our church also has a ministry that brings together Hispanics and Brazilians with Sunday services in Spanish. Our members come from countries on every continent and speak many languages. Based on our church demographic, this research project aimed to enhance the cross-cultural ministry abilities of Riverside's existing leadership, equipping them for more effective cross-cultural ministry within our church's existing demographic and beyond to greater Miami.

As of 2021, the population of Miami was comprised of 71 percent Hispanics and projected to grow at a rate of about 1 percent per year.[8] The other 29 percent of the population is comprised of non-Hispanics, including White, African American, Asian, and other ethnic groups. Many churches have operated successful Hispanic ministries for

[7] Riverside Baptist Church, "About Us."

[8] Miami Matters, "2022 Demographics, Summary Data for County: Miami-Dade," accessed March 15, 2022, http://www.miamidadematters.org/demographicdata.

several years, and others have started successful Chinese, Korean, and Haitian ministries. The current demographics naturally present RBC with additional opportunities to reach other ethnic groups.

Based on the church's mission, history, and diversity, I proposed to church leadership the development of an educational curriculum that would equip our leadership in cross-cultural ministry to engage more effectively in church ministry. This curriculum was implemented in eight lessons and delivered over four weeks. First, we reviewed the theological understanding of cross-cultural ministry and the understanding of human behavior. Second, we considered cultural differences and similarities as well as principles of cross-cultural leadership and social relations. Third, we reviewed how to lead and disciple ministry teams and teach cross-culturally. Fourth, we learned about implementing cross-cultural ministry within the local church and mission field and put it all together for the purposes of evangelism, discipleship, and commissioning.

Rationale

By God’s design, the church is a multicultural institution ordained and commissioned by Christ to make disciples of all nations. This requires Christians to step out of their comfort zones and go beyond their own cultural settings to proclaim the gospel to people of other cultures (Acts 1:1–8). Ultimately, the church will be “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev 7:9).

To effectively proclaim the gospel, the church must engage in cross-cultural ministry. Church leadership must model this engagement to the rest of the church body. However, leaders cannot teach or engage in something they have not yet mastered. Jesus started his ministry with a group of twelve disciples (Luke 6:12–16), but he also equipped another seventy-two disciples to go two by two, “whom he sent ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go” (Luke 10:1). Jesus invested time equipping

and empowering disciples before they were commissioned to engage in ministry. This needs to happen at RBC as we begin our second century of ministry. We learn by spending time with Christ, exercising our spiritual gifts, and reflecting on and learning from our past successes and failures so that we can begin to engage with people of other cultures.

God is revealing a new season of ministry, and RBC must continue to form cross-cultural bridges. The more bridges we build, the more doors God may open for us. The more doors God opens, the more opportunities for evangelism and discipleship. The more souls reached and saved, the more born-again Christians. These Christians will be the leaders who take RBC into the future with a mission to bring more people to repentance and faith in Christ. This ultimately brings glory to God.

Purpose

The purpose of this ministry research project was to advance the kingdom of God locally by equipping and empowering church leadership in cross-cultural ministry.

Goals

The following goals present the strategy for equipping church leadership in cross-cultural ministry.

1. The first goal was to invite a qualified group of individuals who would successfully complete the four-week training program.
2. The second goal was to assess participants before the teaching series began to evaluate their current understanding of cross-cultural ministry.
3. The third goal was to develop an eight-lesson biblical curriculum delivered over four weeks that addressed cross-cultural ministry leadership skills.
4. The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural ministry skills by teaching the curriculum to at least ten participants.

A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of these four goals.[9] The research methodology is outlined in the following section.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the achievement of these four goals. The first goal was to invite a qualified group of individuals who would successfully complete the four-week training program. This goal was accomplished by inviting pastors, staff, and all lay leaders to join the four-week training program. This invitation was made through face-to-face-requests, email invites, personal phone calls, and church announcements. This goal was considered successfully met when fifty-five individuals at RBC filled out the commitment card accepting the invitation to complete the four-week training.

The second goal was to assess participants before the teaching series began to evaluate their current understanding of cross-cultural ministry. This goal was measured by conducting a twenty-two question, anonymous survey of participants. This goal was considered successfully met when thirty-one RBC participants completed the survey.

The third goal was to develop an eight-lesson biblical curriculum addressing cross-cultural ministry skills. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of a group of godly leaders at RBC who oversaw the curriculum development. The panel employed a rubric to measure the biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when the panel agreed that the curriculum exceeded the evaluation criteria at the sufficient level.

The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural ministry skills by teaching the curriculum to at least ten participants. This goal was measured by

[9] All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

conducting a post-training assessment in which participants demonstrated successful assimilation of the material presented. A statistical analysis was conducted on the data gathered from both the pre- and post-training assessments. This goal was considered successfully met when (a) twenty RBC participants completed the training and the post-training assessment, and (b) a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference in the post-training assessment scores of RBC participants.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Leadership. In his book on cross-cultural leadership, Sherwood Lingenfelter defines leadership as "aligning people." This aligning is in terms of mission, vision, and organizational goals.[10]

Cross-cultural leadership. As Lingenfelter puts it, cross-cultural leadership is essentially "aligning people" while "taking the challenge of building a community of trust among people who come from two or more cultural traditions that provoke clash of worldviews."[11]

Servant leadership. According to Lorraine Dierck, "Servant leadership means that anyone who has a vision should be empowered to start a new team and a new ministry. [His] job as leader is to help people fulfill the dreams they have in their heart."[12]

One limitation applied to this project. This limitation was the reduced availability of the participants to physically attend the four-week training program. Not

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[10] Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 16, Kindle.

[11] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 20.

[12] Lorraine W. Dierck, "Teams That Work: Leadership, Power, and Decision-Making in Multicultural Teams in Thailand" (DMiss diss., Biola University, 2007), 115, quoted in Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 16.

all participants were able to attend the training sessions on the given day and time. To mitigate this limitation, each training session was offered via Zoom so participants could attend remotely or watch the recording.

One delimitation applied to this project. The training was limited to church leaders at RBC. The reason for this delimitation was to focus on equipping leaders in cross-cultural ministry so they may model and teach these skills to the church membership. This delimitation was changed near the beginning of project implementation when numerous church leaders worldwide expressed interest in joining the training. This is further described in chapter 5.

Conclusion

This ministry research project was designed to bring great benefit to the local church, particularly to its leadership. Whether ministry and administrative staff or lay leadership, this training provided the necessary cross-cultural tools and skills to interact with individuals and groups of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Lastly, this project's most important goal was to help ministry leaders fulfill the Great Commission of Christ, improving the way they do evangelism and discipleship both within and outside the church walls. Beyond the quantitative data analysis showing a statistically significant increase in understanding, the qualitative feedback from many participants demonstrated great appreciation for the training and encouragement to continue training additional leaders in cross-cultural ministry.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY

God loves the world. He is our creator and a loving God who wants "multitudes of peoples from every nation, tribe, and language" on earth (Rev 7:9) to come to faith in Christ so they may be saved. His love for the world is such that he gave his one and only begotten son to save the world from the bondage of sin (John 3:16) and to reconcile it to himself (2 Cor 5:19). Those purchased by the blood of the Lamb not only comprise the universal church of Jesus Christ but are a diverse group of people that come from every nation, tribe, and language of the world.

The church is the vehicle established by Christ for the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth. This salvation is in a way contingent on the church first making disciples as it goes to the ends of the earth. As the church proclaims the gospel, God the Holy Spirit may produce belief, repentance, and new birth in the individual who hears the gospel. Thus, the church is the vehicle through which the gospel is proclaimed and disciples are made; the Holy Spirit of God is the one who bestows new birth and salvation.

The mission of the church is no small task. It is the proclamation of the gospel to every corner of earth so people of every nation, tribe, and language may be saved. As such, the church is a multicultural institution by virtue of its calling and nature. Paul writes that "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9–11 ESV). As Paul asserts at the end of this passage, the ultimate purpose of the mission of the church is the glory of God the Father.

Today, the mission of the church has not changed from that of the early church: we must continue to engage with peoples of other cultures so they may hear the message of the gospel and become disciples of Christ. This requires every ministry area of the local church to be well-prepared to take on the challenges they may encounter as they learn to engage cross-culturally.

Finally, it is important to understand that everything revolves around the glory of God. The church has been saved for the glory of God and now proclaims the gospel and makes disciples for his glory. If the church is to engage in cross-cultural ministry and fulfill the Great Commission, it is ultimately for the glory of God.

This chapter explores the biblical and theological reasons for cross-cultural ministry within the local church. First, we contemplate the love of God for the world and why he wants people to come to faith in Christ. Second, we understand why the church has been commissioned by Christ to be the vehicle of salvation for the proclamation of the gospel and for making disciples. Third, we study why the local church must be equipped to effectively engage in cross-cultural ministry.

God Loves the World and Wants People of Every Nation, Tribe, and Language to Come to Faith in Christ

It would be difficult to grasp the love of God for people without first trying to understand his attributes and character. As this chapter unfolds, it will become necessary for the reader to accept the transcendence of God, who is beyond human comprehension and experience. Human beings cannot find God without him first making himself known to them. He has revealed himself through his general revelation (what he has created and what can be perceived through the senses) and special revelation (the history of humankind through the witness of Scripture). The God who created the peoples of every nation, tribe, and language in his own image and likeness deliberately chooses to reveal himself to them. His greatest manifestation to the world is through the person of his Son,

Jesus Christ, who came to Earth. The author of the book of Hebrews writes, "But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe" (Heb 1:2). God reveals himself to humankind because he loves them.

The Attributes and Character of God

It is impossible to fully comprehend the attributes and character of God. He is infinite in every way. However, what we know of him is based on his deliberate choice to reveal himself to humankind. Not only did he reveal himself through his general and special revelation, but the Bible says that God manifested himself in the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:1–2). The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* affirms, "The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being," and "To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience."[1]

When considering the attributes and character of God, we first need to understand that they are intimately connected. While his attributes reveal his essence and personal qualities, his character reveals action, that is, the external manifestation of his essence as he reveals himself to human beings. Regarding his essence, it is important to note that God's attributes are not something added to him (or that he can obtain) or removed from him (or that he can lose) separate from his essence. Instead, he *is* each one of those attributes as part of his being and essence and sovereignly exercises them as he pleases. As such, the essence of God is not a collection of attributes, nor additions to his being.[2] A comprehensive list of God's attributes is beyond the scope of this ministry research project. However, these attributes include love, holiness, blessing, truth, mercy,

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[1] Southern Baptist Convention, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, accessed May 4, 2022, https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/.

[2] Wayne Grudem, *Teología sistemática: Introducción a la doctrina bíblica* (Miami, FL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 168–69.

knowledge, omnipresence, eternity, omnipresence, light, spirit, and wisdom.[3] Wayne Grudem says that God's character is manifested to human beings through the witness of Scripture, general revelation, and personal experience.[4] For example, one of the attributes of God is that he is love. As John writes that "God is love" (1 John 4:16), we see his character in action as Jesus says that "he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45). In this example, human beings can learn about the love of God through Scripture (special revelation). This revelation is confirmed as the world is observed through the human senses, for example, God causing his sun to rise and sending his rain (general revelation). Finally, all human beings can enjoy the benefits of the sun and rain for light, water, heat, and harvesting of crops (personal experience and benefit). The church is the means ordained by Christ to teach the nations about God, his love, and his desire that they come to faith in Christ so they may be saved.

God Does Not Have Love—He Is Love and Loves the World

It is impossible for human beings to fully comprehend God's love in all its splendor. Love is his essence. He holds the universe and all things together because he is love and because he loves. No doubt, love is the greatest attribute of God. As Katherine Sonderegger articulates, "Love is the keystone of the Divine Perfections, we should say, the Attribute that holds together, sums up, and makes lovely the entire Divine Nature, all its Properties and its Glory."[5] However, the love of God cannot be understood in human terms. His love must be understood in light of what he has revealed about himself in Scripture. The Bible takes absolute preeminence. Grudem writes, "So we must learn from

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[3] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 168–69.

[4] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 151–52.

[5] Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 469.

observing how God acts in all of Scripture and from the other attributes of God that are given in Scripture, as well as from our own real-life experiences of God's love, if we are to refine our idea of God's love in an appropriate way and avoid misunderstanding."[6] In this regard, we must assert that because God is love, and love is one of his attributes, it is his character to love.

Because love is his very essence, we are better able to understand John 3:16. Jesus tells Nicodemus that "God so loved the world [his attribute of love], that he gave his only son [his character becoming effective] that whoever believes in him [condition to obtain benefit] shall not perish but have eternal life [benefit]." Similarly, Paul, writing to the church in Rome, says that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). MacArthur effectively expresses this in his book, *The Vanishing Conscience*: "The cross is proof of the immense love of God."[7]

In the context of this ministry research project, we conclude that God loves the people of all nations and tribes because he is love and because he loves. His love is manifested through his desire that people come to faith in Christ so they may not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). As the vehicle of the proclamation of the gospel, the church must do its best to love as God loves, both within the local church and to the nations.

Perfect Love, Perfect Justice, Perfect Mercy

People often misunderstand the love of God, asking, "If God is love, then why would a loving God condemn anyone?" For this reason, it is important to understand that God's love is not the same as human love. God's love is complete and perfect. The human understanding of love is incomplete, imperfect, and tainted by sin. Humans tend

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[6] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 159.

[7] John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 98, Kindle.

to confuse God's love. Katherine Sonderegger questions "if we haven't reduced transcendent love to philantropia or love for humanity."[8] A similar thought is offered by Grudem when speaking of the love of God: "So we must learn to see God act through the Bible and the other attributes of God that are given to us in the Bible, as well as from our experiences of God's love in our lives, in order to refine our idea of God's love in an appropriate manner so we may avoid misunderstandings."[9] God is indeed a loving God. He loves the world so much that he gave his own son. However, love is not the only attribute of God. He is also just and must punish sin. Anything that is not perfectly aligned with his character and his divine dignity is inherently sinful. A perfect God cannot tolerate or associate with anything that is less than perfect.

God is lovingly just; therefore, he must punish sin. However, in his sovereignty, he also extends grace and mercy. When Adam and Eve chose to rebel against him, they deserved death. Instead, he extended grace and mercy and offered a "bridge of salvation" so Adam and Eve were spared immediate death. He used animal skins to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness, providing a temporary covering of their sin and foreshadowing the perfect sacrifice of Christ. MacArthur says, "When humankind fell, the love of God was extended in mercy to his fallen creatures."[10] Human beings are totally dependent on God's unmerited love and mercy.

Mercy Is a Manifestation of God's Love

God manifests his love through his mercy. God loves all people of the world regardless of their nation, tribe, and language. They are all precious to him. There is a higher sense of worth in human beings than in any other creature. Though birds are

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[8] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, 1:478.

[9] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 150–51.

[10] John MacArthur, *Comentario MacArthur del Nuevo Testamento: Mateo* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017), chap. 17, "Benditos los Compasivos," sec. 6, "La Fuente de Misericordia," para. 4, Kindle.

valuable to God, human beings are more valuable. In Matthew 6:26, Jesus says, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” Human beings are extremely valuable to God. He may manifest his love through his mercy, as he demonstrated when he spared Nineveh from destruction (Jonah 4:10–11). He may also show his love through his patience with the world. Peter writes, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). The condition to accept God’s mercy and become recipients of all its benefits is to repent and come to faith in Christ. John says in his Gospel, “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). The church is the chosen instrument for the proclamation of God’s mercy and salvation.

Human Beings Are the Crown of All Creation and the Church the Firstfruit

God created the world with human beings in mind. Interestingly, human beings were created last, after all other creation was made. Though he made everything for his own glory, God made the earth with human beings in mind so they would manifest his glory through ruling over his creation. MacArthur writes, “The creation of the human race was the central object of God’s creative purpose from the beginning.”[11] William MacDonald asserts that “the crown of God’s work was the creation of man in His image and according to His likeness.”[12]

Genesis 1 and 2 reveal that humankind was created in a different way in

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[11] John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning: The Bible on Creation and the Fall of Adam* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 127, Kindle.

[12] William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), pt. 1, “Old Testament,” sec. 1, “Earth’s Earliest Ages,” chap. 1, “The Creation,” sec. “Gen 1:26–28,” para. 10, Kindle.

comparison to everything else God created. All other creation was spoken into being by God's command. Human beings, however, were formed by the hand of God as he breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. The Genesis account says, "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). God has special love and consideration for human beings. One of the most important ways God expressed his love for human beings is in the blessings he gave them at creation. Genesis 1:28 says that "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

When it comes to love for human beings, God places them in a very special category separate from everything else, even beyond angels (2 Pet 2:4). It seems as if the worth of humankind is intimately connected to being created in the image and likeness of God and to being given commands that were not given to any other created being. Indeed, bearing the image and likeness of God is not a small thing, especially when our creation order includes cognition, conscience, a sense of morality, reproduction, and stewardship over his entire creation. The only thing that separates human beings from animals is the image and likeness of God. Humans are the crown of his entire creation, and the church is the firstfruit of all he created. James writes of the church, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created" (Jas 1:18). God wants the church to proclaim the gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth so more firstfruits may be added to the church.

The Church Has Been Commissioned by Christ to Proclaim the Gospel and Make Disciples

The word for the English term church comes from the Greek *ekklēsia*, meaning

"the 'congregation' or the 'assembly' of God's people."[13] Jesus Christ is the one who builds this congregation or assembly of believers (Matt 16:18). The word *ekklēsia* is not new in the New Testament. It comes from the Hebrew *qahal*. The Septuagint translates *qahal* with the word *ekklesiazo*, "to summon an assembly,"[14] which ultimately is translated as *ekklesia* in the New Testament.[15] The study of both the Hebrew and the Greek for the word church shows us that the church is not a building or a legal entity but a congregation or assembly of individuals who gather to worship. Gregg Allison asserts in *Sojourners and Strangers*, "The term ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia) is never used in the Greek New Testament to refer to a building (not surprisingly, because the early followers of Jesus did not meet together in buildings that served solely for Christian assemblies)."[16] The church is then the congregation of those summoned by Christ to gather. Allison offers his definition of the church "as the people of God who have been saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and have been incorporated into his body through baptism with the Holy Spirit."[17] Similarly, the *Baptist Faith and Message* refers to the church as local and universal; local refers to "the autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel," and universal refers to "the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."[18] Grudem offers a simple definition: "the community of all true believers of all times."[19] In all of these definitions,

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[13] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 854.

[14] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 854.

[15] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 858–59.

[16] Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 148, Kindle.

[17] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 61.

[18] Southern Baptist Convention, *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

[19] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 858.

the church is never referred to as a building or even just a group of people who gather. Instead, the church is a group of called individuals who gather or assemble to worship God in Christ. As such, theologically, the church cannot be composed of unsaved people, even if these individuals happen to gather in a building that is called a church.

Finally, the church universal is not only "the community of all true believers of all times,"[20] but we may also enhance this definition by saying the church universal includes the community of believers of all nations, tribes, and languages. Alluding to the unity of the church, Allison offers an interesting perspective:

> The fellowship and connectedness that are sensed by believers crossing into different cultures and meeting Christians from different nationalities, ethnicities, linguistic groups, socioeconomic status, political systems, educational levels, and religious backgrounds, point toward another factor enhancing unity: membership in the universal body of Christ.[21]

Those individuals throughout history, no matter their ethnicity, have been called by Christ to gather and are the ones who comprise his church.

The Church: Commissioned by Christ

What does it mean to be commissioned? What does commission mean? The *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* defines the word commission as "a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties. An authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts. Authority to act for, on behalf of, or in place of another. A task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another. A group of persons directed to perform some duty."[22] Connecting these definitions with the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," we may say that our Lord Jesus Christ has conferred,

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[20] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 858.

[21] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 173.

[22] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), s.v. "commission."

authorized, commanded, directed, given power, and entrusted his church to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:16–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The Great Commission is not optional; it is an unappealable command. Christopher Wright articulates, "The Great Commission implies an imperative, a mandate. So, it also presupposes an authority behind that imperative."[23]

The commissioning of the church is a command that passes on from master to disciple. It is interesting to observe the process in which the Great Commission is given. First, Jesus gave the Great Commission to the church through the apostles. The apostles passed on the same Commission to succeeding generations of Christians. This process is to replicate indefinitely. Second, this commissioning is global, far-reaching, and universal—not regional, limited, or local. Christ explicitly commanded, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19); "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15); and "[Go] to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). His intention is to use the church as the vehicle through which the proclamation of the gospel and the making of disciples are accomplished. A third aspect of the Great Commission is the faithful keeping of the integrity of the gospel message. Nothing can be changed. The Lord not only sends his disciples but makes clear that they are to teach his commands, not any other commands: "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20). Again, we see a "command over a command" because Jesus not only commands his disciples (and the church by extension) to go to the ends of the earth making disciples, but he also commands that they are to teach specifically what he had taught and commanded them while he was still with them.

The Church: The Vehicle of Salvation

By vehicle, the church is to be understood as the primary means through which

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[23] Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 51–52, Google Books.

the gospel is carried to the nations across the world. The dictionary defines the word vehicle as "a means of carrying or transporting something. An agent of transmission (carrier). A medium through which something is expressed, achieved, or displayed."[24] Referring to Abraham and his descendants being a blessing to the nations, Wright notes that the church is also a "vehicle of blessing"[25] through which the gospel is carried. However, Wright also notes that the church can also be a "vehicle of God's judgement" to those who reject the gospel.[26]

Indeed, that is all the church can do. The church has not produced the gospel. The church does not own the gospel but has received the gospel. It has been commanded to proclaim that gospel without alteration to make disciples of all nations so they may receive and in turn teach that same gospel. The church only carries the gospel. Believing in the gospel, new birth, and salvation is entirely a ministry of the Holy Spirit, who produces this miracle. The church does not save. The church cannot save anyone; the church cannot even save herself. We are fully dependent on God. The church must understand the command given by Christ and seek to become more effective.

The Proclamation of the Gospel

The message of the gospel is the seed that is to be planted in the minds of people (Matt 13:1–23). The church has been "entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed" (1 Cor 4:1). People cannot learn about Christ unless the church takes the gospel to them. The apostle Paul makes this point clear when writing to the church in Rome, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom 10:14). Every member of the church, especially its leaders,

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[24] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* s.v. "vehicle."

[25] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 189, 202.

[26] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 402.

must go and proclaim the gospel. There is no harvesting if the planting has not preceded it. The message is planted by the proclamation of the gospel, and the harvest reaped are those who have heard and believed this proclamation.

The gospel is the power of God. Paul asserts in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." Paul points out two important things: (a) the fact that he is not ashamed, and (b) the power of the gospel. The church must not be ashamed of proclaiming the gospel. We must recover the boldness of the early church. John Piper says, "Be shamed but not ashamed . . . there is a difference between being shamed for the gospel and being ashamed of the gospel. If you are a faithful Christian, you will be shamed for the gospel. That is, you will be the target of shaming behavior. But there is a very good reason why you do not have to be ashamed when that happens."[27] Piper also writes about the power of the gospel, listing three reasons why the gospel is the power of God. First, the gospel has the power to make converts. Second, the gospel brings believers to eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God. Third, the gospel is the power to bring about future salvation through a life of faith.[28] The gospel will bring the believer through temptation and persecution and death and judgment into eternal safety and ever-increasing joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God. The power of the gospel, when it is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, has the power to make ministry successful on God's terms.

Equipping Leaders to Disciple

The church, through the help of the Holy Spirit, supports the maturing of those people who believe on the name of Christ. Whether it is a person who has recently

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[27] John Piper, "The Gospel Is the Power of God unto Salvation," Desiring God (blog), June 21, 1998, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-gospel-is-the-power-of-god-unto-salvation.

[28] Piper, "The Gospel Is the Power of God unto Salvation."

accepted Christ or a pastor with many years of ministry experience, every Christian is a disciple of Christ. We are constantly learning about God and experiencing him as we grow in his love. Christ is building and equipping every member of his church. Paul writes to the Ephesians about the provision of teachers in the church "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12–13). We are to grow to the measure of the fullness of Christ. In his book *Deep Discipleship*, J. T. English writes that "success in ministry is not found in building programs but in building disciples—disciples who love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). Christ is the goal, not better or more impressive ministries. He is what we want."[29] The ultimate reason for making disciples is that we form followers of Christ who love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind. The challenge for the local church in a cross-cultural ministry context is that leaders must learn to disciple individuals of other cultures.

The Local Church Must Be Equipped to Effectively Engage in Cross-Cultural Ministry as It Makes Disciples of All Nations

Jesus has given his church a command and a mission. This mission is the salvation of the world so that people come to faith in Christ for the glory of God. Church ministry can be a daunting task, especially when the members of the church do not know what to do or have not reached spiritual maturity. It is true that we have been given spiritual gifts of all kinds for the benefit of the church, but it is also true that Christ has given the church leaders to pastor and disciple the flock. The apostle Paul said to the church in Ephesus, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ

[29] J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 17, Kindle.

may be built up" (Eph 4:11–12). Christ wants his church to be equipped for ministry, but this needs to happen under the influence and sound teaching of the leadership structure of the church. Regarding this, English writes, "The local church is meant to be the primary spiritual guide for disciples who are on the journey of growing deeper in the love and knowledge of God. The local church is the place where we are formed, equipped, and sent out to make more disciples."[30] The church is the only institution that has received the commission and blessing of Christ. The church has been given leaders to help the church realize its full potential. Lastly, the church has been endowed with all kinds of spiritual gifts for the edification of the church and for fulfilling the Great Commission. As such, the church is the primary place for equipping the saints because it is the only institution ordained and blessed by God for that purpose.

Spiritual Maturity Precedes Equipping (Col 1:28–29)

Spiritual maturity is a necessary requirement before commissioning and equipping someone for ministry. The results of equipping the wrong person to do the work of ministry can be potentially disastrous; examples abound. Paul, instructing Timothy regarding men desiring ministry, warns him of this: "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil" (1 Tim 3:6). The church needs mature leaders who can help recent converts to reach spiritual maturity before considering formal ministry responsibilities.

The church is the place where believers grow from spiritual infants to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is not about learning more theology or doctrine. Judas himself walked with Jesus but made disastrous decisions. Though the church is meant to be the primary spiritual guide for disciples, spiritual maturing and growth happen not only within the four walls of the church. Believers must continue maturing as they exercise

[30] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 49.

spiritual disciplines daily. We are also to shine the light of Christ in our other personal environments and places of influence such as work, school, family, and neighborhoods.

In this process, those whom God appointed as teachers must teach to the best of their abilities, and those who are disciples must commit to learn to the best of their abilities. Paul, writing to the church in Colossae, says, "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me" (Col 1:28–29). Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp consider this passage in their book *How People Change*: "Paul's goal was to see church communities singly devoted to the message of the living Christ. Notice that he says he teaches everyone so that everyone may grow to the maturity of Christ."[31] God's desire for believers is that each one of us is presented fully mature in Christ. The life of every Christian is one of continuous growth and maturing.

Making Disciples of All Nations

The command is clear: "Make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19–20). The work of the church would be irresponsible and incomplete if only the gospel was proclaimed and nothing else followed. Evangelism is the first step; discipleship follows. The Holy Spirit convinces people of sin and regenerates them, yet spiritual infants need to grow. This is when the church needs to take on the task of discipling those whom God has brought into the church.

Discipleship is so important that Jesus spent three years intensively discipling and equipping his twelve disciples. Discipleship occupies a prominent position in God's plan for the church. The early church understood this and made it a priority. If the church is to reach the nations, many leaders need to be discipled and equipped. Paul tells

[31] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 222–23, Google Books.

Timothy, “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:1–2). The leaders of the church must take discipleship seriously. Discipleship is a ministry that needs to self-replicate. English posits, “Once you have equipped others, you have to send them to equip others as well. Show them that their equipping matters, that once they are equipped they are going to be able to use the new tools they have in order to serve and lead others.”[32]

However, leaders are not the only ones in need of discipleship. The congregation also needs to be discipled. Jesus makes this clear when he tells Peter to feed his lambs and take care of and feed his sheep (John 21:15–17). The congregation is to be fed and cared for. They need to learn the Bible, they need to learn doctrine, and they need to practice spiritual disciplines. English articulates, “Deep discipleship is about giving people more Bible, not less; more theology, not less; more spiritual disciplines, not less; more gospel, not less; more Christ, not less.”[33] If the local church is to make an impact on the world, change needs to happen from within. Leaders are jointly responsible for the spiritual growth of the flock.

A Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Though salvation is the work of the three persons of the Trinity, it is also necessary to understand that each person is distinct and unique and works in a distinctive manner. English writes, “The Father initiates salvation. The Son accomplishes salvation. The Spirit applies salvation so that we may walk in obedience.”[34] Indeed, the plan of salvation is the work of the triune God, and each person of the Trinity plays a distinct role.

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[32] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 167.

[33] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 8.

[34] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 135–36.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the church enterprise became a ministry of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can happen or be achieved without the indwelling and blessing of the Third Person of the Trinity. The role of the Holy Spirit remains distinctively special, as he is empowering and equipping the church on earth. It is he who gives life to those who are dead. In his book *Who is the Holy Spirit*, R. C. Sproul asserts, "It is the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit to come to people who are spiritually dead, who are walking according to the course of this world and according to the prince of the power of the air."[35] In the same way as the Holy Spirit in creation "moved over the face of the waters, when everything was formless, dark and empty" (Gen 1:2), he moves in the hearts and minds of those who do not know Christ so they may be born again.

The work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to new birth; he is also actively working within the life of the church. He has given spiritual gifts and ordained leaders for the edification of the church. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit "will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:16). Paul adds that what he teaches are the words of the Spirit: "What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words" (1 Cor 2:12–13). Finally, the Holy Spirit selects and equips individuals to serve in ministry, such as he did with Paul and Silas before sending them on their missionary journey (Acts 13:2).

The Church Is Meant to Be Cross-Cultural

The book of Revelation offers us amazing insight into what the future of the church looks like in the glory of the presence of God. It reveals that the church is extremely diverse. John writes, "After this I looked, and there before me was a great

[35] R. C. Sproul, *Who Is the Holy Spirit?* (Sanford, FL: Ligonier, 2012), 18–19.

multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands" (Rev 7:9). The church is meant to be as diverse as the rest of creation. Even the observable world shows us the great diversity of God's creation. Humankind is not the exception. God desires the worship of all this diversity: peoples of all nations, tribes, and languages—each worshipping God in their own cultural expressions and languages. This diverse universe of worshipers represents a view into the future of the church. God is pleased when his glory is exalted in every language and cultural expression.

The Bible is a cross-cultural book. As we read its pages, we become part of this cross-cultural experience because we are reading a book written by individuals of other languages, cultures, times, and geographical locations. In *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, authors E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien affirm,

> We can easily forget that Scripture is a foreign land and that reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. To open the Word of God is to step into a strange world where things are very unlike our own. Most of us don't speak the languages. We don't know the geography or the customs or what behaviors are considered rude or polite. And yet we hardly notice.[36]

Indeed, the breadth of the Bible represents an entire cross-cultural experience. The church, commanded to make disciples of all nations, is to take part in this cross-cultural enterprise for the salvation of the world.

When connecting Jesus's command to the church to go to the ends of the earth to the vision of the church shown to John in the book of Revelation, we begin to grasp the cross-cultural nature of the church. The church did not remain Jewish. It quickly became Gentile. The church is to become the locus of diversity. The more diverse it is, the richer it becomes spiritually, and God is glorified.

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[36] E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, introduction to *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), para. 7, Kindle.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that God loves peoples of every nation, tribe, and language and wants the multitudes to come to faith in Christ. God reveals his love to the world in his general and special revelation, through which he shows humankind his attributes and character. When the crown of his creation, humans, sinned against him, God devised a plan to save the world through the atoning sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. This chapter also described that the church is the vehicle of salvation commissioned by Christ to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations. Finally, this chapter asserted that the church must be equipped to effectively engage in cross-cultural ministry as it makes disciples of all nations. This is a ministry of the Holy Spirit, who empowers the church and gives spiritual gifts to leaders for the edification of the church. Equipping leaders in cross-cultural ministry is essential to the building of Christ's church in light of the Great Commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and the vision of the universal church shown to John in the book of Revelation.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL ISSUES RELATED TO CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY

RBC is located in a cosmopolitan city, and its members desire to improve their ministry skills to reach people of other cultures. The church is an enterprise and ministry of the Holy Spirit. J. T. English says, "The local church is the visible and situated (place), adopted family of God (people), that is being equipped for mission and Christlikeness (purpose), through the indwelling and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit (presence)."[1] Church ministry is ineffective without the Spirit indwelling the hearts and minds of believers. The Spirit equips and empowers the saints and fuels church ministry from beginning to end (1 Pet 4:10–11). Jesus Christ bestows upon the church all the necessary power and authority of the Holy Spirit so she can take on the Great Commission (Matt 28:18).

Paul tells his spiritual son Timothy to "train himself to be godly" (1 Tim 4:7) so that "the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (1 Tim 3:17). Similarly, every church member, especially leaders like Timothy, must train themselves in all areas of godliness to be effective in every good work. This includes cross-cultural ministry. Equipping church leadership for cross-cultural ministry includes taking the following measures:

1. Equip participants in an understanding of the threefold nature of the heart as responding through cognition, affection, and volition. This includes an understanding of how sin affects the heart's responses, a person's worldview, and eventually the culture in which we live.

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[1] J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 72–73, Kindle.

2. Equip participants with a biblical understanding of cross-cultural ministry. This includes an understanding of ministering in a cross-cultural context, how the church is entrusted with the gospel, the command to make disciples, and the church's purpose, identity, and mission.

3. Equip the church in leadership skills. This includes a blend of organizational and servant leadership theory as well as effective leadership of ministry teams.

4. Equip the local church with a God-centered vision for discipleship, a biblical perspective of spiritual parenting, and the practice of spiritual disciplines.

5. Equip the church in educational ministry. This includes educational philosophy, learning science theory, best practices, and an understanding of how to teach and disciple different ministry groups within the local church.

Understanding the Dynamics of the Heart

Cross-cultural ministry is deeply connected with an understanding of the human heart, its spiritual nature, and how this affects individual worldview and culture. To grasp the dynamics of cultural interaction, one must also study the effects of sin on the responses of the human heart.

Humans are complex beings created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). As such, humans have an inherent responsibility before God (Eccl 11:9). We have been equipped with capabilities that no other creature possesses. God bestowed us with cognitive, affective, and volitional capabilities to interact with the environment (Gen 6:5). In *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, Jeremy Pierre asserts, "Human experience is three-dimensional. The human heart responds cognitively through rational processes based on knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart."[2] This three-dimensional dynamic informs how we interact with the world. Still, it is a dynamic that has been corrupted by sin. Humans worship self above God. Pierre notes, "The habits people form in their self-worship make them less aware of the beliefs, values, and commitments that lead them in the direction of a

[2] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 18, Kindle.

particular idol."[3] Humans make idols *for* themselves, but ultimately humans make idols *of* themselves. The cognitive and affective areas of an individual's heart scan the environment for opportunities to satisfy heart desires. When the volitional aspect of the heart produces an action, this action may be one that glorifies God or one that is sinful. The individual's worldview is centered on his personal benefit and well-being and not God's honor and glory (Rom 1:21). As individuals interact with the world, their evolving worldviews influence the culture.

What wisdom does the Bible offer regarding human nature? Speaking of the heart's condition, Jesus says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matt 15:19). Evil thoughts are the cognitive and affective responses of the human heart. Sinful actions are the result of the volitional response of the heart.

The prophet Jeremiah offers similar insight, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). The prophet describes the complexity of the human heart as beyond the understanding of any human being. Sin has left the human heart spiritually handicapped and progressively corrupt. All human understanding is affected by sin. Miguel Núñez describes the effect of sin on humanity's ability to understand God: "As we have pointed out, total inability means that man is completely incapable of choosing God. And that inability is due precisely to the impact of sin on Adam and Eve."[4] Genesis 6 offers a vivid demonstration of the effect of sin on the three-dimensional heart: "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Gen 6:5). The hearts, the desires, and the actions of mankind sought evil, disregarding their Creator in every way.

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[3] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 62.

[4] Miguel Núñez, *Enseñanzas que transformaron el mundo: Un llamado a despertar para la iglesia en Latino América* (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 33–34. Translation provided by Julio Salas.

The Connection of the Human Heart to Culture

The human heart is intimately connected to individual worldview, and a collection of many worldviews influences a culture. Established patterns of human behavior that become normative in a society become that society's culture. The church will benefit from a proper understanding of this process. Culture is defined as "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. It is also defined as the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization."[5] Citing Paul G. Hierbert's *Cultural Anthropology*, James Plueddemann asserts, "At the core of culture is worldview—beliefs about the deepest meaning of life and assumptions about the nature of reality."[6] Worldview is what gives form to our customary beliefs, social forms, attitudes, values, and practices. However, our hearts and our very natures have been corrupted by sin, damaging every area of life including our worldview and our very perceptions of reality. Paul writes, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom 3:10–12). A culture formed of corrupted worldviews is also corrupt; no culture is exempt from the effects of sin.

Ministering in a Cross-Cultural Context

God has designed the church to be a multicultural institution ordained and commissioned by Christ to make disciples of all nations. This requires Christians to step

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[5] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), s.v. "culture."

[6] James E. Plueddemann, *Leading across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), chap. 4, topic 3, "Worldview," Kindle. For an excellent discussion of worldview, see chapter 18 in Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983). For an overview of the concept of worldview and its history, see chapter 1 of Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

out of their comfort zones and go beyond their own cultural settings to proclaim the gospel to people of other cultures (Acts 1:1–8). In cosmopolitan cities such as Miami, peoples of many nations, cultures, ethnic groups, religions, and languages live and engage with one another in a variety of ways. This socio-ethnic cultural diversity provides the ideal environment for the local church to earnestly engage in cross-cultural ministry to reach these individuals with the gospel.

The word ministry has multiple contexts. Ministry can be understood on a large scale; for example, all believers engage in Great Commission work to reach the nations. Ian McFarland says, "The NT Greek term *diakonia*, 'ministry' refers to the services Christians are obliged to render to one another and to the world by virtue of their having been called by God in Christ, whose own ministry is the foundation of that exercised in his name (Heb 8:6)."[7] Ministry on a more granular level may be understood as the work with different groups in a local church: youth ministry, college ministry, couples' ministry, etc. This context implies ministering to those who believe and are now in the process of being discipled. McFarland offers a helpful insight:

> The precise form and character of Christian ministry is described in various ways in the NT. Sometimes the focus is on the ministry of the whole Church, whether directly outwardly to the world as "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18) or inwardly to the community as "building the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). At other times it is used to refer to the specific ministry of an individual within the Church.[8]

Cross-cultural ministry is the church's active effort to engage in Great Commission work with peoples of other nations, cultures, ethnic groups, worldviews, and languages. This ministry occurs first within the church walls, in the discipleship of members of all age groups. This ministry then extends to engaging in evangelistic outreach to non-believers outside the church but within its geographical reach. This

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[7] Ian A. McFarland, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 315.

[8] McFarland, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 315.

outreach includes evangelism (sharing the gospel), discipleship (growth to spiritual maturity), and commissioning (replication of evangelism and discipleship).

Entrusted with the Gospel

The church did not create the gospel, and the church does not own it. The church has been "entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed" (1 Cor 4:1). Nothing should be added to the gospel, and nothing should be removed from its message (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18–19). Knowing and embracing the biblical integrity of the gospel is crucial; the church must not put herself in a position of teaching false doctrines or a false gospel. Leaders must be cautious of what they preach and teach, as they are responsible before God for preaching the true gospel. The apostle Paul admonished the Galatians:

> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! (Gal 1:6–9)

To know the gospel is to understand the plan of salvation. To produce a consistent explanation of the gospel, I recommend that RBC utilize the framework of Greg Gilbert's book, *What Is the Gospel?*[9]

God Is the Righteous Creator

God owns the world. God owns you. God owns your children. God owns anything you consider yours. The human race is totally dependent on God. Gilbert writes, "None of us is autonomous, and understanding that fact is key to understanding the gospel. Despite our constant talk of rights and liberty, we are not really as free as we would like to think. We are created. We are made. And therefore, we are owned."[10]

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[9] Gregory D. Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 6, Kindle.

[10] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, 42.

Indeed, the human concept of ownership is inherently nonexistent. Human beings do not even own their own bodies. Psalms 100:3 says, "Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture." Human beings did not create themselves and cannot avoid death. God is the Creator and is in absolute control of every aspect of human life; he decides our existence and reality. God created the world for his own glory. He made Adam and Eve the crown of all creation to rule over everything he had created. Without believing that God is the Creator of the world, there would be lawlessness and anarchy.

Man Is the Sinner

Both Adam and Eve disobeyed and lost the relationship they enjoyed with God. Sin permeated every area of human life and was passed on from one generation to the next. Gilbert asserts, "Sin is the breaking of a relationship, and even more, it is a rejection of God himself—a repudiation of God's rule, God's care, God's authority, and God's right to command those to whom he gave life. In short, it is the rebellion of the creature against his Creator."[11] The sin of Adam and Eve not only broke the relationship between God and men but put every human being in the predicament of being enemies of God. We are sinners. Paul writes to the Romans, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); he adds, "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

Jesus Christ Is the Savior

God could have destroyed Adam and Eve in the snap of a finger, recreate human beings, and begin a brand-new story. He did not do this. God chose mercy. God is a loving God. He chose to save Adam and Eve. Instead of destroying them, God covered their nakedness with animal skins. Innocent animals were put to death in their place to cover their shame and nakedness. Both Adam and Eve clearly understood their

[11] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, 48.

predicament. There was nothing they could do to earn salvation from death. At first, they tried covering themselves with fig leaves; it was useless. Gilbert asserts, "You are a sinner destined to be condemned. But God has acted to save sinners just like you!"[12] God saves the sinner. We are totally powerless. Jesus is our savior, the one who died for our sins. When we understand this, we can comprehend John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This verse gives us the biblical worldview of the gospel.

Our Response Is Faith and Repentance

As John the Baptist cried, Jesus is "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). All we are to do is have faith and repent. Gilberts asserts, "Faith and repentance. This is what marks out those who are Christ's people, or 'Christians.' In other words, a Christian is one who turns away from his sin and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ—and nothing else—to save him from sin and the coming judgment."[13] The apostle John writes in his Gospel, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12–13).

Commanded to Go to the Nations and Make Disciples

The Great Commission is simple: go to the nations and make disciples. This is not a mere act of obedience but an act of worship. Núñez offers, "The purpose of the church is the glory of God, but its mission is the Great Commission. World evangelization is God's way of seeking to glorify his name and glorify his Son as

[12] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, 60.

[13] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, 73.

Redeemer."[14]

Isaiah records a vision from the Lord, "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'" Isaiah responded, "Here am I; send me!" (Isa 6:8). Likewise, the church should exhibit immediate obedience to God's command. Gilbert reminds the believer,

> If you are a Christian, realize that you hold in your hands the only true message of salvation the world will ever hear. There will never be another gospel, and there is no other way for people to be saved from their sins. If your friends, family, and coworkers are ever to be saved from their sins, it will be because someone speaks the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. That's why Jesus commissions us to go into all the world, preaching and teaching this good news to the nations.[15]

Jesus did not give the Great Commission to the universal church alone, as if leaders and qualified people are the only ones to share the gospel. It is a mandate to every local church and every Christian to share the gospel and bring people to Christ.

Understanding the Purpose, Identity, and Mission of the Church

The local church has a purpose, an identity, and a mission. Understanding these three categories will benefit the church tremendously, especially for ministry in a cross-cultural context.

The first category is purpose. The purpose of the church is the glory of God.[16] The universe revolves around the glory of God, and everything declares the glory of God (Ps 19:1). Even Jesus did not seek his own glory but the glory of his Father in heaven. In the same way, the church is to glorify God. Paul tells the Corinthians, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31), and "You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies" (1 Cor 6:20). Revelation

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[14] Miguel Núñez, *Una iglesia conforme al corazón de Dios*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H, 2018), 29.

[15] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, 120.

[16] Núñez, *Una iglesia conforme al corazón de Dios*, 29.

provides a vivid picture of the glory of God in the heavenly places: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Rev 4:11).

The glory of God is also intimately connected to the church's holiness. We were made holy (Heb 10:20) for God's glory. Gregg Allison offers an interesting perspective about the church's holiness connected to its identity, "This purity is positional, in the sense that the holy church is set apart for, or consecrated to, God and his purposes."[17] The church is not inherently holy but has been made holy by Christ's sacrifice.

The second category is identity. A church that understands its purpose needs to understand its identity. The identity of the church is connected to the One who brought it into existence. The church did not create itself; God created the church and chose every single member who belongs to it. He planned this before the creation of the world for his glory (Eph 1:4). The identity of the church is also intimately connected to its purpose, the glory of God. The church possesses inherent dignity; every member of the church has been adopted and given a new status as a child of God (John 1:12; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:6). God's children must honor this privilege and embrace their new identity. In the past we were sinners, but we were purchased by Christ and are now saints called to live holy lives that honor God and obey his commands. The church's identity is also connected to Jesus's command to go to the nations; it is under his authority and by his command that the church is sent to the nations.

The third category is the mission. The mission of the church is simple: go to the nations and make disciples (Matt 28:16–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The church is the vehicle God uses to bring salvation to the world. We have a purpose—the glory of God;

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[17] Gregg R. Allison, *The Church: An Introduction*, Short Studies in Systematic Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 56–57, Kindle.

we have an identity as children of God and a holy nation; and now our mission given by his Son Jesus Christ is to go to the nations, proclaim the gospel, and make disciples. Allison asserts,

> His commission is part of the mission entrusted to God the Son by God the Father. Three days after his crucifixion, having demonstrated to his disciples that he is resurrected, Jesus says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld" (John 20:21–23).[18]

In the context of the local church fulfilling this Great Commission, God chose the church to be the vehicle that carries the message of the gospel to the nations.

Equipping Church Leadership for Cross-Cultural Ministry

Both locally and universally, the church is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. God equips leaders for the task of ministry, yet leaders must submit to the authority and leadership of the Spirit of God. He will use Spirit-filled leaders for his glory to lead and build his church according to his will; faithful leaders will earnestly seek God's direction and yield their hearts to him. These leaders may come from other nations, speak another language, or be of a different ethnicity, but the local church is one family of God without special distinctions. The apostle Peter makes this clear: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9).

If the local church is to earnestly follow the command to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19), then the church needs to be properly organized. Becoming an organized ministry (a ministry organization) does not mean becoming a business in the secular sense of the word. Instead, as a young Jesus said in the temple, we must be "about [the] father's business" (Luke 2:49 KJV).

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[18] Allison, *The Church,* 95.

God's business for the church is the making of disciples of all nations. The word organization is defined as "an administrative and functional structure."[19] Similarly, the church should organize itself in functional structures so that each of the gifts and talents given by the Spirit to the body of Christ can be effectively used for kingdom purposes. Paul writes to the church in Corinth, "There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work" (1 Cor 12:5–6) and "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people" (1 Cor 14:3).

The challenge for the local church, especially a church located in a cosmopolitan city, is the ability to build successful ministry teams with Christians from other cultures. An understanding of cultural background will allow us to more effectively work for Christ and the kingdom. Lingenfelter explains, "Leading cross-culturally is inspiring people who come from two or more cultural traditions to participate with you in building a community of trust, and then to follow you and be empowered by you to achieve a compelling vision of faith."[20] Cross-cultural ministry leadership is about servant leadership, discipleship as spiritual parenting, and being able to teach the next generation of believers to replicate ministry in the same way they were taught.

Applying Leadership Theory to Cross-Cultural Ministry

Leader and leadership are words that come from the same root verb "to lead," meaning "to guide on a way especially by going in advance, to direct on a course or in a direction, to guide someone or something along a way."[21] A leader is someone who directs and guides. Ministry must have effective leadership. However, directing and

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[19] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "culture."

[20] Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 155, Kindle.

[21] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "lead."

guiding in the context of church ministry implies understanding the nature of the church and who leads the church. The mission of the church provides direction to the church leadership. A Christian who takes on a position of leadership understands that the church belongs to God and that he is a steward following his leader, Jesus Christ, and submitting to the will of God.

Regardless of cultural background, the following general practices have proved effective in leading organizations and teams.

Leaders Model the Way

In their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner assert that leaders must first model the way by clarifying values and setting the example.[22] First, the values are derived from the mission of the church universal. The mission statement of the local church and its ministries must be aligned to the Great Commission. Other mission statements would be incompatible. The values of the local church ministry need to be aligned to the mission and affirmed by the church body, understanding that if every local church member is filled with the Spirit, then their values should be closely aligned. Christian values include loving the Lord with all your heart (Mark 12:30), loving your neighbor (Mark 12:31), loving one another (John 13:34), letting the message of Christ dwell among you (Col 3:16), offering your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Rom 12:1), and bearing with each other and forgiving one another (Col 3:13), etc. A leader must set an example by modeling biblical values.

Leaders Inspire a Shared Vision

Once the example has been set, leaders then inspire a shared vision. Kouzes and Posner propose "envisioning the future by imagining exciting and ennobling

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[22] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 5th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 46, Kindle.

possibilities" and "enlist[ing] others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations."[23] The church universal indeed has a mission, and we all have the same core values. However, realities and circumstances may differ when we get to the local church level. Preaching the gospel and making disciples in communist China will be different from preaching the gospel in Islamic Saudi Arabia, Latin America, and the United States. Kozes and Posner add, "When you envision the future that you want for yourself and others, and when you feel passionate about the legacy you want to leave, you are much more likely to take that first step forward."[24] Enlisting other people who share the same vision is the next step. These individuals will support the ministry. Moses envisioned the future and inspired the Israelites: "When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites—the land he swore to your ancestors to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 13:5). In the same way, Jesus told his disciples, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people" (Matt 4:19).

Leaders Challenge the Process

As a leader and his followers bond by sharing a vision and the leader models the way, he also should provide opportunities for followers. Kouzes and Posner propose that a leader must "search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve. . . . Experiment and take risks by consistently generating small wins and learning from experience."[25] Again, Matthew describes the ultimate example, "Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matt 10:1). Luke writes, "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to

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[23] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 94.

[24] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 97.

[25] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 144.

every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1). Godly leaders challenge followers with opportunities that equip and empower them to do more for Christ.

Leaders Enable Others to Act

According to Kouzes and Posner, leaders "foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships" and "strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence."[26] Jesus let his disciples help when he fed the crowds of five thousand (Matt 14:13–21) and four thousand (Matt 14:13–21). The apostles allowed the early church to decide who should serve the tables by choosing their deacons (Acts 6:1–15). Finally, leaders strengthen others by increasing self-determination. Paul tells the church in Rome, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Rom 12:11–12).

Leaders Encourage the Heart

Leadership is about the heart. Leadership is a relationship between leaders and followers.[27] Kouzes and Posner affirm the importance of "recognizing contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence" and "celebrating the values and victories by creating a spirit of community."[28] We see Jesus spending time with his disciples, teaching them, and nurturing their relationships. Jesus also spends non-ministry time with his disciples at a local wedding in a city called Cana (John 2:1–12).

Servant Leadership

Regardless of culture, leadership is about serving. Jesus said he came to serve, not to be served (Matt 20:18; Mark 10:45). In the same way that a servant is not greater

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[26] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 194.

[27] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, xiii.

[28] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 246.

than his master (John 13:16), the church is here to serve, not to be served. Regardless of language or cultural background, every Christian leader should have a spirit of servant leadership. Though every church member should take part in church life, the ability to serve is distinctive of leaders, who are specially required to lead sacrificially and by example. A servant leader demonstrates a genuine desire for his followers and their personal ministries to grow spiritually. In *Leading Well Across Distance and Cultures*, author Ken Cochrum asserts that "servant leadership involves helping others grow and develop while achieving their goals."[29] In a more profound sense, servant leadership is discipleship of future leaders; this must be exercised in a spirit of humility, not of arrogance. Leaders are to model Christ. Elmer writes, "The leader's first and foremost responsibility is to model the servanthood of Christ. By that standard, all expressions of leadership must be measured."[30] The more we model Christ and not someone else's culture, the easier it becomes to cross over cultural bridges. We are to imitate his leadership character.

Ministry Teams

Ministry teams are common in the New Testament. John the Baptist trained his team of disciples (Luke 7:19). Similarly, Jesus chose twelve disciples (Luke 6:12–16) who became his core ministry team. Beyond the twelve, he sent many more disciples: "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1). Many more examples of ministry teams can be observed in the New Testament.[31]

According to Lingenfelter, leading cross-culturally is "a clash of worldviews."

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[29] Ken Cochrum, *Close: Leading Well across Distance and Cultures* (self-pub., CreateSpace, 2013), chap. 5, topic 9, Kindle.

[30] Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 161, Kindle.

[31] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally,* 16.

Lingenfelter says, "Leading is inspiring people who participate with you in a community of trust to follow you—a leader or a leadership team—and be empowered by you to achieve a compelling vision of faith."[32] He adds,

> The complexity of leading cross-culturally lies in the challenge of building a community of trust among people who come from two or more cultural traditions that provoke a clash of worldviews. Because people rely on their cultural understandings for meaning, security, and significance, cultural differences have inherent power in human relationships to foster fear and mistrust.[33]

This is perhaps the most important challenge in any local church: earning the trust of each member of the community, especially those from other cultures.

Once trust is built, pursuing the mission and vision is more easily accomplished. Leaders must clearly understand the mission and vision: go to the nations, proclaim the gospel, and make disciples. Based on this premise, church leaders must align organizational objectives so ministry teams can follow and maintain their unity. Speaking of resilient teams that stay together despite their differences, author Larry Osborne asserts, "Sticky teams know how to deal with the issues at hand and still come out united in purpose and vision, with a genuine camaraderie undamaged by strong differences."[34]

Sharing the same mission, vision, and ideals does not mean that team members have the same personalities or levels of expertise. Leaders must discern the strengths and weaknesses of each team member. The best teams feature members who lead and serve from their strengths, not their weaknesses. Despite probable disagreements and personality differences, we make every effort to love one another (Col 3:14) and "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3) as our teams commit to pursue our organizational our shared mission and vision.

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[32] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally,* 19.

[33] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally,* 20.

[34] Larry Osborne, *Sticky Teams: Keeping Your Leadership Team and Staff on the Same Page* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 19, Kindle.

In *Leading from Your Strengths*, author Rodney Cox proposes three natural principles for best team performance and productivity:

> First, understanding your own God-given strengths. This is a key to growth, change, and finding your place on the team where God has placed you. Second, recognizing and valuing the God-given strengths of others on your team. This is a key to the commitment of each team member to each other. Third, blending differences among team members and harnessing each person's unique strengths. This results in greater effectiveness and productivity for your team.[35]

In following this model, an honest skills and spiritual gifts assessments may be necessary. This will help team members to understand their place on a team and help leaders to discern skills and spiritual gifts, placing team members in appropriate areas of service while maximizing productivity and effectiveness.

A God-Centered Vision of Discipleship

The church's mandate is "to make disciples" (Matt 28:19). Discipleship is not only about offering educational programs, although these are necessary for the edification of the local church body. However, programs are useless if they are not focused on making disciples who truly love God. English points out, "Success in ministry is not found in building programs but in building disciples—disciples who love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). Christ is the goal, not better or more impressive ministries. He is what we want."[36] Knowledge of God is at the heart of discipleship. All of discipleship programs must be aligned with the sole objective of making disciples who know God better and give him glory. English adds,

> Deep discipleship is more about reveling in the transcendence of God than it is a ministry practice. The source of true discipleship is not better programs, better preaching, or better community. All of those, and more, are hugely important tools,

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[35] Rodney Cox, *Leading from Your Strengths: Building Close-Knit Ministry Teams,* rev. ed. (Township, NJ: BookBaby, 2018), 12, Kindle.

[36] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 17.

> but the source of discipleship is God himself. Thus, at the heart of everything we do is the desire to grow in our love and knowledge of God.[37]

The aim of the local church is to continue discipleship "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

A Biblical Perspective of Spiritual Parenting

Biblical discipleship is like parenting. Though Paul had no children of his own, he had spiritual children. The most prominent of these is Timothy. Paul calls Timothy his "true son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2). Paul is also a spiritual parent to Titus (Titus 1:4). Similarly, the apostle John calls those to whom he writes "my dear children" (1 John 2:1).

Sadly, too many churches have fallen into the culture of individualism and no longer view discipleship as spiritual parenting but as merely educational programming. Ajith Fernando shares a personal message he received from Pastor Richard Brohier: "Our culture of individualism sees [discipleship] as a program rather than a lifestyle of sacrifice and inconvenience."[38] This is no longer only a problem in first-world countries but also in less developed countries. People resist sacrificing their time to invest in discipling others. Shallow discipleship creates a shallow spirituality and ultimately a shallow group of local church members. Churches must develop leaders who view discipleship as a parenting relationship between leader and disciple. Fernando regards discipleship as "an affectionate relationship of caring between people who see themselves as having a parent-child relationship."[39] Learning about the cultural values of people will significantly contribute to the discipleship process; developing trust among people from different cultures is essential to effective discipleship.

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[37] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 19–20.

[38] Ajith Fernando, *Discipling in a Multicultural World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 25, Kindle.

[39] Fernando, *Discipling in a Multicultural World*, 27.

Growing in Christ through Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

The goal of believers is to reach spiritual maturity; this brings glory to God. Cognitive, academic, and theological knowledge is not a sign of spiritual maturity. A true Christian must grow to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Growing in the likeness of Christ is a spiritual experience acquired through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Leaders must help disciples of all nations, tribes, people, and languages learn how to worship God. As such, the process of discipleship should include the following disciplines.

Reading and Listening to the Bible

Leaders should encourage disciples to read their Bibles, meditate on what they read, and memorize verses. Meditating means to dwell on, take in, or listen to the Word of God. Donald Whitney says, "Bible intake is not only the most important Spiritual Discipline; it is also the most broad."[40] Reading, listening, and memorizing Scripture is key to spiritual growth.

Prayer

Just as Jesus taught his disciples how to pray (Luke 11:1–13), leaders must teach their disciples how to pray. Prayer is inherently an act of worship. Paul tells the church in Thessalonica to "Rejoice always, pray continually" (1 Thess 5:16–17). Jesus constantly tells his disciples, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matt 26:41). Leaders must teach disciples to pray and to meditate on Scripture while praying. Whitney writes, "Meditation is the missing link between Bible intake and prayer. Too often disjointed, the two should be united."[41]

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[40] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 34–35.

[41] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 96–97.

Worship

God seeks "true worshipers [who] will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). Leaders are responsible to teach disciples to worship God in Spirit and truth. Worshipping, according to Whitney, is "focusing and responding to God. . . . The more we focus on God, the more we understand and appreciate His infinite worth. As we understand and appreciate this, we can't help but respond to Him."[42] Leaders must teach disciples to focus their minds and attention on God during worship.[43]

Equipping the Church in Meaningful Educational Ministry

Discipleship and meaningful education programs are vital for the growth and edification of the church body. Spiritual maturity is first achieved when individuals grow spiritually in the likeness of Christ (discipleship). At certain levels of spiritual maturity, educational programs are a great help in the believer's maturing process. Some of today's churches merge discipleship and educational ministries into one ministry, tending to package discipleship into what is actually an educational program. To differentiate the two ministries and incorporate them into the life of the church, I propose that churches define a clear educational philosophy.

Examining Educational Philosophy

It is essential for Christian leaders and teachers to focus on the things of above and to teach the truth. Having the right cosmovision of the gospel is necessary because our educational philosophy is based on our understanding of the purpose of life in the universe God created. George Knight asserts,

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[42] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 114–15.

[43] Whitney describes many other spiritual disciplines that leaders should model and teach disciples including evangelism, or sharing the gospel with others; serving, or taking a responsibility within the church body; stewardship of time and resources; fasting as an act of worship; silence and solitude as a way of deeper meditation; journaling; learning; and perseverance.

> The task of educational philosophy is to bring future teachers, principals, superintendents, counselors, and curriculum specialists into face-to-face contact with the large questions underlying the meaning and purpose of life and education. To understand these questions the student must wrestle with such issues as the nature of reality, the meaning and sources of knowledge, and the structure of values.[44]

The local church context is not excluded from such transcendent questions; we already have many of these answers in Scripture. Our purpose is to bring glory to God. Our mission is to make disciples in the image of Christ. As such, our educational philosophy must be aligned with the same purpose and mission. Without good boundaries and guidelines, it is easy to deviate even from the noblest desire to obey God. A wrong educational philosophy may turn true worship into a legalistic—or at the other extreme, liberal—form of external worship. A wrong philosophy may take spiritual formation and make it a structured system of biblical learning that focuses students more on academics and legalism rather than worship, resulting in spiritually illiterate Christians.

The Science of Learning

Learning is the ability to retrieve information, and it is essential in the life of a believer. The Christian life is not mere cognitive learning; it includes learning through deep spiritual experiences that connect with our hearts and ultimately our minds. As such, learning must be focused on making faithful and genuine disciples of Christ.

The book of Deuteronomy provides ancient insight into the science of learning. Similarly, Paul's letters to Philippi offer an interesting perspective on how to learn about God. This project will explore two methods of maximizing the retrieval of information for purposes of discipleship and educational ministry: repetition and reflection.

Learning through Repetition

The book of Deuteronomy provides an interesting perspective on the retrieval

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[44] George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016), chap. 1, para. 6, Kindle.

of information learned by repetition. “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut 5:6–7). According to the authors of *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*, “To be most effective, retrieval must be repeated again and again, in spaced out sessions so that the recall, rather than becoming a mindless recitation, requires some cognitive effort.”[45] These simple exercises can be employed on Sundays during Bible school and at home between parents and children.

Learning through Reflection

Paul tells the Philippians, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—*meditate* on these things” (Phil 4:8 NKJV). Perhaps meditation, or reflection, is the easiest way of learning passively. Of methods to improve retrieval of information, Brown says, “Reflection can involve several cognitive activities that lead to stronger learning: retrieving knowledge and earlier training from memory, connecting these to new experiences, and visualizing and mentally rehearsing what you might do differently next time.”[46] The beauty of learning through reflection is that we can constantly exercise it without the structures imposed by repetitive learning.

Educational Ministry in the Church

True educational ministry prioritizes discipleship. Discipleship is a spiritual parenting relationship between leader/teacher and disciple. The objective of this section is to develop a true discipleship experience through a meaningful educational ministry. To

[45] Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. McDaniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 28, Kindle.

[46] Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, *Make It Stick,* 27.

become thoroughly competent in ministry, leaders must understand the age group in which they minister. This section provides general guidelines on how to become a better educator in four essential areas of ministry: adults, youth, children, and preschoolers. Understanding how each of these age groups learns will help leaders develop better disciples who love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Teaching Adults

This is a wide-ranging age group, from young adults to senior adults, who come with different levels of skills and experiences. Many feel they have something to give, but they desire a safe environment in which to contribute. In *Creative Bible Teaching*, the authors assert that adults "often feel that others in the group are brighter, are more experienced, and have greater promise."[47] As leaders, we must create environments in which adults feel safe in sharing their experiences. Adults are "self-motivated, self-disciplined, have a wealth of experience, are practical, can learn independently, and can provide insightful contributions."[48] They should be discipled in such a way that they also become mentors to younger, less experienced individuals. Churches must be careful to examine that adults are godly leaders and educators before giving them educational roles. However, it is key for church leaders to identify and train adults who can be disciple-makers in the church and at home with their own children and families.

Teaching Youth

This group involves teenagers of various ages. Youth learn best through direct experiences and via caring role models. Richards and Bredfeldt assert, "In teaching youth, firsthand experience is essential. . . . Anyone who is watched by adolescents and

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[47] Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), 270, Kindle.

[48] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 271–72.

children is likely to be emulated by those same young people. That includes student ministry leaders as well."[49] The authors go on to explain that youth learn best when they are active in discovering truth; therefore, teachers should never tell them something they can discover for themselves.[50] Here the role of adults is of extreme importance. Discipleship is learned by example. Youngsters follow the example of their youth leaders and adults, so leaders in these ministries must be chosen wisely. Ideally, adults should develop younger leaders who will eventually become the future generations of youth leaders.

Teaching Children

Richards and Bredfeldt write that children learn by experience, by example, by repetition with variation, and through concrete language and experiences.[51] The best methods for teaching children include storytelling, dramatics, questions, discussion, projects, and creative activities.[52] Similar to teaching youth, training teachers how to best go about this ministry will ensure that these children grow spiritually as they become disciples of Christ. In turn, these children will become the future generation of the youth ministry.

Teaching Preschoolers

Some people think ministry to preschoolers as a kind of childcare. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This ministry is so important that even Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:14). Though children in this age group learn very differently

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[49] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 292.

[50] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 292.

[51] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 305–6.

[52] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 307.

than children or youth, preschool children also grow spiritually. Richards and Bredfeldt add, “The primary task of the Christian early childhood teacher in the church, or even in the school context, is to provide the basic concepts and information needed by their children to formulate a biblical view of the world. Our goal is to help the child see their world through a biblical worldview.”[53]

Conclusion

It is essential to equip the local church in all ministry areas to reach people of other cultures and to disciple our existing members. The fundamentals of salvation, the gospel, and the Great Commission need to be consistently and constantly taught, particularly to newer generations of leaders. Teaching basic organizational skills to leaders is also necessary for effective church and ministry organization. As the church grows and faces different needs and challenges, the organizational structure will need to be adjusted.

It is imperative that the church not forget her calling: to make disciples of all nations. Discipleship is the process of spiritual parenting that brings the believer to greater spiritual maturity for the glory of God. Educational programs play an important part in helping mature Christians grow in their knowledge and understanding of Christ. A blend of godly discipleship with a well-stewarded educational program is necessary to disciple and teach the next generations of believers of all age groups.

[53] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 323.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter provides a description of the implementation of this ministry research project at Riverside Baptist Church of Miami, Florida. The purpose of this project was to advance the kingdom of God locally by equipping and empowering church leadership in cross-cultural ministry. The first goal was to invite qualified individuals to successfully complete the four-week training. The second goal was to assess participants prior to the training to evaluate their current understanding of cross-cultural ministry. The third goal was to develop an eight-lesson biblical curriculum addressing cross-cultural ministry leadership. Finally, the fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural ministry skills by teaching the curriculum to at least ten participants over a four-week period.

Implementing this project included the following phases: (1) pre-implementation project planning and preparation, (2) implementation of the training in cross-cultural ministry skills, and (3) post-implementation data analysis to determine if participants increased in their knowledge of cross-cultural ministry skills.

Pre-implementation: Project Planning and Preparation

I began to plan and prepare for this project at the beginning of my doctoral program. To conceptualize and ultimately give shape to the project implementation, I spent much time in reflective meditation and prayer. I also familiarized myself with other research projects by using the SBTS library website.[1] I made numerous phone calls to

[1] The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, "James P. Boyce Centennial Library," accessed January 2, 2022, https://library.sbts.edu.

coordinate the logistics of the project. This included discussing the project goals and implementation logistics with our senior pastor and building support for the project with other church leaders, including the Hispanic ministry pastor and other leaders. I communicated often with my faculty supervisor and the Professional Doctoral Studies office at SBTS to ensure that I was making progress in my classes, in documenting project, and in obtaining the proper approvals. Through these conversations, I noted thoughts and ideas with the intention of having all the materials ready to implement the project.

This phase of pre-implementation activities took approximately four months, from March 1, 2022, until about June 20, 2022. During this time, I also submitted to the SBTS Ethics Committee the research instruments and forms required for approval to work with human subjects. As I received feedback from my church leadership and my SBTS supervisor and mentors, I started to refine the project website, which enabled me to better define curricula development and potential teaching dates. Since my professional background is in information systems, it was helpful to visualize and set up an online educational environment for the project far in advance of the start. This enabled me to create a more effective structure and plan for project implementation.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

I started my doctoral degree program shortly after the pandemic broke out in 2020. Between the start of my degree and project implementation, I was often uncertain as to how I could effectively implement my research in person given that churches were holding online services, masks were still enforced in several contexts, and many people understandably did not want to gather in person.

After speaking with pastors, leaders, and fellow doctoral students, it became increasingly clear that the most effective way to deliver the training during this season was via an online educational platform. Prior to 2020, using an online platform was one

option for training delivery. During and after the pandemic, using an online platform became the norm. I used Zoom to deliver the live sessions, recorded all of the sessions, and made them available for later replay.

The pandemic uncertainty continued even through the first half of 2022. By this time, however, people were not only more proficient in online systems but also more enthusiastic about using video conferencing for training. The pandemic presented new challenges, but it also offered new opportunities for training individuals around the world.

Website Development

Preparation of the website, where the course materials would "live" in the online world, formally started in January 2022.[2] During the website development phase, I produced and edited image and video promotional content, developed an online structure, designed marketing blurbs, set up automated processes, and devised strategies for content delivery.

Deploying an online training program required visualizing the project in a pre-production environment where I could test the navigability of the site, enhance the search functionality, and validate the links for live sessions, session replays, and the pre- and post-training assessments. I also planned automated email reminders that prompted participants to complete assessments and watch sessions; these emails went out twenty-four hours, twelve hours, and one hour before live sessions began. The reminders made it easy for participants to click through to various parts of the training, but more importantly, they "shepherded" participants through the course by encouraging them to continue improving their cross-cultural ministry skills.

The website required ongoing maintenance until September 30, 2022, the last

[2] Dates provided are close approximates and for reference only. There were some time overlaps between each of the phases of the project implementation, and some of the steps in the implementation took weeks to complete.

day participants could submit the post-training assessment after watching the live video replays. As the project progressed, I updated the educational content and made other minor improvisations to give students the best online educational experience.

Training Delivery Formats

To make the training available to as many people as possible, I determined that the training would be offered fully online. Internet access and basic computer knowledge were the only requirements. To facilitate the online classroom experience for participants, I used the educational platform of my own educational business, America Academics.[3] The online format was flexible enough to make it accessible to every participant who truly desired to complete the training program. The training program was offered in the following formats: (1) live Zoom sessions, (2) recorded session replay, (3) PDF download for reading-only (electronic or print), and (4) audio-only format. The PDF download was a simplified version of the training. The audio-only version was based on the PDF download and presented in a reflexive way that walked students through a session in a "one-on-one" format. Participants could make use of one or more formats as needed. If a participant missed a live session or wanted to take additional notes on a session, the participant could watch the session replay.

Training Structure

I structured the learning modules in the following order: Welcome and Pre-training Assessment, Lessons (eight modules), and Post-training Assessment.

All students who registered for the training were able to watch the content of the Welcome module. This module presented all information related to the training, including instructional text and video on how to navigate the online classroom and the

[3] For the purposes of this project, I offered two sites, one in the English language (https://www.americaacademics.com/Cross-Cultural-Church-Leadership) and one in the Spanish language (https://www.americaacademics.com/Liderazgo-Eclesial-Cross-Cultural).

class syllabus. I also provided instructions for utilizing the Zoom platform, WhatsApp, Facebook Live, and YouTube Live. Once students completed the Welcome module, they were prompted to complete the mandatory pre-training assessment to have full access to the pre-recorded audio, the text content of the course, and the live sessions. In addition, they were able to access the Live Sessions module, which provided links to live Zoom sessions, and the Sessions Replay module, in which all recorded sessions were made available for replay.

After completing the four-session training program, participants were asked to complete the Post-training Assessment module. Completion of this assessment generated an automated email with the student completion certificate.[4]

Training Cohorts

All participants were adults who brought a wealth of information, knowledge, and previous experience, so I designed the training to be cohort-based. The training was offered to English and Spanish speakers by offering the modules in both languages and the live sessions in each language on different days of the week; English sessions took place on Tuesdays, and Spanish sessions were offered on Wednesdays.

Some participants had prior successful cross-cultural ministry experience and needed affirmation from an authoritative source. For others, the training provided new ministry skills. Another group had cross-cultural ministry skills but needed assistance with implementing their skills. Cohort-based training allowed participants to learn from one another in a safe environment and allowed them to freely express their thoughts and opinions.

Student Handbook

I developed a student handbook to accompany the online training. Once

[4] See appendix 12.

students completed the pre-training assessment, they received an automated email with a download link to the student handbook in PDF format. Students could print it or read it on their phones or computers. This student handbook offered a brief overview of the four-week, eight-lesson training. It also offered a concise view of all the elements taught in greater detail via the live sessions. Students were advised to pay attention to the session and take notes after watching the session replay so they would retain as much knowledge as possible.

Pre- and Post-training Assessment Development

I carefully designed the pre-and-post-training assessment to ensure it would produce accurate and useful data for post-implementation analysis. The Applied Empirical Research seminar was instrumental in the process of developing the assessment as well as providing the statistical analysis tools required to measure the effectiveness of the project implementation.

Individuals interested in participating in the training visited the main website for their language (English or Spanish) to learn more about the training. Once they registered for the course, they entered the Welcome module, where they were prompted to complete a commitment to participate and a voluntary agreement to participate, create a personal identified number (PIN), and complete the pre-training assessment, titled "Cross-Cultural Ministry Skills Survey."[5] The assessment was divided into sections: a demographic assessment to gather personal data on the participant; an assessment of the participant's personal faith, church, and religious background: and the twenty-two questions intended to assess the participant's current cross-cultural ministry skill level.

The post-training assessment measured the same cross-cultural ministry skills as did the pre-training assessment. An addendum to this assessment gathered additional

[5] See appendix 3.

narrative from the participants, including whether their knowledge increased in regard to each of the lessons offered, if the seminar was a blessing to them, and if they would recommend this class to someone else.[6] This qualitative data complemented the comments gathered in the course and student community sections throughout the entire seminar experience.

Implementation of Training in Cross-Cultural Ministry Skills

The total implementation of this project took approximately four months, beginning on June 1, 2022, and ending seventeen weeks later on September 30, 2022. This phase could be divided into four sections: (1) the curriculum completion and expert panel approval, which was completed around the third week of June; (2) the promotion of the training sessions and participant recruitment and registration, which started the last week of June and continued into August; (3) the teaching sessions, which were delivered over four weeks beginning August 23, 2022; and (4) gathering the statistical data to prepare it for analysis, which took place during September and early October.

Curriculum Development

I based the curriculum on the purpose and goals of this ministry research project: to advance the kingdom of God locally by equipping and empowering church leadership in cross-cultural ministry through an eight-lesson biblical curriculum addressing cross-cultural ministry leadership. The eight lessons were delivered in four sessions over four weeks. Each session offered two lessons. The lessons were designed to provide participants with the necessary ministry tools to serve in the context of a local church located in a multicultural city. Each lesson built on the previous lesson and covered an area of ministry expertise. Cross-cultural knowledge was embedded in every

[6] See appendix 4.

lesson. Each lesson was delivered in approximately an hour.[7]

Session 1

The first two lessons were foundational to the entire seminar. Lesson 1 was titled "The Theology of the Cross-Cultural Church." This lesson offered the theological foundation of the church and the basics of the doctrine of God, of human beings, and the church, among others. Lesson 2 was titled "Understanding of Human Experience and Behavior." This lesson provided a biblical and theological understanding of human behavior and experience.

Session 2

Lesson 3 was titled "Understanding Multi-Cultural Diversity and Cross-Cultural Interaction." It provided students with a general understanding of multicultural diversity and interaction. Lesson 4 was titled "Organizational Leadership Applied to Ministry" and introduced participants to principles of organizational leadership applied to the context of the local church.

Session 3

Lesson 5, titled "Leadership and Discipleship of Ministry Teams," offered participants principles of leadership and discipleship of ministry teams. Lesson 6, "Integrated Relational Discipleship in the Local Church," offered an integrated and relational approach to discipleship in the local church.

Session 4

Lesson 7, "Principles of Missional Educational Philosophy for Local Churches, Christian Educational Organizations, and Christian Businesses," offered participants principles of educational philosophy applied to local churches, Christian

[7] See appendix 11.

educational organizations, and even Christian businesses. Lesson 8, "Teaching Methodologies and Learning Science Applied to Educational Ministries in the Local Church," offered a practical approach to different educational ministries in the local church by offering teaching methodologies and learning science to be applied to the context of the local church.

Curriculum Evaluation

The cross-cultural ministry training curriculum was evaluated by an expert panel composed of three highly qualified and Spirit-filled individuals: Pastor Otto Fernandez, Senior Pastor at RBC, Pastor Jamil Ribeiro, leader of the Hispanic ministry at RBC and Pastor Al Fernandez of the Florida Baptist Convention. Each panelist took time to review the curriculum and complete the curriculum evaluation rubric.[8] It took approximately one month to collect these evaluations.

Promotion and Marketing

I started to promote the project in late May for the purpose of "testing the waters." More intense promotion and marketing began on June 26, 2022, and continued for seven weeks until Sunday, August 21, 2022. Our target audience included individuals who exercised any kind of leadership within the context of the local church or outside of the local church. Invited participants included pastors, church senior leaders, ministry personnel, lay leaders, ministry directors, volunteers, small group leaders, Christian educators of all age levels, Christian entrepreneurs, and even parents as they also exercise leadership within their own contexts.

Riverside members received an email inviting them to take the training and were also invited to participate via announcements on Sunday mornings. This promotion was helpful, but to emphasize the benefit of the training, I felt a second push was needed.

[8] See appendix 1.

This time, Senior Pastor Otto Fernandez emphasized the training purpose and goals and extended the invitation to register on each of the three Sundays before training started. Pastor Jamil also advertised the training to our Spanish congregation in the same way. I supplemented these announcements by distributing fliers, reaching out to personal contacts, and making phone calls. I also sent an email blast to adult Sunday School teachers and to the children's Sunday School ministry.

In order to meet the objectives of the study of this project, part of the strategy was to give Riversiders real exposure to and live interaction with individuals from other cultures, ethnicities, and social contexts—individuals living inside and outside of the United States. Therefore, I promoted this training and extended an invitation to participate to individuals around the world with the same leadership qualifications as listed above. A total of 466 individuals registered for the training: 215 participants for the English language training and 251 participants for the Spanish language training. All participants from countries and territories outside of the United States were offered the same pre- and post-training assessments and provided exactly the same training. The global participants and the participants from Riverside benefited from interacting with one another in a live setting. For purposes of this project, only data from Riverside participants was used in the statistical analysis.

Curriculum Delivery

Training began the third week of August and was offered to English and Spanish speakers via English and Spanish cohorts. Participants were encouraged to participate in live sessions as their schedules allowed and encouraged to interact in the live video comments and the Student Community section of the website. The following paragraphs detail the results of the English and Spanish language cohorts.

English Cohort

The English cohort started on Tuesday, August 23, 2022, at 7:30 p.m. and met

on the following four Tuesdays until September 13, 2022. The Zoom session opened thirty minutes early so that participants could log in and prepare to participate. Each session started on time and lasted for approximately two hours and thirty minutes, occasionally exceeding this time. English cohort participants were able to replay the sessions and complete the post-training assessment until September 30, 2022.

Two hundred and fifteen individuals registered to take the seminar as part of the English cohort; however, only ninety-nine individuals completed the pre-training assessment. About thirty-three individuals participated in the first live session, and the following sessions maintained an attendance of approximately twenty-four individuals. Most of these individuals were faithful Riversiders. Individuals who did not make it to the live session for various reasons were able to watch the session replays and interact qualitatively in the video comment sections and in the Student Community sections of the website.

The video comments section and interactions in the Student Community were overwhelmingly positive. At the beginning of the training, I would personally respond to each comment, but I eventually lost track, leaving some ninety-nine unanswered comments. Overall, the qualitative response from this group was excellent and beyond my initial expectations.

Spanish Cohort

The Spanish cohort started on Wednesday, August 24, 2022, at 8:00 p.m. and met on the following four Wednesdays, until Wednesday, September 14, 2022. Again, the Zoom session opened thirty minutes early so that participants could log in and prepare to participate. Each session started on time and lasted for approximately two hours and thirty minutes, occasionally exceeding this time. Spanish cohort participants were able to replay the sessions and complete the post-training assessment until September 30, 2022.

Two hundred and fifty-one individuals registered to take the seminar as part of

the Spanish cohort; however, only 122 individuals completed the pre-training assessment. About twenty-five participants participated in the first live session, and participation in the following live sessions held steady at approximately twenty-three attendees. Some of these individuals were faithful Riversiders; some others were Hispanics in the U.S., and others were from countries in Latin America. One person from Spain (a Roman Catholic Priest) participated as well. Again, many individuals who did not make it to the live session for various reasons (including Wednesday-night church activities) were able to watch the session replays and interact qualitatively in the video comment sections and in the Student Community sections of the website.

As with the English cohort, the video comment section and interaction in the Student Community were overwhelmingly positive. I would personally respond to each comment, but I eventually lost track, leaving some 105 unanswered comments. Overall, the qualitative response from this group was excellent and beyond my expectations.

Table 1. Cross-cultural seminar cohort breakdown

Cohort	Registered	Pre-training assessment	Post-training assessment	Commitment before God
Cross-Cultural Church Leadership (English)	215	99	41	13
Liderazgo Eclesial Cross-Cultural (Spanish)	251	122	54	26
Totals:	466	221	95	39

Post-implementation Activities

Subsequent to the completion of all modules, participants were asked to complete a post-training assessment to measure the increase in their cross-cultural ministry skills. In addition to this assessment, participants were offered the opportunity to make a "Commitment before God," a personal one-on-one written covenant with God. At the end of the four-week training, forty-one participants in the English cohort

completed the post-training assessment. From this last group, thirteen participants completed the optional Commitment before God module. Fifty-four participants in the Spanish cohort completed the post-training assessment. From this last group, twenty-six participants completed the optional Commitment before God module.

Post-implementation: Data Collection and Analysis

I began to collect post-training data from participants on September 14, 2022, the last day of training and the first date that the participants could complete the post-training assessment. This continued until September 30, 2022, when the post-training assessment module closed and I moved all of the data into a database for analysis.

This phase included analysis of quantitative data, in the form of pre- and post-training assessment results, and qualitative data, in the form of narrative feedback offered by participants in the video comments and student community section and on the post-training assessment. Though this phase was short in duration, it was the most time-consuming phase and required meticulous review, as it required taking all of the data and putting it in a usable format for interpretation.

At the conclusion of the training, I downloaded comma-separated value spreadsheets from the educational platform. This consisted of four files that provided the pre- and post-training assessment data for the English and Spanish participants. Using Microsoft Excel, I filtered each of these files so that only the RBC participant data was analyzed for the purposes of this project.

I then translated the data into a six-point Likert Scale format for further analysis. My notes from the Applied Empirical Research class and additional consultation with Professor Joseph Harrod, an expert on statistical data and analysis, were instrumental in my analysis.

Table 2 presents the results of the t-test for dependent samples for the pre- and post-training assessments in cross-cultural ministry skills. A *t*-test for dependent samples

demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-training total scores: $t_{(19)} = -3.942$, $p < .001$. The pre-test mean score of 105.15 versus the post-test score of 111.5 demonstrated an increase of 6.55. The *t*-test demonstrates that the participants increased in their understanding of cross-cultural ministry skills.

Table 2. Results of *t*-test dependent samples for increase in cross-cultural ministry skills

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Total	*Post-Test Total*
Mean	105.15	111.7
Variance	42.23947368	21.27368421
Observations	20	20
Pearson Correlation	0.13852967	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	19	
t stat	–3.94235478	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000437014	
t Critical one-tail	1.729132812	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000874027	
t Critical two-tail	2.093024054	

Participants were also invited to give qualitative feedback on the training and me as the instructor.[9] This feedback touched on a number of aspects in the training. Isaac wrote, "I feel so excited about this life-changing leadership training. In fact, this training has widening [*sic*] my knowledge on how to lead effectively and efficiently in the gospel of God. It is great pleasure to join any of your programs and also invite others to join as

[9] Julio Salas, "Certified Testimonials," America Academics, accessed October 15, 2022, https://www.americaacademics.com/testimonials; Julio Salas, "Testimonios Certificados," America Academics, accessed October 15, 2022, https://www.americaacademics.com/testimonios.

well. May God bless you abundantly." Joan said, "Extremely valuable information to fulfill the call of Mt 28:19." Jose offered,

> Great class and I learned a lot about how ministries should work in local churches to include people of different culture background [and] language. We all are one in Christ and we all have the word of God to guide us. The BIBLE is the same no matter the language your Bible has. Will be great if each session will be one class. Given [*sic*] students more opportunities to share their opinion or question. May God bless you for the great work you are doing.

Many other participants shared that they appreciated the ability to replay sessions, to build relationships with other participants, to be encouraged in challenging ministry contexts, and ultimately, to increase in their cross-cultural ministry skills.

Conclusion

From the planning and preparation phase to the data analysis phase, each part of this project provided enormous ministry experience. I brought all my previous expertise in business, information systems, education, and ministry to bear in this training program. Despite the massive amount of practical work it took, the interaction with people from all over the world expanded my own vision of ministry, even though I was the "expert" teaching others about cross-cultural ministry. Even the challenge of dealing with circumstances outside of my control taught me to rely on God's providence and mercy.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The book of Revelation not only provides rich and compelling imagery of what the church is going to look like in her eschatological future, but it also provides an accurate reading of God's mind and heart for the composition of his church. Through his church, God's grace and love extend to every person on earth: peoples of all tribes, ethnicities, and languages—all of them redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, for the glory of God the Father. The apostle John wrote, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands" (Rev 7:9).

From its start until its conclusion, this ministry research project has been inspired by and focused on the reality of the cross-cultural diversity of the church in view of God's redemptive plan for all humankind. God desires every person on Earth to be saved, and the church is the vehicle of blessing through which the gospel is to be proclaimed. The Great Commission given by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:16–20 finds its glorious fulfillment in this magnificent eschatological image of Revelation 7:9. The saints described in the book of Revelation are the very same people who once worshipped here on Earth and were redeemed by the blood of Christ. All of them heard and believed in the gospel. All of them were saved by Jesus Christ their Lord.

That glorious imagery provided compelling reasons to work very hard in equipping church leaders at Riverside Baptist Church of Miami (and leaders from all over the world) in cross-cultural ministry. I focused on delivering training that (1) would provide participants with sufficient proficiency in multiple areas of practical ministry

leadership, (2) could be applied in multiple contexts, particularly in a multicultural city, and (3) impact many people of all kinds of ethnic backgrounds, cultures, races, and languages.

This chapter reviews and evaluates this ministry project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. It also provides reflexive insights gained through the implementation process and a thoughtful evaluation of what I would do differently next time.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this ministry research project was to advance the kingdom of God locally by equipping and empowering church leadership in cross-cultural ministry. This project implementation was successfully accomplished as leaders of Riverside Baptist Church along with church leaders from all over the world joined the English or Spanish cohort training sessions and completed all curriculum requirements. A total of twenty leaders from Riverside Baptist Church and an additional seventy-five church leaders from all over the world successfully "graduated" from the first iteration of this training.

Limitation

One limitation applied to this project: the reduced availability of the participants to physically attend the four-week training program. Not all participants were able to attend the training sessions in person on the given day and time. Some participants had to attend church activities on that same day; others had small children to care for; others were in different time zones. These and other reasonable justifications made it difficult for some participants to join physically on the same day and time.

To mitigate this limitation, each training session was offered fully online via Zoom so participants could attend remotely from the comfort of their homes. Additionally, a full recording of the session was uploaded two hours after the session

ended to the educational platform's course section. This made it possible for people who were not able to attend the live online session to watch the video recording, comment on the session, and provide class feedback in the same way as the other students. Students from different time zones were most grateful for this "Session Replay" alternative. Participants from Africa, Asia, and Europe benefited most from this option.

Delimitation

Initially, one delimitation applied to this project: the training was limited to church leaders at RBC. The reason for this delimitation was to focus on equipping leaders in cross-cultural ministry so they may model and teach these skills to the church membership. All kinds of individuals who are respected Christian leaders at Riverside participated in this study: pastors, elders, deacons, church staff, ministry directors, small group leaders, volunteer leaders, Sunday School teachers, worship leaders, community influence leaders, and Christian entrepreneurs.

These leaders are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, within and outside of the church. As project planning progressed, I recognized that in addition to leaders at Riverside, the educational experience would be richer if individuals from other countries were invited to join. Since the training was available online, I was easily able to open registration beyond the membership of Riverside. By the completion of the project, seventy-five Christian leaders from all over the world successfully completed the training. Though the statistical analysis of the project results would not be based on the larger group of non-Riverside participants, I felt that both groups would benefit from each other's interaction.

The original project delimitation was changed to meet the growing need for this training; however, the statistical results of the training were based only on the twenty leaders at RBC who successfully completed the training requirements.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Meeting the intended goals was among the highest priorities I kept throughout the entire research process. Gathering quality participant data was critical. Therefore, each goal was designed to maximize the successful outcome of the data collection and analysis. The success of this ministry research project was dependent on the achievement of the following four goals: (1) to invite a qualified group of individuals who would successfully complete the four-week training program; (2) to assess participants before the teaching series began to evaluate their current understanding of cross-cultural ministry; (3) to develop an eight-lesson biblical curriculum delivered over four weeks that addressed cross-cultural ministry leadership skills; and (4) to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural ministry skills by teaching the curriculum to at least ten participants.

The First Goal

The first goal was to invite a qualified group of individuals who would successfully complete the four-week training program. This first goal was engineered in such a way that its successful completion depended on the selection of qualified participants including pastors, elders, deacons, church staff, ministry directors, small group leaders, volunteer leaders, Sunday school teachers, worship leaders, community influence leaders, and Christian entrepreneurs.

These individuals were primarily leaders from Riverside, as my subject of study. Eventually, Christian leaders from all over the world were added to the participant list. This second group was included to provide Riverside leaders exposure to and real interaction with other Christian leaders from other cultures and ethnicities.

The first goal was achieved when fifty-five Riverside leaders committed to taking the cross-cultural church leadership training. Thirty-one of these members completed the pre-assessment survey, and twenty members completed the training. In total, ninety-five Christian leaders worldwide completed the training.

Table 3. Number of participants completing cross-cultural training

	Riverside Baptist Church Leaders	Christian Leaders (World)	Totals
Cross-Cultural Church Leadership (English)	11	30	41
Liderazgo Eclesial Cross-Cultural (Spanish)	9	45	54
Totals:	20	75	95

The Second Goal

The second goal of the project was to evaluate each participant's current understanding of cross-cultural ministry. This goal was achieved by administering a pre-training assessment.[1] The assessment was presented in both English and Spanish versions and included eight questions on the participant's demographic situation, four questions concerning personal faith, church, and religious involvement, and twenty-two questions to assess current cross-cultural ministry skills. The twenty-two cross-cultural ministry questions were designed to complement the areas covered by the training. This goal was successfully achieved when thirty-one Riverside leaders (twenty English speakers and eleven Spanish speakers) completed the pre-training assessment. The pre-training assessment yielded interesting insights, some of which are highlighted in table 2 and described in the following section.

Table 4. Pre-training assessment, selected questions

No.	Question	SA	A	AS	DS	D	SD
4	Every local church regardless of their size should make efforts to accommodate individuals of other cultures.	11	9	0	0	0	0
6	I don't feel confident to share the gospel with someone from another culture or religion.	4	12	1	2	0	1

[1] See appendix 2.

No.	Question	SA	A	AS	DS	D	SD
7	My ministry team is composed of individuals of different ethnic background, culture, nation, and/or language.	6	12	1	0	0	1
19	I believe my church possesses a healthy corporate culture that promotes cross-cultural fellowship among members and that fellowship is reflected in the way ministry is promoted across the board.	5	11	3	0	1	0
21	Local churches in cosmopolitan or multi-cultural cities are to engage in local missions.	10	8	1	0	1	0

I was encouraged to see that all respondents agreed or strongly agreed to question 4: “Every local church regardless of their size should make efforts to accommodate individuals of other cultures.” This was consistent with the responses to question 13, “I am open to learn from individuals from other cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and languages,” on which respondents also agreed or strongly agreed. These responses showed that participants believe the church should accommodate people of other cultures and are personally willing to make the extra effort to learn from them. Most Riverside participants were already positive about and open to cross-cultural ministry efforts.

Despite their willingness to serve people of other languages and cultures, sixteen participants agreed or strongly agreed to question 6: “I don’t feel confident to share the gospel with someone from another culture or religion.” I noted this response and made sure to address it in the lessons on discipleship.

Responses to questions 7 and 19 demonstrate that RBC leaders view their ministry teams as multicultural and believe that RBC possesses a healthy corporate culture that promotes cross-cultural fellowship among members. Other questions related to the benefits of multicultural ministry and the equal worth and dignity of all peoples before God were answered with strong agreement. There is still some work to do, but it is

very encouraging that RBC church leaders already view themselves and their ministries as multicultural.

The Third Goal

The third goal was to develop an eight-lesson biblical curriculum delivered over a four-week period that addressed cross-cultural ministry leadership skills. The curriculum was crafted to provide participants with a solid understanding of cross-cultural ministry from the ground up, that is, to equip participants with a complete range of ministry tools to be effective leaders within and outside of the local church.

The curriculum was evaluated and approved by an expert panel composed of three highly qualified individuals. Each panelist took time to review the curriculum and complete the curriculum evaluation rubric.[2]

The eight lessons in cross-cultural ministry skills were successfully delivered over the course of four sessions delivered over a four-week period. Two cohorts were assembled for the training: an English cohort and a Spanish cohort. Cohorts gathered every week; the English cohort met on Tuesdays, and the Spanish Cohort met on Wednesdays. With the development and delivery of the eight-lesson curriculum on increasing cross-cultural ministry leadership skills, the third goal was achieved.

The Fourth Goal

The fourth goal was to increase the knowledge of cross-cultural ministry skills by teaching the curriculum to at least ten participants. This last goal was successfully met when twenty Riverside leaders completed the training and filled out the post-training assessment. The cross-cultural ministry skills questions on the post-training assessment were identical to the pre-training assessment, but the post-training assessment included additional questions measuring student satisfaction levels and allowing students the

[2] See appendices 8 and 9.

opportunity to reflect on their new knowledge. It also provided space for participants to write narrative responses.

To measure the increase in knowledge of cross-cultural ministry skills, I used a *t*-test for dependent samples to determine whether there was a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training assessment scores. The quantitative data reveals that the fourth goal was met, as the *t*-test for dependent samples showed a difference of $t_{(19)} = -3.942$, $p < .001$.[3] The pre-training mean score of 105.15 versus the post-training mean score of 111.70 demonstrated a mean increase of 6.55.[4]

Post-implementation data analysis revealed increases in specific measures that are worth further consideration. Question 2 posited, "Local churches in cosmopolitan or multicultural cities are to engage with the people of other cultural backgrounds." Whereas the initial mean score was 5.00 for this question, after the training, the mean score had risen by +0.65, revealing an even greater conviction on the behalf of participants that the local church is to engage with others of different cultural backgrounds.

One of the most encouraging results of the training was the improvement in those who did not feel confident in sharing the gospel with someone from another culture or religion (question 6). Prior to the training, this score was 4.75 (less than "5–Agree.") After the training, the mean score of 5.15 showed that participants were more confident in sharing the gospel. Participant Geetawattie L. wrote, "Being in this class for the past weeks has been a great blessing to me, I am motivated to show forth the kind of love that God require[s] of me, to share the Gospel to all nations despite their culture or beliefs. It was very edifying, and I am grateful to the Lecturer for taking time to impart in us, God bless you."

Even though the pre-training assessment showed the participants believed their

[3] See appendix 7.

[4] See appendix 6.

ministry teams were multicultural, their post-training scores on this question (7) showed a mean increase of +0.80. Participants had an even better understanding of the importance of diversity in leadership, and this increase demonstrated that they recognized RBC's leadership team as having strong diversity. Similarly, participants who initially agreed that they were equipped to serve (question 9) showed a mean increase (+0.55) in their confidence in cross-cultural ministry knowledge and readiness. This was corroborated by qualitative responses from participants at the end of the training, including Jose R. C., a Riverside leader, who wrote, "Great class, and I learned a lot about how ministries should work in local churches to include people of different culture background and language."

Strengths of the Project

This ministry research project displayed many areas of strength, three of which are highlighted here: the educational delivery method, the diversity of the participants, and the systematic learning approach that gave participants the opportunity to learn ministry from multiple perspectives.

Educational Delivery Method

First, the educational delivery method was perhaps a game changer in the entire implementation process. The Zoom platform provided a great medium for conducting the live sessions in an effective and timely manner. Students were able to speak and see each other through live video. It was possible to record sessions and make them available for students to replay at a more convenient time. The educational platform, https://www.americaacademics.com, also provided participants with a seamless online structure that was easy to access, navigate, and participate in.

If participants were unable to access the video component of the training, an audio-only version of the lessons afforded students the ability to take the training, comment on each of the lessons, and respond to other students' comments. The interaction and exchange of knowledge through the Student Community section enabled

participants to share with one another that “iron may sharpen iron” (Prov 27:17).

The pre- and post-training assessment sections of the website provided participants the ability to assess their learning and provided me the ability to download quantitative and qualitative data that was vital to statistical analysis and overall reflection on the project. It was also important to guide participants through the curriculum using an automated email communication system. Keeping participants apprised of the next step in training reminded them of the importance of developing cross-cultural ministry skills and encouraged them to complete this biblical training.

Participant Diversity

Second, the diversity of the participant group was another great strength of this project. Of the twenty participants who completed the entire training program, nine were male and eleven were female. Ten participants were individuals 61 years old and over, while the second largest group was comprised of six individuals 41 to 50 years old. Two individuals ages 18 to 30 and two individuals ages 51 to 60 participated. The small size of the latter groups does not necessarily mean that these ages are not interested in learning about cross-cultural ministry; this participant group only represented a microcosm of the demography of Riverside.

Ethnic groups were represented as follows: White (3), Hispanic (10), Black (6), and Other (1). Language groups were represented as follows: English (8), Spanish (9), Portuguese (2), and Other (1). Fourteen participants spoke more than one language, while six spoke only one language.

Though residents of Miami, participants from Riverside are individuals from a diversity of contexts; many countries, ethnicities, and languages are represented in this microcosmos. Most of Riverside’s English cohort spoke not only English but also a second language. Many of them were born in the United States to English-only parents; others were English speakers born in the United States to Spanish-speaking parents.

Others were immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Africa who, like many Hispanics, were first- or second-generation immigrants and spoke English as a second language. Many of them have children of various ages born in the United States. This group joins together, worships, and has fellowship with the English speakers of our church.

Systematic Learning Approach

Third, the curriculum structure provided students with a solid and systematic learning approach to every lesson from the first to the last. Lesson 1 provided a foundational understanding of ministry, offering participants a solid theological approach to the doctrine of the Church, the doctrine of God, and the doctrine of human beings, among other theological principles. Lesson 2 offered participants an extended view of the theology of human beings, focusing on the human behavior and experience. This first session was considered foundational to the entire curriculum. Lessons 3 and 4 built on a proper understanding of lessons 1 and 2.

In the second session (lessons 3 and 4), students were ready to understand the principles of culture and cultural interaction, and later, principles of organizational leadership. The third session (lessons 5 and 6) built on the knowledge of theology, human nature and behavior, and organizational leadership, and broadened these competencies with a greater understanding of leadership and discipleship of ministry teams and integrated relational discipleship.

In the fourth and last session, students completed the required competencies outlined in the curriculum. Lesson 7 gave participants a basic understanding of how to develop a mission statement, whether the context was a local church, a Christian business, or any other Christian organization. Lesson 8 provided great practical competencies for individuals serving in age-based ministries.

Each lesson required that participants understand the material, take notes, write comments, and interact with other students' comments. Participants using the audio-based

curriculum had a “one on one” format with the instructor, including a time of prayer and Scripture before the lesson.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project perfectly blended my passions in information systems, ministry, education, business, and organizational leadership, and I consider it one of my greatest accomplishments in ministry and in my personal life. However, it had some weaknesses that I hope to amend next time I offer this training. The first weakness occurred in the development of the pre- and post-training assessments but was not realized until data analysis. The second weakness was the limited content of the curriculum. The third weakness was the brevity of the entire training, which was delivered in only four sessions. The fourth weakness was the extended duration of each of the training sessions.

Flaw in Pre- and Post-Training Assessment Development

After analyzing the data from the pre- and post-training assessments, I noticed that there were surprising statistical outliers in the first several answers of some respondents.[5] These answers were not consistent with other answers provided by the same respondents. For example, in the pre-assessment, a Riverside participant in the English Cohort strongly disagreed to the question, “The church is by God’s design a multicultural institution ordained by God” and to the question, “Local churches in cosmopolitan or multicultural cities are to engage with the people of other cultural backgrounds.” However, the same participant disagreed when asked, “Local churches should only be composed of people of the same language” and agreed when asked, “Every local church regardless of their size should make efforts to accommodate individuals of other cultures.”[6] To disagree that the church was designed by God as a

[5] See appendices 4 and 5.

[6] See pre-training assessment scores for participant EN-03-03 in appendix 4.

multicultural institution and to disagree with God's call to engage with other people of multicultural backgrounds is not consistent with the belief that churches should accommodate individuals of other cultures. It was also inconsistent with the rest of the participant's responses and responses from the participant group.

As I reviewed the scores, I realized that the inconsistency of this participant's answers could have been due to misreading the answers in the Likert scale for the first two questions. However, the lack of a "back" button in the assessment that would allow the participant to change previous answers prevented the participant from updating previous answers. In future iterations of the training, I will add a back button to the survey so that the participants can review all of their answers before submitting the assessment. I believe this will also improve my data collection and analysis.

Limited Curriculum Content

Though I believe the curriculum was excellent, I never felt fully satisfied with it. I felt I could add more and more. Though friends would tell me it was more than sufficient, I felt it was still not enough. Perhaps I was too hard on myself. I wanted my students to learn even more—as much as I learned in the doctoral program! But unfortunately, time would not permit this. Though student feedback demonstrated satisfaction with the training and showed a significant increase in cross-cultural ministry skills knowledge, I felt there was more I could give the students to learn. Perhaps future versions of this course will include video case studies, interviews, and additional resources so that students can spend more time with the material.

Brevity of the Training Program

It was very hard to get people to commit for longer than four sessions. After consulting with various pastors, including Pastor Otto and Pastor Jamil from Riverside, and even other fellow doctoral students and potential participants, I realized I had to be creative and resourceful. After reflecting on the program's length, I believe an extra one

or two shorter sessions focused on questions and answers and clarification may be needed in future versions of this training.

Extended Duration of Training Sessions

Each training session lasted for about 2 hours and a half and sometimes 2 hours and 45 minutes. I felt this was a little bit too long. I even had a hard time continuing to lecture after one hour. Each of the sessions demanded a lot from students, and with Tuesday and Wednesday sessions, my time commitment was twice that of students. Though some of this was mitigated on the student side by providing session replays, I could make improvements on session length in future versions of the training. This may include adding another one or two sessions to divide the training competencies more efficiently into shorter sessions. I would also like to find additional ways to make each session "more fun" to motivate students to retain the knowledge and complete the training.

What I Would Do Differently

If I were to repeat this training, I would administer short quizzes for each of the lesson replays, require participants to submit the lesson notes taken from each of the video sessions, and increase the requirements of my curriculum so at the end of the training I could effectively "commission" people to an area of ministry.

Administer Short Quizzes

My educational philosophy for teaching those who serve in the context of the local church is not about getting a passing grade but helping them retain and be able to retrieve as much knowledge as possible for future use. I want to develop a practical ministry leader who will put into action what he or she learned by teaching it to other leaders in the local church. I want these individuals to learn, retain, and put that knowledge into practice. Administering short, ungraded, no-time-limit quizzes would

provide participants with a way to remember and refresh what was learned without the worry or pressure of getting a "failing grade." Though these quizzes would be mandatory to move on to the next lesson, a participant could take the quiz as many times as needed to pass it.

Submission of Lesson Notes from Each Video Session

To further help knowledge retention and application, I would also make it a requirement for participants to submit their lesson notes from each of the sessions. Again, the goal is not for participants to earn a "passing grade" but instead to increase their knowledge and put that knowledge to practice. The lesson notes are a pedagogical way to ensure students remember what was taught in the live or recorded session. It may even make a participant rewatch all or part of the session videos to remember and write about it. Though it may be time-consuming, the idea of this exercise is that students retain the maximum amount of knowledge as they reflect upon their own ministry context.

Increase Curriculum Requirements and Commission Participants

One of the things I repeated over and over to my students was "beyond the mere cognitive learning, this class is about what you are going to do with what you have learned." As such, I would take every opportunity to help my students feel the weight of the responsibility of being a minister of the gospel. Perhaps I would need to make the training more challenging with quizzes and questions, but the ultimate goal would be to commission true ministry leaders who would actively serve in the context of the local church or in any other setting. Commissioning participants to be "Cross-Cultural Ministers" (not ordained) in front of a large number of witnesses, including their own families, would be a way for them to publicly commit to serving the Lord.

Theological Reflections

Beyond the academics and the practical ministry side of this project, I had plenty of time to reflect theologically about this entire project. I experienced times when I felt the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit leading me into a greater love for God's people, the people for whom Christ died.

First, I reflected upon God's mercy and faithfulness in the way he cares for us and fulfills all his promises. He did not smite Adam and Eve after they rebelled. Quite frankly, that would have been the easier way—to simply start over. God forgave them and even pronounced judgment against the serpent; the woman's offspring would crush its head (Gen 3:15). Similarly with Abraham, God promised he would be the father of many nations (Gen 17:4–7); this implies countries, cultures, languages, and ethnicities. God shepherded his people throughout the ages until our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to live with us and make all promises come true. When Christ died on the cross and rose on the third day, he defeated Satan. This opened the door to everyone who believed in him. As Paul wrote to the church in Colossae, "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Col 3:11). When Christ commanded his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19), it was the moment the promise God gave to Abraham became more alive than ever! Lastly, the glorious imagery of Revelation 7:9 not only shows Abraham's "spiritual descendants" as the father of the faith (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:6–7) but also puts God's love and faithfulness on full display for our joy and his glory.

Second, I reflected upon the immense and diverse complexity of God that can be seen all over creation. As I reflected upon cultural, ethnic, and language diversity among human beings across recorded history, I realized that diversity in its multiple forms is not unique to human beings. Uniqueness (a form of diversity) can be seen in animals, plants, insects, animated and unanimated objects, and even upon looking at the sky and the universe. We see this magnificent diversity in full display all over the place.

When one understands this magnificence, then reading the account of creation in Genesis 1 takes on another reality. One example is in Genesis 1:11: "Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good." There are similar examples in Genesis 1:20 (for the water to produce living creatures) and Genesis 1:24 (for the land to produce living creatures). As Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." God is a God who loves diversity and wants to be worshipped in every diverse possible way. Ultimately, diversity must work for God's own glory.

Personal Reflections

I rejoice in Christ for having completed this ministry research project. It was a tremendous experience that changed my life and perspective on the way I see and do ministry. My personal perspectives on people, race, ethnicities, and cultural diversity have completely changed for the better. I feel I have matured a little bit more. Today, I try to see everything through God's eyes. Before, I saw the world in "black and white." Today, after all this research and meditation, I can see God's creational diversity "in full color." As I write these lines, I cannot stop remembering all the beautiful faces of the people with whom I was able to become friends and interact, both from Riverside and from all over the world. God provided Zoom to be the medium through which we communicated live on video and audio. I could be "virtually" present in many countries of the world at the same time, from the United States to Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Though I see my fellow Riversiders every Sunday, I will keep praying for "my other flock," the students who participated from all other countries. I pray for each one of

the students who graduated from this training to be faithful to God and to Christ in their service in the local church.

Conclusion

As mentioned in chapter 1, the church is not only the locus of leadership but also the vehicle of salvation and blessing. The Great Commission extends to every member of the local church because every born-again Christian, as an ambassador of the kingdom, is deployed and commissioned back to the world for the purpose of the glory of God and the fulfillment of this Great Commission. This makes every believer and every member of the local church a vehicle of salvation and blessing in their own communities. They are ambassadors who will lead people to Christ by inviting them to be part of the local church family.

This entire project was created with a personal conviction that the church is a multicultural entity created by God as a vehicle of salvation as well as a genuine desire to equip leaders at Riverside Baptist Church in cross-cultural ministry. God in his mercy and providence provided the necessary resources to make this educational ministry enterprise possible even beyond the original goal of only training Riverside leaders. The implementation of this entire project was a true multicultural experience that opened my ministry horizons beyond my imagination. Additionally, all participants gained, confirmed, and renewed ministry insights that will be effectively used in the local church and beyond. For all of these reasons, to God be the glory.

APPENDIX 1

COMMITMENT CARD

This commitment card served to identify individuals willing to participate in this research project. This information helped the researcher define a group of committed participants that planned to voluntarily take the training from beginning to end.

COMMITMENT CARD

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess a general understanding of cross-cultural ministry within the local church context. This research project is being conducted by Julio Cesar Salas under the direction of the Professional Doctoral Studies office at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and again at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research. Indicate below your agreement to participate in this project.

[ ] I agree to participate.
[ ] I do not agree to participate.

Personal Identifier Number (PIN): This identifier consists in the last four digits of your cell phone number and your numeric day of birth, both together (e.g., **5764**26 where "5764" is the last four digits of your cell phone number, and "26" is your numeric day of birth). It will ensure anonymity while also allowing the opportunity to measure the results of the project.

_____ (1) last four numbers of your cell phone number

_____ (2) numeric day of birth (01–31)

Write down your entire Personal Identifier Number (PIN):

_____

Remember this PIN number. You will need it at the end of the training to complete the Post-Assessment Survey.

APPENDIX 2

PRE-TRAINING ASSESSMENT

This assessment was designed to measure the general understanding of cross-cultural ministry within the local church context of Riverside Baptist Church, Miami, Florida. This assessment was administered prior to the implementation of the training in cross-cultural ministry skills.

CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY SKILLS PRE-TRAINING ASSESSMENT

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess a general understanding of cross-cultural ministry within the local church context. This research project is being conducted by Julio Cesar Salas under the direction of the Professional Doctoral Studies office at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and again at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses.

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

This cross-cultural survey consists of a set of preliminary questions and a set of cross-cultural questions. Each question item has 6 answer options to choose from. Choose the option of your choice accordingly whether you Agree or Disagree. The preliminary questions should take less than 5 minutes to complete. The cross-cultural questions may take another 5 minutes to complete. Read carefully and answer as accurate as possible. After each question is answered, please click on the blue button below to go to the next page or question.

PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

This brief section gathers demographic data of the participants. Please select your answer. All information provided remains confidential.

1. What is your age group? (Participants 18 years old and older only)
   ___ Under 30
   ___31 to 40
   ___41 to 50
   ___51 to 60
   ___61 and over

2. What is your gender?
   ___Male
   ___Female

3. What is your ethnicity?
   ___ White / Caucasian / European
   ___ Black / African American / African Descent
   ___ Asian
   ___ Middle Eastern
   ___ Hispanic / Latin American
   ___ Native American
   ___ Other

4. During my childhood and early teens, I was raised:
   ___ In the United States of America
   ___ In my native country and city
   ___ In multiple cities and countries
   ___ N/A

5. My native language is:
   ___English
   ___Spanish
   ___Portuguese
   ___Creole
   ___French
   ___Chinese
   ___Arabic
   ___Other

6. In addition to my native language, I can speak a second language:
   ___Yes
   ___ No
   ___ N/A

7. Is the city where you currently live considered a multi-cultural city?
   Multi-cultural or Cosmopolitan city: A place where peoples of many cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, customs, backgrounds, languages, and beliefs live together):
   ___Yes
   ___ No
   ___ N/A
   ___ I don't know

8. At work or school (or any other place), I interact with people of other languages, ethnicities, and/or nationalities:
   ___Yes
   ___ No
   ___ N/A

PERSONAL FAITH / CHURCH / RELIGIOUS ASSESSMENT

This brief section gathers information on your personal faith, church, and religious views.

1. I have repented of my sin and trusted my Lord Jesus Christ for my salvation:
   ___Yes
   ___ No
   ___ N/A

2. Are you a member of Riverside Baptist Church of Miami?
   ___Yes
   ___ No
   ___ I am an attendee
   ___ I am a member of a church outside of the USA
   ___ N/A

3. If not a member of Riverside Baptist Church of Miami, enter the city, state, and country where your church is located:
   _____

4. My role in the church is:
   ___Pastor
   ___ Elder
   ___ Deacon
   ___ Sunday School Teacher
   ___ Small Group Leader
   ___ Church Staff
   ___ Ministry Director
   ___ Volunteer
   ___ I am a Christian entrepreneur or a leader in my local community
   ___ Other

PART 2: CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY QUESTIONS

This section gathers information on your understanding of cross-cultural interaction. Please answer the following questions by placing a checkmark in the box that most closely represents your current practices or beliefs.

SECTION 1: THE CHURCH – CROSS-CULTURAL - ECCLESIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. The church is by God's design a multicultural institution ordained by God:
   - SD = Strongly Disagree
   - D = Disagree
   - DS = Disagree Somewhat
   - AS = Agree Somewhat
   - A = Agree
   - SA = Strongly Agree

2. Local churches in cosmopolitan or multicultural cities are to engage with the people of other cultural backgrounds:
   - SD = Strongly Disagree
   - D = Disagree
   - DS = Disagree Somewhat
   - AS = Agree Somewhat
   - A = Agree
   - SA = Strongly Agree

3. Local churches should only be composed of people of the same language:
   - SD = Strongly Disagree
   - D = Disagree
   - DS = Disagree Somewhat
   - AS = Agree Somewhat
   - A = Agree
   - SA = Strongly Agree

4. Every local church regardless of their size should make efforts to accommodate individuals of other cultures:
   - SD = Strongly Disagree
   - D = Disagree
   - DS = Disagree Somewhat
   - AS = Agree Somewhat
   - A = Agree
   - SA = Strongly Agree

SECTION 2: SHARING THE GOSPEL

5. I have shared the gospel with an individual from another culture:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

6. I don't feel confident to share the gospel with someone from another culture or religion:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

SECTION 3: CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY TEAMS PERSPECTIVE

7. My ministry team is composed of individuals of different ethnic background, culture, nation, and/or language:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

8. I feel I understand well my ministry team:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

9. I feel I am equipped to serve in cross-cultural ministry in my local church:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

10. I find it enjoyable sharing Christ with people of other cultures:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

SECTION 4: CROSS-CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH

11. The church will benefit from having a multiculturally diverse group of people?

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

12. It is necessary to have a rich cultural diversity that participates actively in the local church

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

13. I am open to learn from individuals from other cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, languages:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

14. Cultural diversity is necessary to reach peoples of the cosmopolitan or multi-cultural city where I live:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

15. The city where I live is cosmopolitan: multicultural, multiethnic, and multilanguage:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

SECTION 5: CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION

16. I feel I need to learn more about cross-cultural relations and ministry:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

17. I am really interested in learning another language or engaging in another culture for ministry purposes:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

18. I feel local churches should only be of one language:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

19. I believe my church possess a healthy corporate culture that promotes cross-cultural fellowship among members and that fellowship is reflected in the way ministry is promoted across the board:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

20. Peoples of all nations, languages, ethnicities, nations have equal worth and dignity before God:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

21. Local churches in cosmopolitan or multi-cultural cities are to engage in local missions:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

22. I believe ministry in my local church should be done only in my native language:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

APPENDIX 3

POST-TRAINING ASSESSMENT ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

After the training, participants completed a post-training assessment consisting of the same twenty-two questions as in the pre-training assessment. In addition, participants were offered an opportunity to evaluate the class and instructor and provide narrative feedback. This appendix contains the fourteen additional questions in the post-training assessment.

POST-TRAINING ASSESSMENT ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS
CLASS AND INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

23. I feel I need to learn more about cross-cultural relations and ministry:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

24. My theological understanding of the church has increased
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

25. My understanding of the human heart has increased
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

26. My biblical understanding of cross-cultural ministry has increased
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

27. I believe the insights offered in this course will help me improve my leadership skills in my ministry
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

28. I gained insight in how to lead, motivate and disciple ministry teams
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

29. My insight on Discipleship has increased
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

30. I gained new insight on meaningful Educational Ministry
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

31. I gained insight on how to disciple different age-group ministries in the local church
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

32. Overall, this class provided valuable insight that will be helpful in various areas of ministry and in my personal life
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

33. This training on cross-cultural ministry was blessing to me:
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

34. The instructor showed proficiency in the different subject matter that were taught
    - SD = Strongly Disagree
    - D = Disagree
    - DS = Disagree Somewhat
    - AS = Agree Somewhat
    - A = Agree
    - SA = Strongly Agree

35. I feel I need to learn more about cross-cultural relations and ministry:
    - Yes
    - No

36. Comments and Suggestions (optional)
    I would love to hear your feedback. Feel free to write your comments and suggestions. This section is optional. This question cannot be left blank. If you don't have any comments or suggestions, you may just type N/A:
    _____

APPENDIX 4

PRE-TRAINING ASSESSMENT SCORES

Table A1. Pre-training assessment scores, questions 1 to 12

Participant	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**	**Q10**	**Q11**	**Q12**
EN-01-01	5	5	1	5	5	5	6	5	5	4	5	5
EN-02-02	6	5	1	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
EN-03-03	1	1	2	5	6	5	5	5	4	4	5	5
EN-04-04	6	6	3	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5
EN-05-05	6	5	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
EN-06-06	6	6	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6
EN-07-07	6	2	2	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5
EN-08-08	6	6	1	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6
EN-09-09	6	2	1	6	6	6	5	6	3	5	6	4
EN-10-10	6	6	2	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6
EN-11-11	6	6	2	6	6	5	1	5	5	5	6	6
ES-01-12	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
ES-02-13	6	6	2	5	5	3	5	4	4	3	5	6
ES-03-14	6	6	1	6	6	6	5	5	5	6	5	5
ES-04-15	6	6	3	5	6	5	6	5	6	5	6	6
ES-05-16	6	6	1	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6
ES-06-17	6	5	1	6	5	5	6	6	4	6	6	6
ES-07-18	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	6	5	5
ES-08-19	6	6	1	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6
ES-09-20	6	6	1	6	6	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
Mean	5.60	5.00	1.70	5.55	5.50	4.75	5.05	5.05	4.95	5.20	5.45	5.40
Mode	6	6	1	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5
Median	6.00	6.00	1.00	6.00	5.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.50	5.00
Std Dev	1.14	1.56	1.03	0.51	0.51	1.21	1.10	0.51	0.83	0.83	0.60	0.60

Table A2. Pre-training assessment scores, questions 13 to 22

Participant	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	SUM
EN-01-01	5	5	6	5	4	1	4	6	6	1	99
EN-02-02	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	2	102
EN-03-03	5	4	6	6	3	1	5	6	5	2	91
EN-04-04	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	5	2	101
EN-05-05	5	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	5	2	98
EN-06-06	6	6	6	6	6	1	5	6	6	1	110
EN-07-07	6	6	6	5	5	2	4	6	6	2	105
EN-08-08	6	6	6	5	5	1	6	6	6	1	113
EN-09-09	6	4	6	6	5	1	2	6	4	1	97
EN-10-10	6	6	6	5	5	1	6	6	6	1	115
EN-11-11	6	6	6	5	5	2	5	6	5	1	106
ES-01-12	5	5	6	5	5	5	4	6	5	1	103
ES-02-13	5	5	6	6	6	3	5	6	6	2	104
ES-03-14	5	5	6	5	4	5	5	6	6	1	110
ES-04-15	6	6	6	5	4	1	6	6	6	1	112
ES-05-16	6	6	6	5	5	1	5	6	6	1	112
ES-06-17	5	5	5	4	5	2	5	1	2	2	98
ES-07-18	6	5	5	5	5	3	6	6	5	3	106
ES-08-19	6	6	6	6	6	1	6	6	6	1	112
ES-09-20	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	6	5	3	109
Mean	5.50	5.30	5.75	5.20	4.65	2.15	4.95	5.60	5.30	1.55	105.15
Mode	5	5	6	5	5	1	5	6	6	1	
Median	5.50	5.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	6.00	5.50	1.00	
Std Dev	0.51	0.66	0.44	0.52	1.04	1.42	0.94	1.14	0.98	0.69	

APPENDIX 5

POST-TRAINING ASSESSMENT SCORES

Table A3. Post-training assessment scores, questions 1 to 12

Participant	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**	**Q10**	**Q11**	**Q12**
EN-01-01	6	6	1	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	6	4
EN-02-02	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
EN-03-03	6	6	1	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6
EN-04-04	6	6	1	6	5	3	5	5	5	5	6	5
EN-05-05	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
EN-06-06	6	6	1	6	6	1	6	5	6	6	6	6
EN-07-07	6	6	1	6	5	4	6	6	6	5	6	6
EN-08-08	6	6	1	6	6	5	6	5	5	5	6	6
EN-09-09	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	5	4	5	5	5
EN-10-10	1	1	1	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
EN-11-11	6	6	4	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	6	5
ES-01-12	6	6	3	6	6	5	6	5	5	5	5	5
ES-02-13	6	6	1	6	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	6
ES-03-14	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6
ES-04-15	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6
ES-05-16	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
ES-06-17	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	5	6
ES-07-18	6	5	2	6	5	5	6	5	5	6	6	6
ES-08-19	1	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
ES-09-20	6	5	4	4	6	5	5	6	6	6	4	4
Mean	5.50	5.65	1.45	5.90	5.65	5.15	5.85	5.50	5.50	5.55	5.75	5.60
Mode	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Median	6.00	6.00	1.00	6.00	6.00	5.50	6.00	5.50	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
Std Dev	1.54	1.14	1.00	0.45	0.49	1.27	0.37	0.51	0.69	0.51	0.55	0.68

Table A4. Post-training assessment scores, questions 13 to 22

Participant	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	SUM
EN-01-01	5	6	6	6	4	1	6	6	6	2	109
EN-02-02	6	6	6	6	5	1	6	6	5	2	116
EN-03-03	6	6	6	5	5	1	6	6	6	1	113
EN-04-04	5	5	6	5	4	4	5	6	5	2	105
EN-05-05	6	6	6	5	6	1	6	6	6	1	116
EN-06-06	6	6	6	5	6	1	6	6	6	1	110
EN-07-07	6	6	6	5	6	2	6	6	6	5	117
EN-08-08	6	6	6	6	6	1	6	6	6	1	113
EN-09-09	6	6	6	5	5	2	4	6	5	1	107
EN-10-10	6	6	6	4	6	1	6	6	6	1	104
EN-11-11	6	6	6	4	4	3	6	6	2	2	111
ES-01-12	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	2	113
ES-02-13	6	6	6	5	6	1	6	6	6	2	113
ES-03-14	6	6	6	5	4	1	6	6	6	1	112
ES-04-15	6	6	6	4	5	1	5	6	6	1	111
ES-05-16	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	6	6	4	122
ES-06-17	6	5	5	5	4	2	6	2	2	2	103
ES-07-18	6	6	6	5	6	2	6	6	5	2	113
ES-08-19	6	6	6	6	6	1	5	6	6	1	111
ES-09-20	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	115
Mean	5.85	5.85	5.95	5.10	5.20	1.95	5.65	5.80	5.35	1.95	111.70
Mode	6	6	6	5	6	1	6	6	6	1	
Median	6.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	1.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	2.00	
Std Dev	0.37	0.37	0.22	0.64	0.83	1.36	0.59	0.89	1.23	1.28	

APPENDIX 6

PRE- AND POST-TRAINING MEAN SCORES

Table A5. Pre- and post-training mean scores

No.	Question	Pre-training Mean	Post-training Mean	Difference
1	The church is by God's design a multicultural institution ordained by God.	5.60	5.50	–0.10
2	Local churches in cosmopolitan or multicultural cities are to engage with the people of other cultural backgrounds.	5.00	5.65	+0.65
3	Local churches should only be composed of people of the same language.	1.70	1.45	–0.25
4	Every local church regardless of their size should make efforts to accommodate individuals of other cultures.	5.55	5.90	+0.35
5	I have shared the gospel with an individual from another culture.	5.50	5.65	+0.15
6	I don’t feel confident to share the gospel with someone from another culture or religion.	4.75	5.15	+0.40
7	My ministry team is composed of individuals of different ethnic background, culture, nation, and/or language.	5.05	5.85	+0.80
8	I feel I understand well my ministry team.	5.05	5.50	+0.45
9	I feel I am equipped to serve in cross-cultural ministry in my local church.	4.95	5.50	+0.55
10	I find it enjoyable sharing Christ with people of other cultures.	5.20	5.55	+0.35
11	The church will benefit from having a multiculturally diverse group of people.	5.45	5.75	+0.30
12	It is necessary to have a rich cultural diversity that participates actively in the local church.	5.40	5.60	+0.20
13	I am open to learn from individuals from other cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and languages.	5.50	5.85	+0.35
14	Cultural diversity is necessary to reach peoples of the cosmopolitan or multi-cultural city where I live.	5.30	5.85	+0.55

No.	Question	Pre-training Mean	Post-training Mean	Difference
15	The city where I live is cosmopolitan: multicultural, multiethnic, and multilanguage.	5.75	5.95	+0.20
16	I feel I need to learn more about cross-cultural relations and ministry.	5.20	5.10	–0.10
17	I am really interested in learning another language or engaging in another culture for ministry purposes.	4.65	5.20	+0.55
18	I feel local churches should only be of one language.	2.15	1.95	–0.20
19	I believe my church possesses a healthy corporate culture that promotes cross-cultural fellowship among members and that fellowship is reflected in the way ministry is promoted across the board.	4.95	5.65	+0.70
20	Peoples of all nations, languages, ethnicities, nations have equal worth and dignity before God.	5.60	5.80	+0.20
21	Local churches in cosmopolitan or multi-cultural cities are to engage in local missions.	5.30	5.35	+0.05
22	I believe ministry in my local church should be done only in my native language.	1.55	1.95	+0.40
	Total	**105.15**	**111.70**	**+6.55**

APPENDIX 7

T-TEST RESULTS

Table A6. Results of *t*-test for dependent samples

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Total	*Post-Test Total*
Mean	105.15	111.7
Variance	42.23947368	21.27368421
Observations	20	20
Pearson Correlation	0.13852967	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	19	
t stat	–3.94235478	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000437014	
t Critical one-tail	1.729132812	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000874027	
t Critical two-tail	2.093024054	

APPENDIX 8

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

This curriculum evaluation rubric was utilized by an expert panel of leaders at RBC who also oversaw the curriculum development. The rubric measured the biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality of the proposed curriculum.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC					
Teaching Material Evaluation Tool					
1 = Insufficient 2 = Requires attention 3 = Sufficient 4 = Exemplary					
Criteria	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Comments**
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound and faithful in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Each lesson was consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.					
Each lesson was consistent with the Riverside's mission statement and values.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum is Christ-centered, Bible-based, grace-filled, and mission-minded.					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical and theological understanding of cross-cultural ministry.					
The curriculum helps attendees become better cross-cultural ministry leaders.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					

Practicality					
The curriculum clearly equips participants how to engage in cross-cultural ministry.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.					

Other Comments:

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 9

CURRICULUM RUBRIC EVALUATION RESPONSES

Evaluator 1: Pastor Otto Fernandez
Role: Senior Pastor, Riverside Baptist Church
Date: June 17, 2022
Rubric Scores:
Biblical Accuracy: 4/4
Scope: 4/4
Pedagogy: 4/4
Practicality: 4/4
Comments: Julio has done an excellent job in putting this curriculum together. It is in-depth and practical. I look forward to seeing the results we will see in our church.

Evaluator 2: Pastor Al Fernandez
Role: Regional Catalyst-Southeast Region, Florida Baptist Convention
Date: June 22, 2022
Rubric Scores:
Biblical Accuracy: 4/4
Scope: 4/4
Pedagogy: 4/4
Practicality: 4/4
Comments: Excellent work and practically [*sic*] church training application.

Evaluator 3: Pastor Jamil Ribeiro
Role: Hispanic-Brazilian Ministry Pastor, Riverside Baptist Church
Date: June 29, 2022
Rubric Scores:
Biblical Accuracy: 4/4
Scope: 4/4
Pedagogy: 4/4
Practicality: 4/4
Comments: NA

APPENDIX 10

INVITATIONS TO CROSS-CULTURAL
MINISTRY SKILLS TRAINING

Friends,

I would like to commend to you a great online training opportunity that is coming up soon. Julio C. Salas, member and Director of Connect groups at the centennial Riverside Baptist Church, is offering a 4-Session CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP TRAINING that will be of great benefit to you as you share Christ and minister among the diverse population of South Florida. This training will be offered both in English and Spanish in two separate **fully online** training dates.

The training in **English** begins on Tuesday August 23rd at 7:30 PM for the next 4 Tuesdays. The same training in **Spanish** begins on Wednesday August 24th at 8 PM for the following 4 Wednesdays.

As a blessing to you, **there is no charge for this training**. You may sign up for English or Spanish training. You may share this information with as many Christians as you like whether they live in Miami, or in any other city.

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, here is the information:

TRAINING IN ENGLISH:
CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP TRAINING (ENGLISH)

Date and Time: Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022, for 4 Tuesdays at 7:30 PM
Where: Fully Online via Zoom and YouTube Live (private link)
To register: Click https://www.americaacademics.com/Cross-Cultural-Church-Leadership
Completion Certificate: Sent electronically via e-mail at the end of training.
Learn: Multicultural Ecclesiology, Understanding of human behavior, Organizational Leadership, Leadership of Ministry Teams, Multicultural Discipleship, Principles of Christian Education. All within the context of a multicultural church.

ENTRENAMIENTO EN ESPAÑOL:
TALLER DE LIDERAZGO ECLESIAL CROSS-CULTURAL (SPANISH)

Fecha y Hora: Miércoles, Agosto 24, 2022, por los próximos 4 Miercoles at 8:00 PM
Dónde: Completamente en Línea por Zoom and YouTube en Vivo (enlace privado)
Para registrarse: Click https://www.americaacademics.com/Liderazgo-Eclesial-Cross-Cultural
Certificado de Término: Enviado electrónicamente vía email al finalizar el entrenamiento.
Aprenda: Eclesiología Multicultural, Comprensión del Comportamiento Humano,

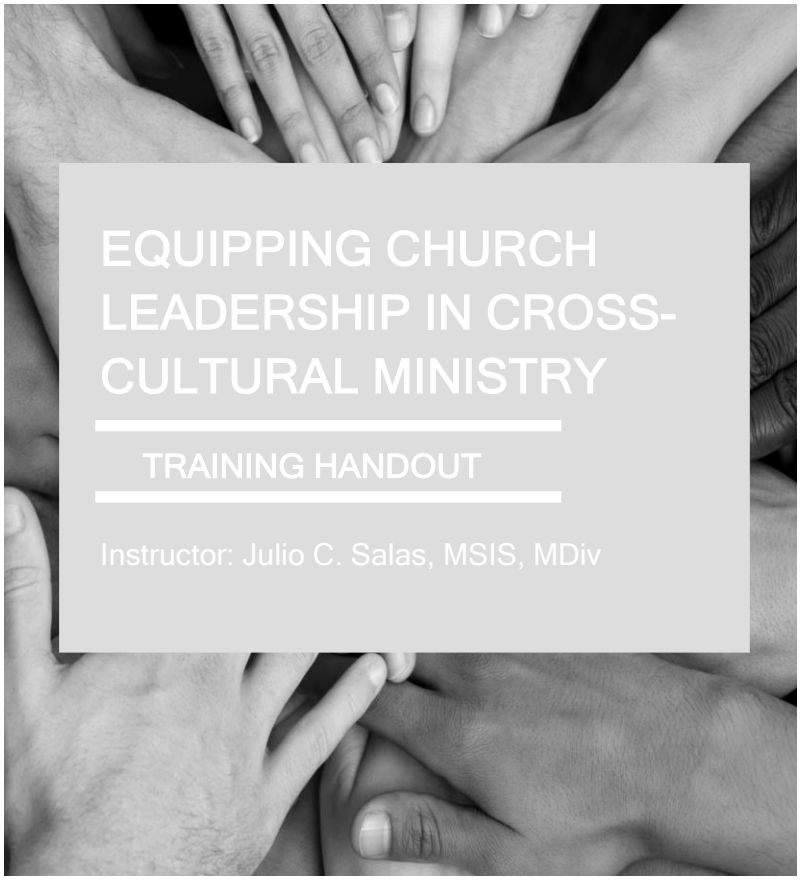
Liderazgo Organizacional, Liderazgo de Equipos Ministeriales, Discipulado Multicultural, y Principios de Educación Cristiana. Todo dentro del contexto de una iglesia multicultural.

God bless you as you seek to expand God's Kingdom.

APPENDIX 11

CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY SKILLS CURRICULUM

The following handout was provided to the English-language cohort enrolled in the cross-cultural ministry skills training. This represents the substance of the eight-lesson biblical curriculum delivered in four sessions over a four-week period. This curriculum was reproduced in Spanish for the Spanish-language cohort. A copy of the Spanish-language curriculum is available by requesting more information from the author at http://www.americaacademics.com/contact.


EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY
TRAINING HANDOUT
Instructor: Julio C. Salas, MSIS, MDiv

About the Instructor

Magister Julio C. Salas, MSIS, MDIV is a Southern Baptist Licensed Minister, Seminary instructor, Consultant in Organizational Leadership, Educational Systems and Systems Integration. He is a doctoral candidate in Leadership and Educational Ministry at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the flagship and oldest seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention founded in 1859.

Mr. Salas holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree majoring in Information Systems, as well as a Master of Science in Information Systems, both from the Florida International University (School of Business) in the city of Miami in the United States of America. America. He also holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky (USA). He is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Educational Ministry with a concentration in Leadership from the same educational institution.

Julio C. Salas brings twenty-five combined years of integrated professional and ministry experience in various areas of church ministry and service. This includes Directional Leadership, Leadership development and coaching, Ministry Teams, training and coaching church personnel, Christian Education, Discipleship, Volunteer Management and Organization, Ministry Educational Systems Integration, Church Management Systems, Church Information Systems and IT, Church Online integration among other areas of church leadership and management.

Besides serving in ministry, Mr. Salas has had the privilege of serving and pouring his knowledge and experience in other for-and non-profit organizations from various industries and sizes including public and private sectors, both in English and Spanish.

His professional experience includes Corporate, Finance, Small and Medium Size Business, Retail, Online, School System, Police (Law Enforcement), Jail, Library System, Election Systems, Cruise Ships, TV Channels, E-Commerce among others. From 2004 to 2010 he was a member of the Miami-Dade County Advisory Board, a position he held providing business perspectives for the best local work for businesses in Miami.

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Julio is married to his beautiful wife Dady with whom he shares a romance and life adventure. As the wise King Solomon said some 900 years before Christ: “Who can find a virtuous woman? Because her esteem far exceeds that of precious stones. (Proverbs 31:10-31).

You can contact Julio C. Salas through his website at www.americaacademics.com

Preface

Working on this cross-cultural training has given me tremendous joy and satisfaction (Ps 119:72). As the material gained substance, the providence of God became manifest through the spiritual support of wise men and women who helped me through my research journey (Rom 8:28). As the research started to build momentum, a growing number of ministry leaders became interested and started to offer valuable insight and even book recommendations to help expand my knowledge. Such contributions not only provided great academic input for study and theological reflection, but also provided the collective wisdom and practical insight needed for success (Prov 11:14). These men and women were instrumental in my experiential understanding of leadership at the local church level. Such collective insights on leadership and cross-cultural ministry were simply providential as they became instrumental in the process of developing sections of this ministry training. I am grateful to God for these amazing brothers and sisters in Christ. For this reason, to God be the glory (1 Cor 10:31)!

I pray that this ministry research training serves as a source of knowledge and understanding both of culture and cross-cultural ministry, whether we do ministry "reaching the nations" within the boundaries of our local contexts, we live in a cosmopolitan city, or we are just trying to reach the nations beyond our local contexts through traditional international missionary efforts to other nations.

And, as in the early days of the church after Pentecost when the church "filled Jerusalem with the gospel" (Acts 5:28), it is my genuine desire that the church of the present day may fill the nations with the glorious message of the gospel through a better understanding of cross-cultural ministry. For these reasons and many more, to God be the honor and the glory! Amen!

Julio C. Salas

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Dedications

For the glory of God. The purpose of this ministry training is to advance the kingdom of God locally by equipping and empowering church leadership in cross-cultural ministry.

To my family

To my church family

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Special Gratitude

Special thanks to the leadership of the centenarian Riverside Baptist Church of Miami and its Senior Pastor Otto Fernandez.

Special gratitude to Iglesia Bautista Riverside, the Hispanic/Brazilian ministry of RBC known as Riverside Hispanos and its Pastor Jamil Ribeiro.

To all of those who support my ministry.

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Foreword

The church is, by God's design, a multicultural institution ordained and commissioned by Christ to make disciples of all nations. This requires Christians to step out of their comfort zones and go beyond their own cultural settings to proclaim the gospel to people of other cultures (Acts 1:1-8). Ultimately, the church will be "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7:9).

If the church is to effectively proclaim the gospel, it must engage in cross-cultural ministry. This engagement must be modeled by church leadership to the rest of the church body. However, leaders cannot teach or engage in something they have not yet mastered. Jesus started his ministry with a group of twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-16), but he also equipped another seventy-two disciples to go two by two, "whom he sent ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1). Jesus invested time equipping and empowering disciples before they were commissioned to engage in ministry. We must learn by spending time with Christ, exercising our spiritual gifts, and reflecting on and learning from our past successes and failures so that we can begin to engage with people of other cultures.

God is revealing a new season of ministry, and the church of our days must continue to form cross-cultural bridges. The more bridges we build, the more doors God may open for us. The more doors God opens, the more opportunities for evangelism and discipleship. The more souls reached and saved, the more born-again Christians. These Christians will be the leaders who take the church of our days into the future with a mission to bring more people to repentance and faith in Christ. This ultimately brings glory to God.

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Contents

About the Instructor 2
Preface 4
Dedications 5
Special Gratitude 6
Foreword 7
Introduction 10
Lecture 1: The Theological Basis for Equipping Church Leadership in Cross-Cultural Ministry 12
- Introduction 12
- God Loves the World and Wants People of Every Nation, Tribe, and Language to Come to Faith in Christ 14
- The Church has been commissioned by Christ to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples 21
- The Local Church Must Be Equipped to Effectively Engage in Cross-Cultural Ministry as It Makes Disciples of All Nations 26

Lecture 2: The threefold nature of the human heart as responding through cognition, affection, and volition and its influence in cultural worldview 33
- Understanding the Dynamics of the Heart 33
- The Connection of the Human Heart to Culture 35

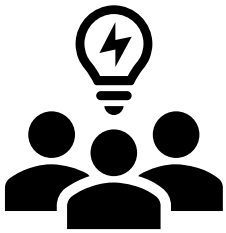
Lecture 3: A Biblical understanding of Cross-Cultural Ministry in the Local Church 36
- Ministering in a Cross-Cultural Context 36
- Entrusted with the Gospel 37
- Commanded to go to the Nations and make Disciples 40
- Understanding the Purpose, Identity, and Mission of the Church 40

Lecture 4: Developing leadership skills for Cross-Cultural Ministry 43
- Applying Leadership Theory to Cross-Cultural Ministry 44
- Servant Leadership 47

Lecture 5: Leadership and discipleship of cross-cultural ministry teams 49

Lecture 6: Principles of biblical discipleship and spiritual parenting in multicultural contexts 52
A God-Centered Vision of Discipleship 52
A Biblical Perspective of Spiritual Parenting 53
Growing in Christ through Practicing Spiritual Disciplines 54
Lecture 7: Equipping the Church in Meaningful Educational Ministry 56
Examining Educational Philosophy 56
The Science of Learning 57
Lecture 8: Educational ministry and discipleship in various age-group ministries within the multicultural local church 59
Educational Ministry in the Church 59
Conclusion 61
Bibliography 63

10



Introduction

The church has always been a multicultural institution by virtue of its unique mandate given by our Lord Jesus Christ, who commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19 NIV). This mandate has been God's plan "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). God promised Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through his seed (Gen 22:18; Gal 3:6-9). The church is the fulfillment of this glorious promise. As such, the mission of the church is to make disciples of all nations by faithfully proclaiming the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, as we "teach them to obey everything He has commanded" (Matt 28:20). Consequently, we must recognize that God has willed and commissioned his church to engage in cross-cultural ministry with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all people. As Duane Elmer says, "God's grace is present in all people and cultures." God yearns for everyone to be saved (1 Tim 2:4).

The church encompasses peoples of all nations and ethnicities. God is worshipped in many languages and cultural expressions. The Holy Spirit is actively convicting people of sin even in remote places where the church has not yet arrived. The use of technology is helping to spread the gospel and disciple people in places where it is still not possible to plant a church, thus making cross-cultural interaction possible. By God's design, the church is a true multicultural entity. However, much of the Christian universe remains culturally homogeneous. Much work remains to equip the church, especially its leaders, to reach people of all nations and cultures.

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In the early days of the church, Christ sent the church to the nations; today, immigration creates the phenomenon of the nations coming to the church. Hence, churches are called to become more cross-culturally sensitive if they are to become more ministry effective. Though demographic shifts present great opportunities for church growth and expansion, these shifts also present great challenges for church leadership. God is stretching our comfort zones. As such, church leaders must quickly learn how to serve peoples of different countries, cultures, languages, and ethnic backgrounds, not only for the purposes of evangelism and discipleship, but also for the purpose of future strategic missionary efforts.

Cross-cultural ministry is one of the most complex efforts of the church. The church must continue to "learn to relearn" from prior experiences and case studies, as cultural values, social norms, and trends are constantly changing. Ministry strategies that were effective fifty years ago are no longer effective or need adjustment. Church leadership must invest time and effort to develop strategies for building the cultural bridges that will allow us to go to the nations. Pastors, staff, lay leaders, and local church members must be trained to be culturally sensitive in order to effectively interact with people of other cultures. Secular organizations are making focused efforts to understand and even master the art of cross-cultural relations. How much more should the church, which Christ ordained and blessed to make disciples of all nations, be the prime source of true salvation and godly influence in the world? As Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck note in Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development, "The church should be the locus of leadership." It should take every opportunity to understand and develop cross-cultural bridges. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mat 5:13-16)

The church of Jesus Christ has a clear mission and command to fulfill the Great Commission. It has been equipped with spiritual gifts and empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to go to all of the ethne (ἔθνη), the "races, tribes, and cultures."3 As such, this ministry training will focus on equipping and empowering church leadership in cross-cultural ministry.

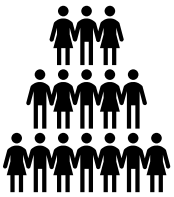
1

Lesson 1: The Theological Basis for Equipping Church Leadership in Cross-Cultural Ministry

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands."

Revelation 7:9 (NIV)

Introduction



God loves the world. He is our creator and a loving God who wants "multitudes of peoples from every nation, tribe, and language" on earth (Rev 7:9 NIV) to come to faith in Christ so they may be saved. His love for the world is such that he gave his one and only begotten son to save the world from the bondage of sin (John 3:16) and to reconcile it to himself (2 Cor 5:19). Those purchased by the blood of the Lamb not only comprise the universal church of Jesus Christ but are a diverse group of people that come from every nation, tribe, and language of the world. The church is inherently cross-cultural by design. The book of Revelation shows us the church in the future:

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands."
(Revelation 7:9 NIV)

THE CHURCH: THE VEHICLE OF SALVATION

The church is the vehicle established by Christ for the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth. This salvation is in a way contingent on the church first making disciples as it goes to the ends of the earth. As the church proclaims the gospel, God the Holy Spirit may produce belief, repentance, and new birth in the individual who hears the gospel. Thus, the church is the vehicle through which the gospel is proclaimed, and disciples are made; the Holy Spirit of God is the one who bestows new birth and salvation.

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV)

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The mission of the church is no small task. It is the proclamation of the gospel to every corner of earth so people of every nation, tribe, and language may be saved. As such, the church is a multicultural entity by virtue of its calling and nature. Paul writes that "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11 ESV). As Paul asserts at the end of this passage, the ultimate purpose of the mission of the church is the glory of God the Father.

"Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11 NIV)

THE CHURCH IN OUR DAYS

Today, the mission of the church has not changed from that of the early church: we must continue to engage with peoples of other cultures so they may hear the message of the gospel and become disciples of Christ. This requires every ministry area of the local church to be well-prepared to take on the challenges they may encounter as they learn to engage cross-culturally.

FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Finally, it is important to understand that everything revolves around the glory of God. **The church has been saved for the glory of God** and now proclaims the gospel and makes disciples for his glory. If the church is to engage in cross-cultural ministry and fulfill the Great Commission, it is ultimately for the glory of God.

ON THIS LECTURE

This chapter will explore the biblical and theological reasons for cross-cultural ministry within the local church. **First**, we will contemplate the love of God for the world and why he wants people to come to faith in Christ. **Second**, we will understand why the church has been commissioned by Christ to be the vehicle of salvation for the proclamation of the gospel and for making disciples. **Third**, we will study why the local church must be equipped to effectively engage in cross-cultural ministry. This ministry is for the glory of God.

God Loves the World and Wants People of Every Nation, Tribe, and Language to Come to Faith in Christ

It would be difficult to grasp the love of God for people without first trying to understand his attributes and character. As this lecture unfolds, it will become necessary for the reader to accept the transcendence of God, who is beyond human comprehension and experience. Human beings cannot find God without his first making himself known to them. He has revealed himself through his general revelation (what he has created and what can be perceived through the senses) and special revelation (the history of humankind

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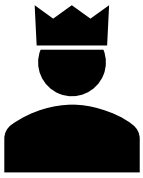
through the witness of Scripture). The God who created the peoples of every nation, tribe, and language in his own image and likeness deliberately chooses to reveal himself to them. His greatest manifestation to the world is through the person of his son Jesus Christ, who came to Earth. The author of the book of Hebrews writes, "But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe" (Heb 1:2). God reveals himself to humankind because he loves them.

THE ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTER OF GOD

It is impossible to fully comprehend the attributes and character of God. He is infinite in every way. However, what we know of him is based on his deliberate choice to reveal himself to humankind. Not only did he reveal himself through his general and special revelation, but the Bible says that God manifested himself in the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:1-2). The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (*BFM2000*) affirms that "The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being" and that "To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience."[1]

When considering the attributes and character of God, we first need to understand that they are intimately connected. While his attributes reveal his essence and personal qualities, his character reveals action—that is, the external manifestation of his essence as he reveals himself to human beings. Regarding his essence, it is important to note that God's attributes are not something added to him (or that he can obtain) or removed from him (or that he can lose) separate from his essence. Instead, he *is* each one of those attributes as part of his being and essence and sovereignly exercises them as he pleases. As such, the essence of God is not a collection of attributes, nor additions to his being.[2] A comprehensive list of



[1] Southern Baptist Convention, *Baptist Faith & Message 2000*, accessed May 4, 2022, https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/.

[2] Wayne Grudem, *Teología sistemática: Introducción a la doctrina bíblica* (Miami, FL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 168-69.

God's attributes is beyond the scope of this training. However, these attributes include love, holiness, blessing, truth, mercy, knowledge, omnipresence, eternity, omnipresence, light, spirit, and wisdom.[3] Wayne Grudem says that God's character is manifested to human beings through the witness of Scripture, general revelation, and personal experience.[4] For example, one of the attributes of God is that he is love. As John writes that "God is love" (1 John 4:16), we see his character in action as Jesus says that "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45). In this example, human beings can learn about the love of God through Scripture (special revelation). This revelation is confirmed as the world is observed through the human senses, e.g., God causing his sun to rise and sending his rain (general revelation). Finally, all human beings can enjoy the benefits of the sun and rain for light, water, heat, and harvesting of crops (personal experience and benefit). The church is the means ordained by Christ to teach the nations about God, his love, and his desire that they come to faith in Christ so they may be saved.

GOD DOES NOT HAVE LOVE—HE IS LOVE AND LOVES THE WORLD

It is impossible for human beings to fully comprehend God's love in all its splendor. Love is his essence. He holds the universe and all things together because he is love and because he loves. No doubt, love is the greatest attribute of God. As Katherine Sonderegger articulates, "Love is the keystone of the Divine Perfections, we should say, the Attribute that holds together, sums up, and makes lovely the entire Divine Nature, all its Properties and its Glory."[5] However, the love of God cannot be understood in human terms. His love must be understood in light of what he has revealed about himself in Scripture. The Bible takes absolute preeminence. Grudem writes, "So we must learn from observing how God acts in

[3] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 168-69.

[4] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 151-52.

[5] Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1, The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 469.

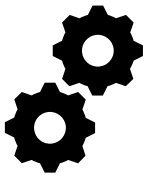
all of Scripture and from the other attributes of God that are given in Scripture, as well as from our own real-life experiences of God's love, if we are to refine our idea of God's love in an appropriate way and avoid misunderstanding."[6] In this regard, we must assert that because God is love, and love is one of his attributes, it is his character to love.

Because love is his very essence, we are better able to understand John 3:16. Jesus tells Nicodemus that "God so loved the world (his attribute of love), that he gave his only son (his character becoming effective) that whoever believes in him (condition to obtain benefit) shall not perish but have eternal life (benefit)." Similarly, Paul, writing to the church in Rome, says that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). MacArthur effectively expresses this in his book *The Vanishing Conscience*: "The cross is proof of the immense love of God."[7]

In the context of this ministry training, we conclude that God loves the people of all nations and tribes because he is love and because he loves. His love is manifested through his desire that people come to faith in Christ so they may not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). As the vehicle of the proclamation of the gospel, the church must do its best to love as God loves, both within the local church and to the nations.

PERFECT LOVE, PERFECT JUSTICE, PERFECT MERCY

People often misunderstand the love of God, asking, "If God is love, then why would a loving God condemn anyone?" For this reason, it is important to understand that God's love is not the same as human love. God's love is complete and perfect. The human understanding of love is incomplete, imperfect, and tainted by sin. Humans tend to confuse God's love. Katherine Sonderegger questions "if we haven't reduced transcendent love to philantropia or love for humanity."[8] A similar thought is offered by Grudem, when speaking of the love of God: "So



[6] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 159.

[7] John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 98, Kindle.

[8] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, 478.

we must learn to see God act through the Bible and the other attributes of God that are given to us in the Bible, as well as from our experiences of God's love in our lives, in order to refine our idea of God's love in an appropriate manner so we may avoid misunderstandings."[9] God is indeed a loving God. He loves the world so much that he gave his own son (John 3:16). However, love is not the only attribute of God. He is also just and must punish sin. Anything that is not perfectly aligned with his character and his divine dignity is inherently sinful. A perfect God cannot tolerate or associate with anything that is less than perfect.

God is lovingly just; therefore, he must punish sin. However, in his sovereignty, he also extends grace and mercy. When Adam and Eve chose to rebel against him, they deserved death. Instead, he extended grace and mercy and offered a "bridge of salvation" so Adam and Even were spared immediate death. He used animal skins to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness, providing a temporary covering of their sin and foreshadowing the perfect sacrifice of Christ. MacArthur says, "When humankind fell, the love of God was extended in mercy to his fallen creatures."[10] Human beings are totally dependent on God's unmerited love and mercy.

MERCY IS A MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE

God manifests his love through his mercy. God loves all people of the world regardless of their nation, tribe, and language. They are all precious to him. There is a higher sense of worth in human beings than in any other creature. Though birds are valuable to God, human beings are more valuable. In Matthew 6:26, Jesus says, "Look at the birds

[9] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 150-51.

[10] John MacArthur, *Comentario MacArthur del Nuevo Testamento: Mateo* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017), chap. 17, "Benditos los Compasivos," sec. 6, "La Fuente de Misericordia," para. 4, Kindle.

of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" Human beings are extremely valuable to God. He may manifest his love through his mercy, as he demonstrated when he spared Nineveh from destruction (Jonah 4:10-11). He may also show his love through his patience with the world. Peter writes, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). The condition to accept God's mercy and become recipients of all its benefits is to repent and come to faith in Christ. John says in his Gospel, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). The church is the chosen instrument for the proclamation of God's mercy and salvation.

HUMAN BEINGS ARE THE CROWN OF ALL CREATION AND THE CHURCH THE FIRSTFRUITS

God created the world with human beings in mind. Interestingly, human beings were created last, after all other creation was first made. Though he made everything for his own glory, God made the earth with human beings in mind so they would manifest his glory through ruling over his creation. John MacArthur writes, "The creation of the human race was the central object of God's creative purpose from the beginning."[11] William MacDonald asserts that "The crown of God's work was the creation of man in His image and according to His likeness."[12]

Genesis 1 and 2 reveal that humankind was created in a different way in comparison to everything else God created. All other creation was spoken into being by God's command. Human beings, however, were formed by the hand of God as he breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. The Genesis account says, "Then the Lord God formed

[11] John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning: The Bible on Creation and the Fall of Adam* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 127, Kindle.

[12] William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), Kindle, pt. 1, "Old Testament," sec. 1, "Earth's Earliest Ages," chap. 1, "The Creation," sec. "Gen 1:26-28," para. 10.

a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). God has special love and consideration for human beings. One of the most important ways God expressed his love for human beings is in the blessings he gave them at creation. Genesis 1:28 says that "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

When it comes to love for human beings, God places them in a very special category separate from everything else, even beyond angels (2 Pet 2:4). It seems as if the worth of humankind is intimately connected to being created in the image and likeness of God and to being given commands that were not given to any other created beings. Indeed, bearing the image and likeness of God is not a small thing, especially when our creation order includes cognition, conscience, a sense of morality, reproduction, and stewardship over his entire creation. The only thing that separates human beings from animals is the image and likeness of God. Humans are the crown of his entire creation, and the church is the firstfruits of all he created. James writes of the church, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created" (Jas 1:18). God wants the church to proclaim the gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth so more firstfruits may be added to the church.

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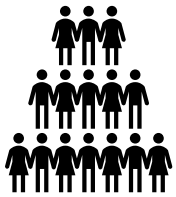
The Church has been commissioned by Christ to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples



The word for the English term church comes from the Greek *ekklēsia*, meaning "the 'congregation' or the 'assembly' of God's people."[13] Jesus Christ is the one who builds this congregation or assembly of believers (Matt 16:18). The word *ekklēsia* is not new in the New Testament (NT). It comes from the Hebrew *qahal*. The Septuagint translates *qahal* with the word *ekklesiazo*, "to summon an assembly,"[14] which ultimately is translated as *ekklesia* in the NT.[15] The study of both the Hebrew and the Greek for the word church shows us that the church is not a building or a legal entity but a congregation or assembly of individuals who gather to worship. Gregg Allison asserts in *Sojourners and Strangers*, "The term ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia) is never used in the Greek New Testament to refer to a building (not surprisingly, because the early followers of Jesus did not meet together in buildings that served solely for Christian assemblies)."[16] The church is then the congregation of those summoned by Christ to gather. Allison offers his definition of the church "as the people of God who have been saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and have been incorporated into his body through baptism with the Holy Spirit."[17] Similarly, the *BFM2000* refers to the church as local and universal; local refers to "the autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel," and universal refers to "the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."[18] Grudem offers a simple definition, "the community of all true believers of all

[13] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 854.

[14] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 854.

[15] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 858-59.

[16] Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 148, Kindle.

[17] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 61.

[18] Southern Baptist Convention, *Baptist Faith & Message 2000*.

times."[19] In all of these definitions, the church is never referred to as a building or even just a group of people who gather. Instead, the church is a group of called individuals who gather or assemble to worship God in Christ. As such, theologically, the church cannot be composed of unsaved people, even if these individuals happen to gather in a building that is called a church.

Finally, the church universal is not only "the community of all true believers of all times,"[20] but we may also enhance this definition by saying the church universal includes the community of believers of all nations, tribes, and languages. Alluding to the unity of the church, Allison offers an interesting perspective, "The fellowship and connectedness that are sensed by believers crossing into different cultures and meeting Christians from different nationalities, ethnicities, linguistic groups, socioeconomic status, political systems, educational levels, and religious backgrounds, point toward another factor enhancing unity: membership in the universal body of Christ."[21] Those individuals throughout history, no matter their ethnicity, have been called by Christ to gather and are the ones who comprise his church.

THE CHURCH: COMMISSIONED BY CHRIST

What does it mean to be commissioned? What does commission mean? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word commission as "a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties. An authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts. Authority to act for, on behalf of, or in place of another. A task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another. A group of persons directed to perform some duty."[22] Connecting these definitions with the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," we may say that our Lord Jesus Christ has conferred, authorized, commanded, directed, given power, and entrusted his church to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations

[19] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 858.

[20] Grudem, *Teología sistemática*, 858.

[21] Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 173.

[22] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., "commission" (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), accessed May 5, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com.

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(Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The Great Commission is not optional; it is an unappealable command. Christopher Wright articulates, "The Great Commission implies an imperative, a mandate. So, it also presupposes an authority behind that imperative."[23]

The commissioning of the church is a command that passes on from master to disciple. It is interesting to observe the process in which the Great Commission is given.

First, Jesus gave the Great Commission to the church through the apostles. The apostles passed on the same Commission to succeeding generations of Christians. This process is to replicate indefinitely. **Second**, this commissioning is global, far-reaching, and universal—not regional, limited, or local. Christ explicitly commanded, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19); "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15); and "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). His intention is to use the church as the vehicle through which the proclamation of the gospel and the making of disciples are accomplished. A **third** aspect of the Great Commission is the faithful keeping of the integrity of the gospel message. Nothing can be changed. The Lord not only sends his disciples but makes clear that they are to teach his commands, not any other commands: "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20). Again, we see a "command over a command" because Jesus not only commands his disciples (and the church by extension) to go to the ends of the world making disciples, but he also commands that they are to teach specifically what he had taught and commanded them while he was still with them.

THE CHURCH: THE VEHICLE OF SALVATION

By vehicle, the church is to be understood as the primary means through which the gospel is carried to the nations across the world. The dictionary defines the word vehicle as "a means of carrying or transporting something. An agent of transmission (carrier). A medium through which something is expressed, achieved, or displayed."[24] Referring to

[23] Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God, Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 51-52, Google Books.

[24] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., "vehicle" (Springfield, MA: Merriam-

Abraham and his descendants being a blessing to the nations, Wright notes that the church is also a "vehicle of blessing"[25] through which the gospel is carried. However, Wright also notes that the church, which is a blessing of God to the world, can also be a "vehicle of God's judgement" to those who reject the gospel.[26]

Indeed, that is all the church can do. The church has not produced the gospel. The church does not own the gospel but has received the gospel. It has been commanded to proclaim that gospel without alteration to make disciples of all nations so they may receive and in turn teach that same gospel. The church only carries the gospel. Believing in the gospel, new birth, and salvation is entirely a ministry of the Holy Spirit, who produces this miracle. The church does not save. The church cannot save anyone; the church cannot even save herself. We are fully dependent on God. The church must understand the command given by Christ and seek to become more effective.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

The message of the gospel is the seed that is to be planted in the minds of people (Matt 13:1-23). The church has been "entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed" (1 Cor 4:1). People cannot learn about Christ unless the church takes the gospel to them. The apostle Paul makes this point clear when writing to the church in Rome, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom 10:14). Every member of the church, especially its leaders, must go and proclaim the gospel. There is no harvesting if the planting has not preceded it. The message is planted by the proclamation of the gospel, and the harvest reaped are those who have heard and believed this proclamation.

Webster, 2003), accessed May 5, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com.

[25] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 189, 202.

[26] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 402.

The gospel is the power of God. Paul asserts in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." Paul points out two important things: (a) the fact that he is not ashamed, and (b) the power of the gospel. The church must not be ashamed of proclaiming the gospel. We must recover the boldness of the early church. John Piper says, "Be shamed but not ashamed… there is a difference between being shamed for the gospel and being ashamed of the gospel. If you are a faithful Christian, you will be shamed for the gospel. That is, you will be the target of shaming behavior. But there is a very good reason why you do not have to be ashamed when that happens."[27] Piper also writes about the power of the gospel, listing three reasons why the gospel is the power of God. **First**, the gospel has the power to make converts. **Second**, the gospel brings believers to eternal safety and joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God. **Third**, the gospel is the power to bring about future salvation through a life of faith. **Fourth**, the gospel will bring the believer through temptation and persecution and death and judgment into eternal safety and ever-increasing joy in the presence of a holy and glorious God.[28] The power of the gospel, when it is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, has the power to make ministry successful on God's terms.

EQUIPPING LEADERS TO DISCIPLE

The church, through the help of the Holy Spirit, supports the maturing of those people who believe on the name of Christ. Whether it is a person who has recently accepted Christ or a pastor with many years of ministry experience, every Christian is a disciple of Christ. We are constantly learning about God and experiencing him as we grow in his love. Christ is building and equipping every member of his church. Paul writes to the Ephesians about the provision of teachers in the church "to

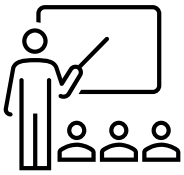
[27] John Piper, "The Gospel Is the Power of God unto Salvation," Desiring God (blog), June 21, 1998, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-gospel-is-the-power-of-god-unto-salvation.

[28] Piper, "The Gospel Is the Power of God unto Salvation."

equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13). We are to grow to the measure of the fullness of Christ. In his book *Deep Discipleship*, J. T. English writes that "Success in ministry is not found in building programs but in building disciples—disciples who love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). Christ is the goal, not better or more impressive ministries. He is what we want."[29] The ultimate reason for making disciples is that we form followers of Christ who love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind. The challenge for the local church in a cross-cultural ministry context is that leaders must learn to disciple individuals of other cultures.

The Local Church Must Be Equipped to Effectively Engage in Cross-Cultural Ministry as It Makes Disciples of All Nations

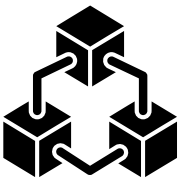
Jesus has given his church a command and a mission. This mission is the salvation of the world so that people come to faith in Christ for the glory of God. Church ministry can be a daunting task, especially when the members of the church do not know what to do or have not reached spiritual maturity. It is true that we have been given spiritual gifts of all kinds for the benefit of the church, but it is also true that Christ has given the church leaders to pastor and disciple the flock. The apostle Paul said to the church in Ephesus, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph 4:11-12). Christ wants his church to be equipped for ministry, but this needs to happen under the influence and sound teaching of the leadership structure of the church. Regarding this, English writes, "The local church is meant to be the primary spiritual guide for disciples who are on the journey of growing deeper in the love and knowledge of God. The local church is the place where we are formed, equipped, and sent out to make more



[29] J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 17, Kindle.

disciples."[30] The church is the only institution that has received the commission and blessing of Christ. The church has been given leaders to help the church realize its full potential. Lastly, the church has been endowed with all kinds of spiritual gifts for the edification of the church and for fulfilling the Great Commission. As such, the church is the primary place for equipping the saints because it is the only institution ordained and blessed by God for that purpose.

SPIRITUAL MATURITY PRECEDES EQUIPPING (COL 1:28-29)



Spiritual maturity is a necessary requirement before commissioning and equipping someone for ministry. The results of equipping the wrong person to do the work of ministry can be potentially disastrous; examples abound. Paul, instructing Timothy regarding men desiring ministry, warns him of this: "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil" (1 Tim 3:6). The church needs mature leaders who can help recent converts to reach spiritual maturity before considering formal ministry responsibilities.

The church is the place where believers grow from spiritual infants to spiritual maturity. English asserts, "The local church is meant to be the primary spiritual guide for disciples who are on the journey of growing deeper in the love and knowledge of God. The local church is the place where we are formed, equipped, and sent out to make more disciples."[31] Spiritual maturity is not about learning more theology or doctrine. Judas himself walked with Jesus but made disastrous decisions. Though the church is meant to be the primary spiritual guide for disciples, spiritual maturing and growth happen not only within the four walls of the church. Believers must continue maturing as they exercise spiritual disciplines daily. We are also to shine the light of Christ in our other personal environments and places of influence such as work, school, family, neighbors, etc.

In this process, those whom God appointed as teachers must teach to the best of their abilities, and those who are disciples must commit to learn to the best of their abilities.

[30] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 49.

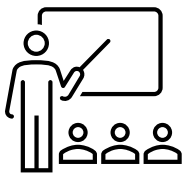
[31] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 49.

Paul, writing to the church in Colossae, says, "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me" (Col 1:28-29). Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp consider this passage in their book *How People Change*: "Paul's goal was to see church communities singly devoted to the message of the living Christ. Notice that he says he teaches everyone so that everyone may grow to the maturity of Christ."[32] God's desire for believers is that each one of us is presented fully mature in Christ. The life of every Christian is one of continuous growth and maturing.

MAKING DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

The command is clear, "Make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19-20). The work of the church would irresponsible and incomplete if only the gospel was proclaimed and nothing else followed. Evangelism is the first step; discipleship follows. The Holy Spirit convinces people of sin and regenerates them. Yet, spiritual infants need to grow. This is when the church needs to take on the task of discipling those whom God has brought into the church.

Discipleship is so important that Jesus spent three years intensively discipling and equipping his twelve disciples. Discipleship occupies a prominent position in God's plan for the church. The early church understood this and made it a priority. If the church is to reach the nations, many leaders need to be discipled and equipped. Paul tells Timothy, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim 2:1-2). The leaders of the church must take discipleship seriously. Discipleship is a ministry that needs to self-replicate. English posits, "Once you have equipped others, you have to send them



[32] Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 222-23, Google Books.

to equip others as well. Show them that their equipping matters, that once they are equipped they are going to be able to use the new tools they have in order to serve and lead others."[33]

However, leaders are not the only ones in need of discipleship. The congregation also needs to be discipled. Jesus makes this clear when he tells Peter to feed his lambs and take care of and feed his sheep (John 21:15-17). The congregation is to be fed and cared for. They need to learn the Bible, they need to learn doctrine, and they need to practice spiritual disciplines. English articulates, "Deep discipleship is about giving people more Bible, not less; more theology, not less; more spiritual disciplines, not less; more gospel, not less; more Christ, not less."[34] If the local church is to make an impact on the world, change needs to happen from within. Leaders are jointly responsible for the spiritual growth of the flock.

A MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Though salvation is the work of the three persons of the Trinity, it is also necessary to understand that each person is distinct and unique and works in a distinctive manner. English writes, "The Father initiates salvation. The Son accomplishes salvation. The Spirit applies salvation so that we may walk in obedience."[35] Indeed, the plan of salvation is the work of the triune God, and each person of the Trinity plays a distinct role.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the church enterprise became a ministry of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can happen or be achieved without the indwelling and blessing of the Third Person of the Trinity. The role of the Holy Spirit remains distinctively special, as he is empowering and equipping the church on earth. It is he who gives life to those who are dead. In his book *Who is the Holy Spirit*, R. C. Sproul asserts, "It is the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit to come to people who are spiritually dead, who are walking according to the course of this world and according to the prince of

[33] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 167.

[34] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 8.

[35] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 135-36.

the power of the air."[36] In the same way as the Holy Spirit in creation "moved over the face of the waters, when everything was formless, dark and empty" (Gen 1:2), he moves in the hearts and minds of those who do not know Christ so they may be born again.

The work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to new birth; he is also actively working within the life of the church. He has given spiritual gifts and ordained leaders for the edification of the church. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit "will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:16). Paul adds that what he teaches are the words of the Spirit: "What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words" (1 Cor 2:12-13). Finally, the Holy Spirit selects and equips individuals to serve in ministry, such as he did with Paul and Silas before sending them on their missionary journey (Acts 13:2).

THE CHURCH IS MEANT TO BE CROSS-CULTURAL

The book of Revelation offers us amazing insight into what the future of the church looks like in the glory of the presence of God. It reveals that the church is extremely diverse. John writes, "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands" (Rev 7:9). The church is meant to be as diverse as the rest of creation. Even the observable world shows us the great diversity of God's creation. Humankind is not the exception. God desires the worship of all this diversity: peoples of all nations, tribes, and language—each worshipping God in their own cultural expressions and languages. This diverse universe of worshipers represents a view into the future of the church. God is pleased when his glory is exalted in every language and cultural expression.

[36] R. C. Sproul, *Who Is the Holy Spirit?* (Sanford, FL: Ligonier, 2012), 18-19.

The Bible is a cross-cultural book. As we read its pages, we become part of this cross-cultural experience because we are reading a book written by individuals of other languages, cultures, times, and geographical locations. In *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, authors E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien affirm,

> We can easily forget that Scripture is a foreign land and that reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. To open the Word of God is to step into a strange world where things are very unlike our own. Most of us don't speak the languages. We don't know the geography or the customs or what behaviors are considered rude or polite. And yet we hardly notice.[37]

Indeed, the breadth of the Bible represents an entire cross-cultural experience. The church, commanded to make disciples of all nations, is to take part in this cross-cultural enterprise for the salvation of the world.

When connecting Jesus's command to the church to go to the ends of the earth to the vision of the church shown to John in the book of Revelation, we begin to grasp the cross-cultural nature of the church. The church did not remain Jewish. It quickly became Gentile. The church is to become the locus of diversity. The more diverse it is, the richer it becomes spiritually, and God is glorified.

CONCLUSION

This lecture has demonstrated that God loves peoples of every nation, tribe, and language and wants the multitudes to come to faith in Christ. God reveals his love to the world in his general and special revelation, through which he shows humankind his attributes and character. When the crown of his creation, humans, sinned against him, God devised a plan to save the world through the atoning sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. This lecture also described that the church is the vehicle of salvation commissioned by Christ to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations. Finally, this lecture asserted that the church must be equipped to effectively engage in cross-cultural ministry as it makes

[37] E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, introduction to *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), para. 7, Kindle.

disciples of all nations. This is a ministry of the Holy Spirit, who empowers the church and gives spiritual gifts to leaders for the edification of the church. Equipping leaders in cross-cultural ministry is essential to the building of Christ's church in light of the Great Commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and the vision of the universal church shown to John in the book of Revelation.

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2

Lesson 2: The threefold nature of the human heart as responding through cognition, affection, and volition and its influence in cultural worldview

"For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" Matthew 15:19 (NIV)

Understanding the Dynamics of the Heart

Cross-cultural ministry is deeply connected with an understanding of the human heart, its spiritual nature, and how this affects individual worldview and culture. To grasp the dynamics of cultural interaction, one must also study the effects of sin on the responses of the human heart.

Humans are complex beings created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). As such, humans have an inherent responsibility before God (Ecclesiastes 11:9). We have been equipped with capabilities that no other creature possesses. God bestowed us with cognitive, affective, and volitional capabilities to interact with the environment (Gen 6:5). In *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, Jeremy Pierre asserts that "Human experience is three-dimensional. The human heart responds cognitively through rational processes based on

knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart."[38] This three-dimensional dynamic informs how we interact with the world. Still, it is a dynamic that has been corrupted by sin. Humans worship self above God. Pierre notes, "The habits people form in their self-worship make them less aware of the beliefs, values, and commitments that lead them in the direction of a particular idol."[39] Humans make idols *for* themselves, but ultimately humans make idols *of* themselves. The cognitive and affective areas of an individual's heart scan the environment for opportunities to satisfy heart desires. When the volitional aspect of the heart produces an action, this action may be one that glorifies God or one that is sinful. The individual's worldview is centered on his personal benefit and well-being and not God's honor and glory (Rom 1:21). As individuals interact with the world, their evolving worldviews influence the culture.

What wisdom does the Bible offer regarding human nature? Speaking of the heart's condition, Jesus says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matt 15:19). Evil thoughts are the cognitive and affective responses of the human heart. Sinful actions are the result of the volitional response of the heart.

The prophet Jeremiah offers similar insight, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). The prophet describes the complexity of the human heart as beyond the understanding of any human being. Sin has left the human heart spiritually handicapped and progressively corrupt. All human understanding is affected by sin. Miguel Núñez describes the effect of sin on humanity's ability to understand God: "As we have pointed out, total inability means that man is completely incapable of choosing God. And that inability is due precisely to the impact of sin on Adam and Eve." [40] Genesis 6 offers a vivid demonstration of the effect of sin on the

[38] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 18, Kindle.

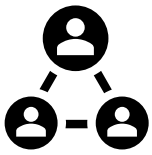
[39] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 62.

[40] Miguel Núñez, *Enseñanzas que transformaron el mundo: Un llamado a despertar para la*

three-dimensional heart: “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time” (Gen 6:5). The hearts, the desires, and the actions of mankind sought evil, disregarding their Creator in every way.

The Connection of the Human Heart to Culture

The human heart is intimately connected to individual worldview, and a collection of many worldviews influences a culture. Established patterns of human behavior that become normative in a society become that society’s culture. The church will benefit from a proper understanding of this process. Culture is defined as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. It is also defined as the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.”[41] Citing Paul G. Hierbert’s *Cultural Anthropology*, James Plueddemann asserts, “At the core of culture is worldview—beliefs about the deepest meaning of life and assumptions about the nature of reality.”[42] Worldview is what gives form to our customary beliefs, social forms, attitudes, values, and practices. However, our hearts and our very natures have been corrupted by sin, damaging every area of life including our worldview and our very perceptions of reality. Paul writes, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Rom 3:10-12). A culture formed of corrupted worldviews is also corrupt; no culture is exempt from sin’s effects.



iglesia en Latino América (Nashville: B&H, 2015), 33-34. Translation provided by Julio Salas.

[41] *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), s.v. “culture,” https://www.merriam-webster.com.

[42] James E. Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), chap. 4, topic 3, “Worldview,” Kindle. For an excellent discussion of worldview, see chapter 18 in Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983). For an overview of the concept of worldview and its history, see chapter 1 of Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

Lesson 3: A Biblical understanding of Cross-Cultural Ministry in the Local Church

"...here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all"
Colossians 3:11 (NVI)

Ministering in a Cross-Cultural Context

God has designed the church to be a multicultural institution ordained and commissioned by Christ to make disciples of all nations. This requires Christians to step out of their comfort zones and go beyond their own cultural settings to proclaim the gospel to people of other cultures (Acts 1:1-8). In cosmopolitan cities such as Miami, peoples of many nations, cultures, ethnic groups, religions, and languages live and engage with one another in a variety of ways. This socio-ethnic cultural diversity provides the ideal environment for the local church to earnestly engage in cross-cultural ministry to reach these individuals with the gospel.

The word ministry has multiple contexts. Ministry can be understood on a large scale; for example, all believers engage in Great Commission work to reach the nations. Ian McFarland says, "The NT Greek term *diakonia*, 'ministry' refers to the services Christians are obliged to render to one another and to the world by virtue of their having

been called by God in Christ, whose own ministry is the foundation of that exercised in his name (Heb 8:6)."[43] Ministry on a more granular level may be understood as the work with different groups in a local church: youth ministry, college ministry, couples' ministry, etc. This context implies ministering to those who believe and are now in the process of being discipled. McFarland offers a helpful insight,

> The precise form and character of Christian ministry is described in various ways in the NT. Sometimes the focus is on the ministry of the whole Church, whether directly outwardly to the world as 'the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18) or inwardly to the community as 'building the body of Christ' (Eph 4:12). At other times it is used to refer to the specific ministry of an individual within the Church.[44]

Cross-cultural ministry is the church's active effort to engage in Great Commission work with peoples of other nations, cultures, ethnic groups, worldviews, and languages. This ministry occurs first within the church walls, in the discipleship of members of all age groups. This ministry then extends to engaging in evangelistic outreach to non-believers outside the church but within its geographical reach. This outreach includes evangelism (sharing the gospel), discipleship (growth to spiritual maturity), and commissioning (replication of evangelism and discipleship).

Entrusted with the Gospel

The church did not create the gospel, and the church does not own it. The church has been "entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed" (1 Cor 4:1). Nothing should be added to the gospel, and nothing should be removed from its message (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19). Knowing and embracing the biblical integrity of the gospel is crucial; the church must not put herself in a position of teaching false doctrines or a false gospel. Leaders must be cautious of what they preach and teach, as they are responsible before God for preaching the true gospel. The apostle Paul admonished the

[43] Ian A. McFarland, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 315.

[44] McFarland, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 315.

Galatians,

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! (Gal 1:6-9).

To know the gospel is to understand the plan of salvation. To produce a consistent explanation of the gospel, I recommend that churches utilize the framework of Greg Gilbert's book, *What Is the Gospel?*[45]

God is the righteous creator. God owns the world. God owns you. God owns your children. God owns anything you consider yours. The human race is totally dependent on God. Gilbert writes, "None of us is autonomous, and understanding that fact is key to understanding the gospel. Despite our constant talk of rights and liberty, we are not really as free as we would like to think. We are created. We are made. And therefore, we are owned."[46] Indeed, the human concept of ownership is inherently nonexistent. Human beings do not even own their own bodies. Psalms 100:3 says, "Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture." Human beings did not create themselves and cannot avoid death. God is the Creator and is in absolute control of every aspect of human life; he decides our existence and reality. God created the world for his own glory. He made Adam and Eve the crown of all creation to rule over everything he had created. Without believing that God is the Creator of the world, there would be lawlessness and anarchy.

Man is the sinner. Both Adam and Eve disobeyed and lost the relationship they enjoyed with God. Sin permeated every area of human life and was passed on from one generation to the next. Gilbert asserts, "Sin is the breaking of a relationship, and even more,

[45] Gregory D. Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 6, Kindle.

[46] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?, 42*.

it is a rejection of God himself—a repudiation of God's rule, God's care, God's authority, and God's right to command those to whom he gave life. In short, it is the rebellion of the creature against his Creator."[47] The sin of Adam and Even not only broke the relationship between God and men but put every human being in the predicament of being enemies of God. We are sinners. Paul writes to the Romans, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); he adds, "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

Jesus Christ is the savior. God could have destroyed Adam and Eve in the snap of a finger, recreate human beings, and begin a brand-new story. He did not do this. God chose mercy. God is a loving God. He chose to save Adam and Eve. Instead of destroying them, God covered their nakedness with animal skins. Innocent animals were put to death in their place to cover their shame and nakedness. Both Adam and Eve clearly understood their predicament. There was nothing they could do to earn salvation from death. At first, they tried covering themselves with fig leaves; it was useless. Gilbert asserts, "You are a sinner destined to be condemned. But God has acted to save sinners just like you!"[48] God saves the sinner. We are totally powerless. Jesus is our savior, the one who died for our sins. When we understand this, we can comprehend John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This verse gives us the biblical worldview of the gospel.

Our response is faith and repentance. As John the Baptist cried, Jesus is "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). All we are to do is have faith and repent. Gilberts asserts, "Faith and repentance. This is what marks out those who are Christ's people, or 'Christians.' In other words, a Christian is one who turns away from his sin and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ—and nothing else—to save him from sin and the coming judgment."[49] The apostle John writes in his Gospel, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born

[47] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?, 48*.

[48] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?,* 60.

[49] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?,* 73.

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of God" (John 1:12-13).

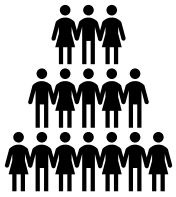
Commanded to go to the Nations and make Disciples

The Great Commission is simple: go to the nations and make disciples. This is not a mere act of obedience but an act of worship. Núñez offers, "The purpose of the church is the glory of God, but its mission is the Great Commission. World evangelization is God's way of seeking to glorify his name and glorify his Son as Redeemer."[50]

Isaiah records a vision from the Lord, "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'" Isaiah responded, "Here am I; send me!" (Isa 6:8). Likewise, the church should exhibit immediate obedience to God's command. Gilbert reminds the believer,

If you are a Christian, realize that you hold in your hands the only true message of salvation the world will ever hear. There will never be another gospel, and there is no other way for people to be saved from their sins. If your friends, family, and coworkers are ever to be saved from their sins, it will be because someone speaks the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. That's why Jesus commissions us to go into all the world, preaching and teaching this good news to the nations.[51]

Jesus did not give the Great Commission to the universal church alone, as if leaders and qualified people are the only ones to share the gospel. It is a mandate to every local church and every Christian to share the gospel and bring people to Christ.



Understanding the Purpose, Identity, and Mission of the Church

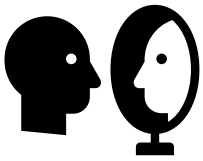
The local church has a purpose, an identity, and a mission. Understanding these

[50] Núñez, *Una iglesia conforme al corazón de Dios*, 29.

[51] Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?*, 120.

three categories will benefit the church tremendously, especially for ministry in a cross-cultural context.

The first category is purpose. The purpose of the church is the glory of God.[52]



The universe revolves around the glory of God, and everything declares the glory of God (Ps 19:1). Even Jesus did not seek his own glory but the glory of his Father in heaven. In the same way, the church is to glorify God. Paul tells the Corinthians, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31), and "You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies" (1 Cor 6:20). Revelation provides a vivid picture of the glory of God in the heavenly places: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Rev 4:11).

The glory of God is also intimately connected to the church's holiness. We were made holy (Heb 10:20) for God's glory. Gregg Allison offers an interesting perspective about the church's holiness connected to its identity, "This purity is positional, in the sense that the holy church is set apart for, or consecrated to, God and his purposes."[53] The church is not inherently holy but has been made holy by Christ's sacrifice.

The second category is identity. A church that understands its purpose needs to understand its identity. The identity of the church is connected to the One who brought it into existence. The church did not create itself; God created the church and chose every single member who belongs to it. He planned this before the creation of the world for his glory (Eph 1:4). The identity of the church is also intimately connected to its purpose, the glory of God. The church possesses inherent dignity; every member of the church has been adopted and given a new status as a child of God (John 1:12; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:6). God's children must honor this privilege and embrace their new identity. In the past we were sinners, but we were purchased by Christ and are now saints called to live holy lives that

[52] Núñez, *Una iglesia conforme al corazón de Dios*, 29.

[53] Gregg R. Allison, *The Church: An Introduction*, Short Studies in Systematic Theology, eds. Graham A. Cole and Oren R. Martin (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 56-57, Kindle.

honor God and obey his commands. The church's identity is also connected to Jesus's command to go to the nations; it is under his authority and by his command that the church is sent to the nations.

The third category is the mission. The mission of the church is simple: go to the nations and make disciples (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The church is the vehicle God uses to bring salvation to the world. We have a purpose—the glory of God; we have an identity as children of God and a holy nation; and now our mission given by his Son Jesus Christ is to go to the nations, proclaim the gospel, and make disciples. Allison asserts,

His commission is part of the mission entrusted to God the Son by God the Father. Three days after his crucifixion, having demonstrated to his disciples that he is resurrected, Jesus says, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld' (John 20:21–23).[54]

In the context of the local church fulfilling this Great Commission, God chose the church to be the vehicle that carries the message of the gospel to the nations.

[54] Allison, *The Church*, 95.

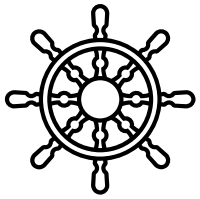
4

Lesson 4: Developing leadership skills for Cross-Cultural Ministry

"...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant..."

Matthew 20:26 (NIV)

Both locally and universally, **the church is a ministry of the Holy Spirit**. God equips leaders for the task of ministry, yet leaders must submit to the authority and leadership of the Spirit of God. He will use Spirit-filled leaders for his glory to lead and build his church according to his will; faithful leaders will earnestly seek God's direction and yield their hearts to him. These leaders may come from other nations, speak another language, or be of different ethnicity, but the local church is one family of God without special distinctions. The apostle Peter makes this clear: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9).



If the local church is to earnestly follow the command to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19), then the church needs to be properly organized. Becoming an organized ministry (a ministry organization) does not mean becoming a business in the secular sense of the word. Instead, as a young Jesus said in the temple, we must be "about

[the] father's business" (Luke 2:49 KJV).

God's business for the church is the making of disciples of all nations. The word organization is defined as "an administrative and functional structure."[55] Similarly, the church should organize itself in functional structures so that each of the gifts and talents given by the Spirit to the body of Christ can be effectively used for kingdom purposes. Paul writes to the church in Corinth, "There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work" (1 Cor 12:5-6 NIV) and "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people" (1 Cor 14:3).

The challenge for the local church, especially a church located in a cosmopolitan city, is the ability to build successful ministry teams with Christians from other cultures. An understanding of cultural background will allow us to more effectively work for Christ and the kingdom. Lingenfelter explains, "Leading cross-culturally is inspiring people who come from two or more cultural traditions to participate with you in building a community of trust, and then to follow you and be empowered by you to achieve a compelling vision of faith."[56] Cross-cultural ministry leadership is about servant leadership, discipleship as spiritual parenting, and being able to teach the next generation of believers to replicate ministry in the same way they were taught.

Applying Leadership Theory to Cross-Cultural Ministry

Leader and leadership are words that come from the same root verb "to lead," meaning "to guide on a way especially by going in advance, to direct on a course or in a direction, to guide someone or something along a way."[57] A leader is someone who directs and guides. Ministry must have effective leadership. However, directing and guiding in the context of church ministry implies understanding the nature of the church and who leads

[55] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), s.v. "culture."

[56] Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 155, Kindle.

[57] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), s.v. "lead."

the church. The mission of the church provides direction to the church leadership. A Christian who takes on a position of leadership understands that the church belongs to God and that he is a steward following his leader, Jesus Christ, and submitting to the will of God.

Regardless of cultural background, the following general practices have proved effective in leading organizations and teams.

Leaders model the way. In their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner assert that leaders must first model the way by clarifying values and setting the example.[58] First, the values are derived from the mission of the church universal. The mission statement of the local church and its ministries must be aligned to the Great Commission. Other mission statements would be incompatible. The values of the local church ministry need to be aligned to the mission and affirmed by the church body, understanding that if every local church member is filled with the Spirit, then their values should be closely aligned. Christian values include loving the Lord with all your heart (Mark 12:30), loving your neighbor (Mark 12:31), loving one another (John 13:34), letting the message of Christ dwell among you (Col 3:16), offering your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Rom 12:1), and bearing with each other and forgiving one another (Col 3:13), etc. A leader must set an example by modeling biblical values.

Leaders inspire a shared vision. Once the example has been set, leaders then inspire a shared vision. Kouzes and Posner propose "envisioning the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities" and "enlist[ing] others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations."[59] The church universal indeed has a mission, and we all have the same core values. However, realities and circumstances may differ when we get

[58] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 5th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 46, Kindle.

[59] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 94.

to the local church level. Preaching the gospel and making disciples in communist China will be different from preaching the gospel in Islamic Saudi Arabia, Latin America, and the United States. Kozes and Posner add, "When you envision the future that you want for yourself and others, and when you feel passionate about the legacy you want to leave, you are much more likely to take that first step forward."[60] Enlisting other people who share the same vision is the next step. These individuals will support the ministry. Moses envisioned the future and inspired the Israelites: "When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites—the land he swore to your ancestors to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 13:5). In the same way, Jesus told his disciples, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people" (Matt 4:19).

Leaders challenge the process. As a leader and his followers bond by sharing a vision and the leader models the way, he also should provide opportunities for followers. Kouzes and Posner propose that a leader must "search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and looking outward for innovative ways to improve…. Experiment and take risks by consistently generating small wins and learning from experience."[61] Again, Matthew describes the ultimate example, "Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matt 10:1). Luke writes, "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1). Godly leaders challenge followers with opportunities that equip and empower them to do more for Christ.

Leaders enable others to act. According to Kouzes and Posner, leaders "foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships" and "strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence."[62] Jesus let his disciples help

[60] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 97.

[61] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 144.

[62] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 194.

when he fed the crowds of five thousand (Matt 14:13-21) and four thousand (Matt 14:13-21). The apostles allowed the early church to decide who should serve the tables by choosing their deacons (Acts 6:1-15). Finally, leaders strengthen others by increasing self-determination. Paul tells the church in Rome, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Rom 12:11-12).

Leaders encourage the heart. Leadership is about the heart. Leadership is a relationship between leaders and followers.[63] Kouzes and Posner affirm the importance of "recognizing contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence" and "celebrating the values and victories by creating a spirit of community."[64] We see Jesus spending time with his disciples, teaching them, and nurturing their relationships. Jesus also spends non-ministry time with his disciples at a local wedding in a city called Cana (John 2:1-12).

Servant Leadership

Regardless of culture, leadership is about serving. Jesus said he came to serve, not to be served (Matt 20:18; Mark 10:45). In the same way that a servant is not greater than his master (John 13:16), the church is here to serve, not to be served. Regardless of language or cultural background, every Christian leader should have a spirit of servant leadership. Though every church member should take part in church life, the ability to serve is distinctive of leaders, who are specially required to lead sacrificially and by example. A servant leader demonstrates a genuine desire for his followers and their personal ministries to grow spiritually. In *Leading Well Across Distance and Cultures*, author Ken Cochrum asserts that "servant leadership involves helping others grow and develop while achieving their goals."[65] In a more profound sense, servant leadership is discipleship of future leaders; this must be exercised

[63] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, xiii.

[64] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 246.

[65] Ken Cochrum, *Close: Leading Well Across Distance and Cultures* (Self-published: CreateSpace, 2013), chap. 5, topic 9, Kindle.

in a spirit of humility, not of arrogance. Leaders are to model Christ. Elmer writes, "The leader's first and foremost responsibility is to model the servanthood of Christ. By that standard, all expressions of leadership must be measured."[66] The more we model Christ and not someone else's culture, the easier it becomes to cross over cultural bridges. We are to imitate his leadership character.

[66] Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 161, Kindle.

5

Lesson 5: Leadership and discipleship of cross-cultural ministry teams

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." 2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

Ministry teams are common in the New Testament. John the Baptist trained his team of disciples (Luke 7:19). Similarly, Jesus chose twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-16) who became his core ministry team. Beyond the twelve, he sent many more disciples: "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1). Many more examples of ministry teams can be observed in the New Testament.[67]

According to Lingenfelter, leading cross-culturally is "a clash of worldviews." Lingenfelter says, "Leading is inspiring people who participate with you in a community of trust to follow you—a leader or a leadership team—and be empowered by you to achieve a compelling vision of faith."[68] He adds,

[67] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally,* 16.

[68] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 19.

The complexity of leading cross-culturally lies in the challenge of building a community of trust among people who come from two or more cultural traditions that provoke a clash of worldviews. Because people rely on their cultural understandings for meaning, security, and significance, cultural differences have inherent power in human relationships to foster fear and mistrust.[69]

This is perhaps the most important challenge in any local church: earning the trust of each member of the community, especially those from other cultures.

Once trust is built, pursuing the mission and vision is more easily accomplished. Leaders must clearly understand the mission and vision: go to the nations, proclaim the gospel, and make disciples. Based on this premise, church leaders must align organizational objectives so ministry teams can follow and maintain their unity. Speaking of resilient teams that stay together despite their differences, author Larry Osborne asserts, "Sticky teams know how to deal with the issues at hand and still come out united in purpose and vision, with a genuine camaraderie undamaged by strong differences."[70]

Sharing the same mission, vision, and ideals does not mean that team members have the same personalities or levels of expertise. Leaders must discern the strengths and weaknesses of each team member. The best teams feature members who lead and serve from their strengths, not their weaknesses. Despite probable disagreements and personality differences, we make every effort to love one another (Col 3:14) and "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3) as our teams commit to pursue our organizational our shared mission and vision.

In *Leading from Your Strengths*, author Rodney Cox proposes three natural principles for best team performance and productivity:

First, understanding your own God-given strengths. This is a key to growth,

[69] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 20.

[70] Larry Osborne, *Sticky Teams: Keeping Your Leadership Team and Staff on the Same Page* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 19, Kindle.

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change, and finding your place on the team where God has placed you. Second, recognizing and valuing the God-given strengths of others on your team. This is a key to the commitment of each team member to each other. Third, blending differences among team members and harnessing each person's unique strengths. This results in greater effectiveness and productivity for your team.[71]

In following this model, an honest skills and spiritual gifts assessments may be necessary. This will help team members to understand their place on a team and help leaders to discern skills and spiritual gifts, placing team members in appropriate areas of service while maximizing productivity and effectiveness.

[71] Rodney Cox, *Leading from Your Strengths: Building Close-Knit Ministry Teams,* rev. ed. (Township, NJ: BookBaby, 2018), 12, Kindle.

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6

Lesson 6: Principles of biblical discipleship and spiritual parenting in multicultural contexts

"…to Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." 1 Timothy 1:2 (NIV)

A God-Centered Vision of Discipleship

The church's mandate is "to make disciples" (Matt 28:19). Discipleship is not only about offering educational programs, although these are necessary for the edification of the local church body. However, programs are useless if they are not focused on making disciples who truly love God. English points out, "Success in ministry is not found in building programs but in building disciples—disciples who love God with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). Christ is the goal, not better or more impressive ministries. He is what we want."[72] Knowledge of God is at the heart of discipleship. All of discipleship programs must be aligned with the sole objective of making disciples who know God better and give him glory. English adds,

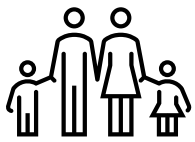
[72] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 17.

Deep discipleship is more about reveling in the transcendence of God than it is a ministry practice. The source of true discipleship is not better programs, better preaching, or better community. All of those, and more, are hugely important tools, but the source of discipleship is God himself. Thus, at the heart of everything we do is the desire to grow in our love and knowledge of God.[73]

The aim of the local church is to continue discipleship "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

A Biblical Perspective of Spiritual Parenting

Biblical discipleship is like parenting. Though Paul had no children of his own, he had spiritual children. The most prominent of these is Timothy. Paul calls Timothy his "true son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2). Paul is also a spiritual parent to Titus (Titus 1:4). Similarly, the apostle John calls those to whom he writes "my dear children" (1 John 2:1).



Sadly, too many churches have fallen into the culture of individualism and no longer view discipleship as spiritual parenting but as merely educational programming. Ajith Fernando shares a personal message he received from Pastor Richard Brohier, "Our culture of individualism sees [discipleship] as a program rather than a lifestyle of sacrifice and inconvenience."[74] This is no longer only a problem in first-world countries but also in less developed countries. People resist sacrificing their time to invest in discipling others. Shallow discipleship creates a shallow spirituality and ultimately a shallow group of local church members. Churches must develop leaders who view discipleship as a parenting relationship between leader and disciple. Fernando regards discipleship as "an affectionate relationship of caring between people who see themselves as having a parent-child relationship."[75]

[73] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 19-20.

[74] Ajith Fernando, *Discipling in a Multicultural World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 25, Kindle.

[75] Fernando, *Discipling in a Multicultural World*, 27.

Learning about the cultural values of people will significantly contribute to the discipleship process; developing trust among people from different cultures is essential to effective discipleship.

Growing in Christ through Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

The goal of believers is to reach spiritual maturity; this brings glory to God. Cognitive, academic, and theological knowledge is not a sign of spiritual maturity. A true Christian must grow to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). Growing in the likeness of Christ is a spiritual experience acquired through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Leaders must help disciples of all nations, tribes, people, and languages learn how to worship God. As such, the process of discipleship should include the following disciplines.

Reading and listening to the Bible. Leaders should encourage disciples to read their Bibles, meditate on what they read, and memorize verses. Meditating means to dwell on, take in, or listen to the Word of God. Donald Whitney says, "Bible intake is not only the most important Spiritual Discipline; it is also the most broad."[76] Reading, listening, and memorizing Scripture is key to spiritual growth.

Prayer. Just as Jesus taught his disciples how to pray (Luke 11:1-13), leaders must teach their disciples how to pray. Prayer is inherently an act of worship. Paul tells the church in Thessalonica to "Rejoice always, pray continually" (1 Thess 5:16-17). Jesus constantly tells his disciples, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matt 26:41). Leaders must teach disciples to pray and to meditate on Scripture while praying. Whitney writes, "Meditation is the missing link between Bible intake and prayer. Too often disjointed, the two should be united."[77]

Worship. God seeks "true worshipers [who] will worship the Father in the Spirit

[76] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 34–35.

[77] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 96-97.

and in truth" (John 4:23). Leaders are responsible to teach disciples to worship God in Spirit and truth. Worshipping, according to Whitney, is "focusing and responding to God.... The more we focus on God, the more we understand and appreciate His infinite worth. As we understand and appreciate this, we can't help but respond to Him."[78] Leaders must teach disciples to focus their minds and attention on God during worship.[79]

[78] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 114-15.

[79] Whitney describes many other spiritual disciplines that leaders should model and teach disciples including evangelism, or sharing the gospel with others; serving, or taking a responsibility within the church body; stewardship of time and resources; fasting as an act of worship; silence and solitude as a way of deeper meditation; journaling; learning; and perseverance.

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7

Lesson 7: Equipping the Church in Meaningful Educational Ministry

"…He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ…"

Colossians 1:28 (NIV)

Discipleship and meaningful education programs are vital for the growth and edification of the church body. Spiritual maturity is first achieved when individuals grow spiritually in the likeness of Christ (discipleship). At certain levels of spiritual maturity, educational programs are a great help in the believer's maturing process. Some of today's churches merge discipleship and educational ministries into one ministry, tending to package discipleship into what is actually an educational program. To differentiate the two ministries and incorporate them into the life of the church, I propose that churches define a clear educational philosophy.

Examining Educational Philosophy

It is essential for Christian leaders and teachers to focus on the things of above and to teach the truth. Having the right cosmovision of the gospel is necessary because our educational philosophy is based on our understanding of the purpose of life in the universe

God created. George Knight asserts,

> The task of educational philosophy is to bring future teachers, principals, superintendents, counselors, and curriculum specialists into face-to-face contact with the large questions underlying the meaning and purpose of life and education. To understand these questions the student must wrestle with such issues as the nature of reality, the meaning and sources of knowledge, and the structure of values.[80]

The local church context is not excluded from such transcendent questions; we already have many of these answers in Scripture. Our purpose is to bring glory to God. Our mission is to make disciples in the image of Christ. As such, our educational philosophy must be aligned with the same purpose and mission. Without good boundaries and guidelines, it is easy to deviate even from the noblest desire to obey God. A wrong educational philosophy may turn true worship into a legalistic—or at the other extreme, liberal—form of external worship. A wrong philosophy may take spiritual formation and make it a structured system of biblical learning that focuses students more on academics and legalism rather than worship, resulting in spiritually illiterate Christians.

The Science of Learning

Learning is the ability to retrieve information, and it is essential in the life of a believer. The Christian life is not mere cognitive learning; it includes learning through deep spiritual experiences that connect with our hearts and ultimately our minds. As such, learning must be focused on making faithful and genuine disciples of Christ.

The book of Deuteronomy provides ancient insight into the science of learning. Similarly, Paul's letters to Philippi offer an interesting perspective on how to learn about God. This training will explore two methods of maximizing the retrieval of information for purposes of discipleship and educational ministry: repetition and reflection.

Learning through repetition. The book of Deuteronomy provides an

[80] George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016), chap. 1, para. 6, Kindle.

interesting perspective on the retrieval of information learned by repetition. “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut 5:6-7). According to the authors of *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*, “To be most effective, retrieval must be repeated again and again, in spaced out sessions so that the recall, rather than becoming a mindless recitation, requires some cognitive effort.”[81] These simple exercises can be employed on Sundays during Bible school and at home between parents and children.

Learning through reflection. Paul tells the Philippians, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—*meditate* on these things” (Phil 4:8 NKJV). Perhaps meditation, or reflection, is the easiest way of learning passively. Of methods to improve retrieval of information, Brown says, “Reflection can involve several cognitive activities that lead to stronger learning: retrieving knowledge and earlier training from memory, connecting these to new experiences, and visualizing and mentally rehearsing what you might do differently next time.”[82] The beauty of learning through reflection is that we can constantly exercise it without the structures imposed by repetitive learning.

[81] Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. McDaniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 28, Kindle.

[82] Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, *Make It Stick*, 27.

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8

Lesson 8: Educational ministry and discipleship in various age-group ministries within the multicultural local church

"…Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength…" Mark 12:30 (NIV)

Educational Ministry in the Church

True educational ministry prioritizes discipleship. Discipleship is a spiritual parenting relationship between leader/teacher and disciple. The objective of this section is to develop a true discipleship experience through a meaningful educational ministry. To become thoroughly competent in ministry, leaders must understand the age group in which they minister. This section provides general guidelines on how to become a better educator in four essential areas of ministry: adults, youth, children, and preschoolers. Understanding how each of these age groups learns will help leaders develop better disciples who love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30 NIV).

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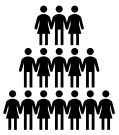
Teaching adults. This is a wide-ranging age group, from young adults to senior adults, who come with different levels of skills and experiences. Many feel they have something to give, but they desire a safe environment in which to contribute. In *Creative Bible Teaching*, the authors assert that adults "often feel that others in the group are brighter, are more experienced, and have greater promise."[83] As leaders, we must create environments in which adults feel safe in sharing their experiences. Adults are "self-motivated, self-disciplined, have a wealth of experience, are practical, can learn independently, and can provide insightful contributions."[84] They should be discipled in such a way that they also become mentors to younger, less experienced individuals. Churches must be careful to examine that adults are godly leaders and educators before giving them educational roles. However, it is key for church leaders to identify and train adults who can be disciple-makers in the church and at home with their own children and families.



Teaching youth. This group involves teenagers of various ages. Youth learn best through direct experiences and via caring role models. Richards and Bredfeldt assert, "In teaching youth, firsthand experience is essential . . . . Anyone who is watched by adolescents and children is likely to be emulated by those same young people. That includes student ministry leaders as well."[85] The authors go on to explain that youth learn best when they are active in discovering truth; therefore, teachers should never tell them something they can discover for themselves.[86] Here the role of adults is of extreme importance. Discipleship is learned by example. Youngsters follow the example of their youth leaders and adults, so leaders in these ministries must be chosen wisely. Ideally, adults should develop younger leaders who will eventually become the future generations of youth leaders.

[83] Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt,. *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), 270, Kindle.

[84] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 271-72.

[85] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 292.

[86] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 292.

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Teaching children. Richards and Bredfeldt write that children learn by experience, by example, by repetition with variation, and through concrete language and experiences.[87] The best methods for teaching children include storytelling, dramatics, questions, discussion, projects, and creative activities.[88] Similar to teaching youth, training teachers how to best go about this ministry will ensure that these children grow spiritually as they become disciples of Christ. In turn, these children will become the future generation of the youth ministry.

Teaching preschoolers. Some people think ministry to preschoolers as a kind of childcare. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This ministry is so important that even Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:14). Though children in this age group learn very differently than children or youth, preschool children also grow spiritually. Richards and Bredfeldt add, "The primary task of the Christian early childhood teacher in the church, or even in the school context, is to provide the basic concepts and information needed by their children to formulate a biblical view of the world. Our goal is to help the child see their world through a biblical worldview."[89]

Conclusion

It is essential to equip the local church in all ministry areas to reach people of other cultures and to disciple our existing members. The fundamentals of salvation, the gospel, and the Great Commission need to be consistently and constantly taught, particularly to newer generations of leaders. Teaching basic organizational skills to leaders is also necessary for effective church and ministry organization. As the church grows and

[87] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 305-06.

[88] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 307.

[89] Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, 323.

faces different needs and challenges, the organizational structure will need to be adjusted.

It is imperative that the church not forget her calling: to make disciples of all nations. Discipleship is the process of spiritual parenting that brings the believer to greater spiritual maturity for the glory of God. Educational programs play an important part in helping mature Christians grow in their knowledge and understanding of Christ. A blend of godly discipleship with a well-stewarded educational program is necessary to disciple and teach the next generations of believers of all age groups.

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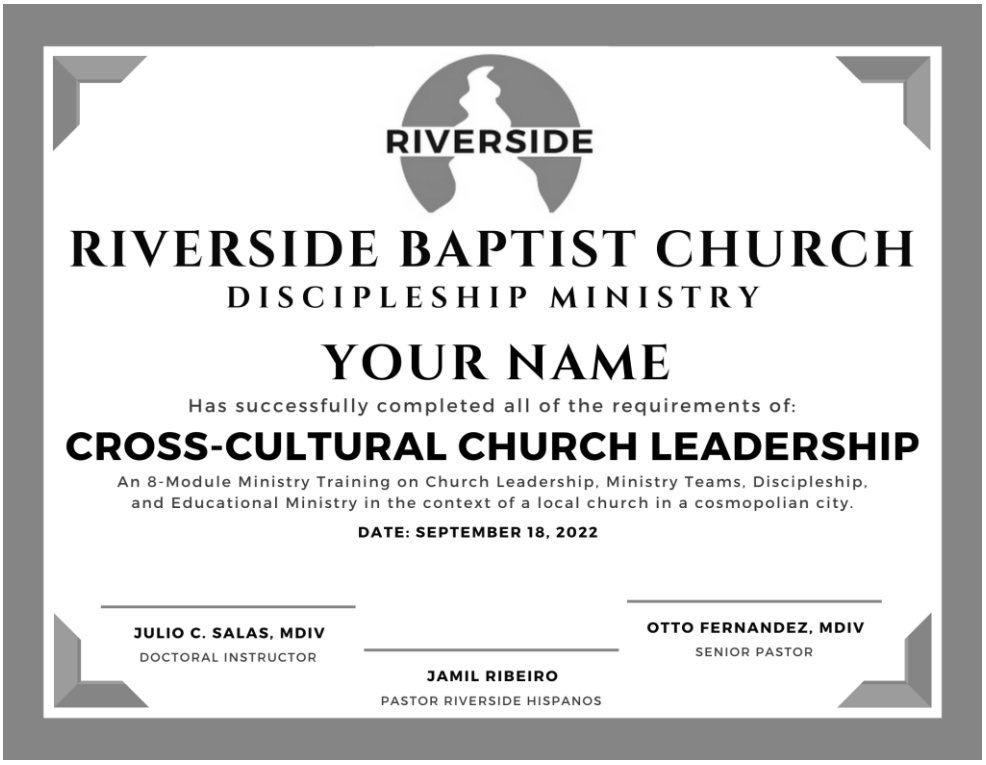
APPENDIX 12

CERTIFICATE OF COURSE COMPLETION

The follow certificates were provided to participants who completed the Cross-Cultural Ministry Skills training program. Riverside members received either an English or Spanish-language certificate from Riverside Baptist Church's discipleship ministry. International participants members received either an English or Spanish-language certificate from America Academics.


RIVERSIDE
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DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY
YOUR NAME
Has successfully completed all of the requirements of:
CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP
An 8-Module Ministry Training on Church Leadership, Ministry Teams, Discipleship, and Educational Ministry in the context of a local church in a cosmopolian city.
DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2022
JULIO C. SALAS, MDIV
DOCTORAL INSTRUCTOR
JAMIL RIBEIRO
PASTOR RIVERSIDE HISPANOS
OTTO FERNANDEZ, MDIV
SENIOR PASTOR

RIVERSIDE
RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH
MINISTERIO DE DISCIPULADO
SU NOMBRE
Ha completado satisfactoriamente todos los requisitos de:
LIDERAZGO ECLESIAL CROSS-CULTURAL
Una capacitación ministerial de 8 modulos sobre liderazgo eclesiástico, equipos ministeriales, discipulado y ministerio educativo en el contexto de una iglesia local en una ciudad cosmopolita.
DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2022
JULIO C. SALAS, MDIV
DOCTORAL INSTRUCTOR
JAMIL RIBEIRO
PASTOR RIVERSIDE HISPANOS
OTTO FERNANDEZ, MDIV
SENIOR PASTOR

America Academics

SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

CERTIFICATE OF COURSE COMPLETION

CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP - COHORT 1

YOUR NAME

An extensive online four-session-eight-module ministry training on leadership in the local church. Students gained a theological understanding of the church, of human behavior, of multicultural diversity, of organizational leadership, of leadership of ministry teams, of integrated relational discipleship, and of educational ministry in the context of a local church located in a multicultural city.

COMPLETION DATE: SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

America Academics

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ESCUELA DE MINISTERIO CRISTIANO

CERTIFICADO DE TERMINO DEL CURSO

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Una extensiva capacitación en línea de 8 módulos en cuatro sesiones en liderazgo en la iglesia local. Los estudiantes obtuvieron una comprensión teológica de la iglesia, del comportamiento humano, de la diversidad multicultural, del liderazgo organizacional, del liderazgo de equipos ministeriales, del discipulado relacional integrado y del ministerio educacional en el contexto de una iglesia local ubicada en una ciudad multicultural.

FECHA DE TERMINO: SEPTIEMBRE 14, 2022

America Academics

America Academics, LLC

Miami, FL United States of America

Julio C. Salas

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY AT RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH IN MIAMI, FLORIDA

Julio Cesar Salas, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. John M. Klaassen

This research project is designed to equip leaders at Riverside Baptist Church in cross-cultural ministry. Chapter 1 presents introductory aspects of the project including the context, rationale, purpose, goals, and research methodology of the project. Chapter 2 provides a theological foundation for cross-cultural ministry by asserting that the church is a multicultural institution by virtue of its mandate and calling. Chapter 3 argues that to effectively equip the church for cross-cultural ministry, church leaders should be equipped with an understanding of the human heart, a biblical understanding of cross-cultural ministry, leadership skills, and a God-centered vision for discipleship and equipping the church in meaningful educational ministry. Chapter 4 provides a detailed explanation of the project and its unfolding, including project timelines. Chapter 5 is both an evaluation of the project implementation based on the completion of the specified goals and a personal reflection on the results of the project.

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VITA

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EDUCATION

BA, Florida International University, 2006
MSIS, Florida International University, 2014
MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Faculty/Instructor, Instituto Teologico Reformado Educa, Valparaiso, Chile, 2018–
Director/Faculty/Instructor, America Academics, Miami, Florida, 2021–
Faculty/Instructor, Seminario Bautista Horeb, Lima, Perú, 2022–
Online Teaching Assistant, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2022–

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Director of Information Technology, Christ Journey Church, Miami, Florida, 2018–2021
Discipleship Minister, Riverside Baptist Church, Ministerio Hispano Brasileiro, Miami, Florida, 2020–
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