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## Going Global: Listening to the Voices in Our Extended Foursquare Family

Jeremy Wallace, D.Min.<sup>1</sup>

### Culture

I grew up in white suburbia in the Pacific Northwest. Childhood consisted mostly of Church, seasonal sports, video games, and skateboarding anywhere my ‘posse’ and I had the energy to skate. I was reared in a blue-collar home; Dad worked sixty-five-hour weeks as a machinist so mom could stay at home and raise me and my brother. It was a lower middle-class upbringing, but we got by alright. It wasn’t perfect, but it was good. Everyone seemed to look the same, talk the same, and go about life “the same.” It wasn’t until junior high school that I first met and befriended non-Caucasian classmates. We simply didn’t have any in elementary school, and frankly there weren’t many in junior high either. But I do remember it was my first time experientially encountering people with different ethnicities from different cultures (and subcultures). I recall the odd mix of sentiments swirling within me: curiosity, bewilderment, fascination. “I wonder what it would be like to live in that family?” I found myself saying. Different foods, different languages, different customs, perhaps different . . . video games? I was left to wonder.

Although my family ventured down to California (from Oregon) to visit relatives every year or so, my most memorable traveling memory before graduating high school came after my eighth grade graduation: a trip to Washington D.C. Only thirty students could go, so I kept my grades up and sold an ungodly amount of disgusting candy bars to raise funds for the trip. This experience was seminal in my formation, imbedding a passion for travel within me that would, only four years later, find me spending three weeks touring Western Europe. This experience would only serve to energize my love and appreciation for international travel and experiencing the wonders inherent within different tribes, tongues, and cultures.

### Foursquare Global Council

For years I served as a director of a formal certified Foursquare Bible Institute. It is in this context that I first met Rev. Gary Matsdorf. Year after year at the annual Foursquare Institute Symposia I would make it a point to say hi to Gary and catch up. One year he and I began discussing his new role with the Foursquare Global Council. To my shame, I wasn't fully aware what it was. Make no mistake, our church was heavily involved in supporting missionaries (both FMI and others) but, as is quite common, in the hustle and bustle of everyday ministry-life, one tends to gravitate toward the things immediately before him/her. This conversation with Gary sparked a profound interest within me concerning Foursquare’s Global Council efforts and the small ways that I could assist Gary in his new role. In light of this new connection with the Foursquare Global Council and spending a week in Doorn, Netherlands with several regional and national Foursquare leaders, I and the FSF executive committee members were excited to dedicate an issue in *Quadrum* aimed

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at hearing from Foursquare practitioners and academics from around the globe. Invitations to submit articles to this unique issue were disseminated, yet an unforeseen global crisis was becoming apparent in the form of Covid-19.

### **Facing Challenges**

No one foresaw the arrival of a global pandemic that would take so many lives, disrupt “normality” as we knew it, and force the Church to innovate and maintain relationships, disciple-making, and missional engagement in unusual modes and means. This unprecedented challenge has not only been devastating, but exceedingly difficult. I live in the belt-buckle of the Bible belt and even here I have noticed that, although social distancing is not as strongly observed as could be, even when people are “out and about,” folks appear less likely to socially engage with others, whether it is simply greeting a stranger or entering another’s “space” to lend a helping hand. We simply do not know yet the long-term effects of how the enduring pandemic will shape our immediate (and lasting) future. What we *do* know, however, is *clear*: our purpose has not changed; our mission has not changed; our identity has not changed. We are the blood-bought Church of the Living God, and we shall move forward in proclamation and demonstration of the Foursquare Gospel to the ends of the earth until Jesus’ *parousia*.

### **Our Current Issue**

Despite the enormous challenges faced amidst this pandemic, we move forward. Every Foursquare ministry has been impacted in some way by Covid-19; Foursquare Scholars Fellowship is no exception. Many prospective contributors to this particular issue were simply not able to complete and submit articles due to the understandable complications and fallout produced by the difficult situation. We are quite pleased, however, that a few quality articles have passed all review phases and are included in this issue. We are equally pleased to include our first non-English article for inclusion in this issue. We desire to see numerous articles in the future for non-English speaking constituency.

The first article comes to us from Gareth Phillips, President of Foursquare Jamaica. His article centers on leadership development as employed in the wonderful nation of Jamaica. Next, in his article, “The New Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” George Butron, a Foursquare Missionary serving in Singapore, focuses on the developments and changes within Foursquare missions over the past twenty years. Our final article, featured in both English and Spanish is Obed Sanabria’s “Until We All Arrive // Hasta Que Todos Lleguemos.” I can hardly express my gratitude enough to Obed, Gareth, and George for their timely and thoughtful contributions. We hope you enjoy the read.

## **Leadership Development: Sustainability in the Jamaican Foursquare Church Context**

Gareth Phillips, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>

### **ABSTRACT:**

The Foursquare Church in Jamaica sees ministry leadership training and development as the foundation on which the ICFG Four-stage National Church Development Model is sustained. With this view, the national church has embraced a Christian Worldview on higher education which has become the impetus for the reformation of its institutionalized learning for ministry preparation. However, a major challenge for the church remains low participation among the young, age 18 to 35 years old, who will be the ones to continue the Foursquare movement in Jamaica into the future. Therefore, in this study, the researcher sought to examine three main questions: (1) What is the attitude of the young people towards ministry and ministry training? (2) To what extent does the church promote ministry training for young people, and (3) What is the value placed on ministry training opportunities within Foursquare Jamaica by the young people? The findings were largely statistically significant at  $p < .05$  and indicated that the young people were in fact desirous of ministry and that the church will need to increase efforts in promoting training. The promotion of training had a positive relationship with the value placed on training and appeal to the young people. Based on these findings, the church envisions a bright future with the young people being fully equipped to keep the Foursquare work going for many years.

The spread and expansion of Christian missions across the regions of the world have shifted from the Global North exclusively sending to the Global South.<sup>2</sup> This shift in missions has been towards a more self-sustaining model of existence in terms of administration and support. These North American churches, para church groups, Christian networks and associations employed a model where foreign missionaries were first sent into other countries to evangelize and Christianize the peoples. The initial model was established as churches of the North understood and embraced the Great Commission rooted in Matthew 28:19-20, to take the gospel to all nations. Twinned to the sending of missionaries was the sending of financial support to sustain the movements and to allow for growth. However, in more recent times, a new pattern of support akin to the shift in the missional model has emerged. In some instances, this new pattern represents a maturing of or the returns on investment made in earlier centuries by the Global North. A distinguishing feature of this shift in the model is the rise of indigenous national movements. An indigenous movement is defined as a local church or church related movement that is self-governed and financially independent of the parent country, that is, “*self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing*”.<sup>3</sup> From the perspective of an indigenous work, moving from full dependence on the parent country, the onus is on that work to pursue greater independence, stability, and maturity.

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<sup>2</sup> Philip Jenkins, “*The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*”, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc. (2011).

<sup>3</sup> Jamaal Bell, “The Missionary’s Role in the Indigenous Church,” The Huffington Post [www.huffpost.com](http://www.huffpost.com) (July 26, 2011, para. 1).

The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (ICFG) is an example of a church organization that has experienced this paradigmatic shift in missional practice. One attempt at recognizing the value and importance of indigenous or national works was in 1982 when the ICFG staged its first Global Leadership Conference bringing together national leaders.<sup>4</sup> An illustration of this transition is between ICFG USA and Jamaica. By the time the last Foursquare Missions International (FMI) fully funded missionary couple, Rev Harold and Faye Curtis, left Jamaica in 1978, Jamaica was viewed as an indigenous Foursquare work. ICFG, Jamaica became fully self-governed by a national board led by a local national leader who was elected by ministers and delegates at the business meeting of its convention. The board's authority is in accordance with its national Bylaws that was first registered with the Jamaican government in August 1965.<sup>5</sup>

The ICFG, Jamaica (established 1947) is currently among several Foursquare national movements in the Caribbean and is one of three early works in the region—Puerto Rico (established 1935) and Cuba (established 1947) being the others.<sup>6</sup> The church boasts a strong historical development in accordance with FMI's vision for national church development. For example, since the establishment of the Caribbean Regional Council (in 2005), the Jamaican church has had two national leaders serving as Chair or representing the region.<sup>7</sup> Also, Jamaica is one of the larger national movements with approximately 26 churches, and the largest membership within the region, approximately 1300. The church has operated a formal Bible training institution for the last 56 years which is the forerunner for several Bible training institutions in Jamaica and has trained several non-Foursquare members serving in leadership of other ministries. The Bible training institution remains an important component of the strategy being deployed by the Board in addressing leadership challenges faced by the national church. Given its historical prominence in the Caribbean, the national church has a renewed focus on serving Jamaica and the region through greater ministry in church planting, discipleship training, and leadership development.

As it poises for exponential growth, the church in Jamaica, after 73 years with its many testimonies of victories, still has as its greatest challenge, the lack of a sustained internal healthy leadership reproduction. Despite the movement's continued progress through the Four-Stage Model, now bordering on Stage 4, the evidence that it continues to produce leaders who reproduce leaders remains weak. This reality is evidenced by the very small number of individuals who are in the pipeline for successive leadership ministry assignments within the national church. While the movement has produced national leaders, it is obvious that the leaders have not consistently reproduced other leaders. Now, the national church is at a crisis point due to the aged population of pastors and leaders with untenable numbers for current and future successive appointments.

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<sup>4</sup> The Foursquare Global Council, *Building Bridges to Global Partnership*, Resource Guide. May 2015

<sup>5</sup> Certificate of Registration, Companies Office of Jamaica issued in Jamaica on August 31, 1965

<sup>6</sup> Nathaniel Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* Los Angeles, CA: ICFG Media (2014).

<sup>7</sup> Dave Stone, Immediate Past Caribbean FMI Area Missionary E-mail message to author, September 4, 2020.

The Foursquare ministerial training program in Jamaica began in 1964 by then missionaries, Reverend and Mrs. Joseph Knapp.<sup>8</sup> They instituted an academic program designed to prepare ministers who would move into pastoral leadership roles following graduation. This response was to meet the growing demands for what the ICFG Global Council now calls, Stage 2 of the Four–Stage Model for National Church Development. Critically, the Four–Stage Model describes a lifecycle of a national church development through four stages from the opening of a nation typically by a foreign missionary to becoming a mission sending church of national members.<sup>9</sup> Each stage presents an opportunity for the growth of individual believers who then collectively move towards greater display of maturity and engagement in the advancement of the national church. The emphasis changes with each stage to represent the mission at that point, that is, moving from initiate, to nurture, to expand, and finally, send. These four emphases are taught and practiced with the desire that they become engrained in the ‘*life*’ of the national church. The Model further explains how the church progresses through this spiraling developmental process consisting of both sequential and continuous experiences to facilitate a multi-layered transformation.

Crucial to this paper is an expanded understanding of Stage 2 as central to the survival and expansion of the national church. A fuller understanding of Stage 2 involves noting the essential implications for implementation and the requirements for continuity. Stage 2: *Nurture*, is characterized as the strengthening of believers and developing of reproducing leaders.<sup>10</sup> While all four stages of the model progress toward greater activities within the life of the church by individuals, this paper asserts that it is the training and development of the disciple as a reproducing leader that will sustain the national church and allow for its continuity. The focus on leadership development must include present and future considerations since to examine one aspect at the expense of the other would lead to a gap that would be detrimental to sustainability. Stage 2 planning and execution must address both components as important and allow for ongoing refinement as related circumstances change. Another aspect or application of Stage 2 understanding involves clear definition or description of the profile or image of leadership within a given context. While there is a general appreciation for Christian leadership that transcends time and locale which is rooted in biblical teachings and practices, each context must have a clear sense of the requirement of Christian leadership within a community, country, or part of the world.<sup>11</sup> The usefulness of describing contextual leadership within the framework of biblical Christian leadership is to capture those elements that are uniquely important for success within a specific context, and to verify that they do not conflict with the Bible. Such descriptions help with

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<sup>8</sup> Cleave, “The Vine and the Branches” Los Angeles, CA: ICFG Media (2014).

<sup>9</sup> John Amstutz, “National Church Movements: Four Stages”. In J. Amstutz (Ed.), *Disciples of all Nations: A Reader. Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (2018). EditorialRenuevo. www.EditorialRenuevo.com.

<sup>10</sup> Amstutz, Four Stages (2018) 18-22.

<sup>11</sup> David Dunaetz, “Transforming Chaos into Beauty: Intentionally Developing Unity in Church Plants”. In J. Amstutz (Ed.), *Disciples of all Nations: A Reader. Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (2018). EditorialRenuevo. www.EditorialRenuevo.com. 100-106.

preservation of cultural components that are relevant to success and allow for easy identification.<sup>12</sup> Stage 2 requires national or indigenous ownership of the process and the outcome. In a practical sense, ownership requires that ICFG in Jamaica be made a Jamaican church rather than a US church in Jamaica. In other words, ICFG does not deny one's culture but desire that individuals express Foursquare beliefs through their culture. Thus, the national church is in charge of all aspects of the process of establishing the local church including its leadership.

Over the last 20 years, the pattern of engagement in ministerial training by Jamaican Foursquare young people, age 18 to 35, has been less than desirable.<sup>13</sup> To date, it is still unclear whether it is the lack of interest in ministerial training or the inability of the Bible training institution to attract Foursquare young people that leads to low participation. Since the Bible training institution is the formal mechanism within the national church for producing qualified individuals to take up pastoral and other leadership roles, the low participation is of priority concern for the leadership. The leadership sees low participation as a factor mitigating against plans for spiritual and numerical growth in the Jamaican church. This view by the leadership is based on a strong anticipation of the national church entering revival of the sort that will have catalytic effect on the expansion of the work and influence in Jamaica, the Caribbean, and the rest of the world.

One attempt at remedying low participation in ministry training programs is that the institution's administration has revamped its earlier 3-year diploma program and now offer a new 2-year associate degree. While this and other efforts are underway, there is still a need for deeper understanding of the perceptions of and attitudes toward ministry within the church. Given the relationship between the numbers of individuals trained and the availability of candidates to assume leadership roles, it is important that time, effort, and resources be dedicated to carefully examine the issues surrounding low participation and possible solutions to this challenge. From an educational perspective, the challenge for the national church is to recruit members as learners in formal, informal, and non-formal engagements with an aim of producing ministry leaders in a continuous and sustained way. Thus, the main objective of this study is to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of the young people toward ministry training in the national church. This issue may be studied from a variety of perspectives, that is, theological, biblical, ethical, and educational. Therefore, the scope of this paper is to examine this phenomenon in the Jamaican Foursquare context applying biblical and educational perspectives in this analysis.

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<sup>12</sup> Bell, "Indigenous Church," The Huffington Post. [www.huffpost.com](http://www.huffpost.com) (July 26, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Gareth Phillips, "President's Report" presented at the ICFG, Jamaica Convention Business Meeting, April 15, 2017.

## **Biblical Foundation for the Jamaica’s Ministry Training Program**

The Bible provides very clear guidance on the nature and importance of biblical training especially for those who are leaders in matters related to faith and spirituality.<sup>14</sup> The role of the Bible in providing details concerning spiritual matters and its acceptance in respect of its ability to teach “*Truth*” and substance is strong among some Christians. This position is particularly true for Pentecostals who accept the doctrine of the Inerrancy of the Scripture.<sup>15</sup> Given the Pentecostal perspective on the Bible, it is an accepted assumption that the Bible would be considered a source or reference book to guide or direct on educational matters such as what should be taught, and how knowledge should be delivered within a ministry training context. As such, the Bible is being used to establish foundational principles of training.

One key scripture that informs the foundation of the Jamaican ministry training context is Ephesians 4:11-13:

*“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.”<sup>16</sup>*

There is consensus among biblical scholars that this text in Ephesians refers to the ministry gifts given by Jesus to the church upon His ascension.<sup>17</sup> Some have referred to these gifts as the five-fold ministry gifts, though there is disagreement among scholars on whether there are four or five such gifts.<sup>18</sup> Notwithstanding, these gifts have been accepted as offices or functions that are useful in bringing about a direct and desirable outcome among believers, that is, for believers to achieve unity of their faith and knowledge of the Son of God. In other words, these gifts are understood and taught to be related to ministry leadership roles. Having been activated in the Church, the body of Christ, there are strong expectations for what these gifts will produce in believers collectively.

A point of emphasis for this paper is in verses 12 and 13. There is specific reference made to or suggestion about what should be taught, by whom and the purpose or the desired outcome of the training. In summary, those assigned ministry leadership offices should be capable of training

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<sup>14</sup> Tom Julien, “Training Leaders by Planting Seed Truths”. In J. Amstutz (Ed)., *Disciples of all Nations: A Reader. Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (2018). EditorialReneuvo. www.EditorialReneuvo.com. 125-128.

<sup>15</sup> Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van. Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. Revised and Updated Vol. 1. (Los Angeles, CA: Foursquare Media, 2016) 351

<sup>16</sup> New Living Translation (NLT), Tyndale House Publishers Inc. (2007)

<sup>17</sup> Matthew Henry, “Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible (Super Value Series)”, Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Henry, Concise Commentary, 2003.



and developing others to do ministry work, that is, to disciple God's people so that in turn, they are able to disciple others. A contemporary educator, based on this biblical discourse, may characterize learning as practical and experiential in nature since the believers having learned, must then do. Additionally, taken further, learning should be transformative in that it produces demonstrable differences in the way believers live and express their faith. The key indicator of learning or standard of achievement to be assessed is presented in verse 13 as measuring up to the complete standard of Christ. Based on this criterion, one extrapolation is that, if individuals are not measuring up then the church (collectively) will not measure up. In such a situation, the ministry training would have failed and all the attendant expectations resting on that outcome

Another foundational scripture is 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

*“All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.*<sup>19</sup>

As an expansion of the previous text, the current renders greater insight into the competencies to be mastered by ministry leaders: teaching, rebuking, correcting. Following training, the expectation is for ministry leaders followed by all disciples to have mastered the skills making them thoroughly equipped for every good work. At the end of training, the individual should be complete with the knowledge, competences, and attitudes, equipping him or her for every good work. The distinction being made between teaching and training is taken as in the field of education where they represent different learning experiences. Training emphasizes more practical applications of knowledge and strengthens learner praxis while teaching involves more mental capacities leading to conceptual and theoretical learning.<sup>20</sup>

The pattern described in the select scriptures, implies that the process of learning remains continuous and reproducible. A continuous process of learning refers to the opportunity for increasing numbers of individuals to participate in the process overtime. Reproducible suggests that those who participate should be able to facilitate the transfer of or interaction with the related aspects of the learning that are required by others. The thread of interpretation presents a distinction between those who are called to a higher responsibility and those who are the recipients of benefits derived from those so called. Those with the higher responsibility must ensure that they become thoroughly equipped to accomplish the call. This call also includes the others who are of the community of faith who must demonstrate the desire to “...obey everything I commanded you” (Matthew 28:20).

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<sup>19</sup> New International Version (NIV) Biblica. Inc. (2011).

<sup>20</sup> Ian MacRae, *Teaching is Different from Training: How to Use Both Effectively*. Training Industry (November 16, 2017). <https://trainingindustry.com/articles/workforce-development/teaching-is-different-from-training-how-to-use-botheffectively/#:~:text=Teaching%20is%20more%20theoretical%20and,is%20intended%20to%20develop%20abilities>.

## **Towards a Jamaican Foursquare Philosophy of Christian Higher Education**

Emerging from the biblical foundation are some educational concepts that are linked to existing educational theories. These will be further examined when outlining the philosophical grounding for ministry training in Jamaica. As a Bible training institution, the Jamaican ministry training program fits within the Christian higher education context. For an educational experience to be characterized as Christian education, its foundation must be the Bible.<sup>21</sup> That requires that the Bible and biblical principles be prominently featured in the curriculum. That is, the interactions in the curriculum should illuminate Bible teachings and principles, and all intended outcomes should be consistent with the values taught in the Bible. Thus, learning should not only be about the Bible and issues related to its authenticity and acceptance, but a deliberate focus should be placed on the content of the Bible. This is satisfactorily met in the Jamaican program with a very strong emphasis on Bible denoted by the course coding.

Christian Education requires that suitable individuals serve as members of faculty.<sup>22</sup> For Christian ministry training, there is a clear expectation that all faculty members are born again believers who boast a testimony of their salvation and boldly maintain a Christian witness in their daily lives (Matthew 5:16). This attribute is necessary for faculty and becomes a platform on which to engage learners in discussions about their own faith. All faculty members serve as role models for learners thus their foundation of faith needs to be in accordance with the institution. Students' interactions with faculty is expected to be inside and outside of classroom. These types of interaction have been found to be empowering and "...essential for high-quality learning experiences".<sup>23</sup> Those meaningful interactions between students and faculty influence the views and actions of students. It is for that reason, space, and time must be allocated and encouragement of such interactions be a constant feature within the learning environment. The quality of the faculty is an indicator of the quality of the learning experience.<sup>24</sup>

Recruiting highly qualified and competent faculty is essential in ensuring that students experience will more likely be of a high quality, in terms of what they are expected to know and are able to do. The wealth of support for student learning and development becomes greater with a strong faculty profile. Learners could get guidance on a number of ministry or field-based questions and gain personal insights as they work closely with faculty.

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Lowell Haines, Michael Hammonds, Jessica Martin and Alana Dean Price, "Christian Higher Education as a High Calling". *Christian Higher Education*, 17(5), (2018) 4. DOI: 10.1080/15363759.2018.1500241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2018.1500241>

<sup>22</sup> Haines et al., *Christian Higher Education*, (2018) 4.

<sup>23</sup> George Kuh, Jillian Kinzie, John Schuh, Elizabeth Whitt, & Associates, "*Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*". San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (2005), 370

<sup>24</sup> Kuh et al, *Creating Conditions that Matter* (2005). 370

Consistent with Pentecostal ethos, the faculty should be spirit-filled.<sup>25</sup> The role of the Holy Spirit in influencing and transforming lives cannot be minimized or understated. Thus, the opportunities faculty will have to help shape those experiences for learners require that they be ready and able to fully engage. The spirit engagement is one of the distinguishing features of Christian versus a traditional education. This process of transformation or spiritual formation is one of the main reasons individuals give for enrolling in a Christian institution. Therefore, the Holy Spirit must be allowed to flow into and through those times of student–faculty interactions and impact both parties.

Christian Education also requires that the core values of the institution be Christian and aligned to the Christian worldview. These values should be embraced by administrators, faculty, and learners. Christian administrators should be committed to ensuring that all members of their Christian community are exposed and are practicing the values. Some institutions require of their learners and faculty to sign code of conduct booklets or sheets as an attempt to strengthen adherence to the value standards. Christian administrators will need to be firm even in the face of resistance and be willing to exercise authority when there is repeated and excessive violation. However, there is an expectation that there will be appropriate measures of grace that facilitate personal growth especially for learners who might be struggling.

For any academic program, an essential curriculum consideration is balance. Balance in curriculum design refers to achieving an appropriate combination of content and experience to enhance learning.<sup>26</sup> Content and experience are such that every learning engagement inherently has aspects of both. However, curriculum designers must use this understanding to account for the proportion of each. The achievement of the best combination leads to curriculum unity. The unity of content and experience is shaped by competing philosophies, experiences, and andragogical perspectives. Thus, consideration about unity involves constant negotiation of all those variables. Balancing further involves a trade–off between the weight and range of content and experience in terms of subject matter and the learner. Subject matter refers to what is taught while consideration about the learner focuses on needs and ability. More often than not, curricula are imbalanced in favor of subject matter, especially theological education which is often criticized for being more theoretical than practical.<sup>27</sup> Bran de Mynck and others echo that Christian education must shift from pure intellectualism and ensure that there is space within the curriculum

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<sup>25</sup> Elize Celic, Beverley Christian, Andrew Matthes, Christian Higher Education and Students Diverse Beliefs: Impacts and Challenges. *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal* 11(1) (2016) 12.

<sup>26</sup> Fred Lunenburg and Allan Ornstein, “*Educational Administration: Concepts and Practices*”. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, (2004).

<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/icctej/vol11/iss1/2>

<sup>27</sup> Lunenburg and Ornstein, *Educational Administration*, (2004)

to allow for reflection that will result in spiritual change.<sup>28</sup> As practiced more so in the USA than in Europe, there should be a blending of general and specific knowledge related to one's calling. This can be facilitated through the engagement of specialists within a given vocation who can bridge the gap by offering more practical insights and experiences. A strong focus on learners or potential learners would be important.

Learners who select to attend a Christian institution do so consciously and for reasons related to spiritual formation.<sup>29</sup> These learners are intentional about their spiritual development and are responding to a sense of call on their lives. The perception that everyone who enrolls in ministerial training does so to become a pastor is changing.<sup>30</sup> Now, there is a greater appreciation for the fact that young people enroll in Christian education for a variety of reasons, however, a large number still attend to find the particular area of ministry in which they will serve. An important aspect of learner's spiritual development is spiritual identity. Spiritual identity is defined as achieving a sense of connection to the larger meaning of existence and one's purpose in life.<sup>31</sup> Chris Kiesling and others add the dimension of behavioral response that is consistent with the individual's internal values.<sup>32</sup> The behavioral response element is significant and relates more to traditional definitions of spirituality. It considers expressions of religious acts of worship or a demonstration of commitment to a community of faith with specific relational expectations and lifestyle practices. Thus, the term spirituality when used in this paper, refers to Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality carries a more nuanced understanding of adherence to traditional Judeo-Christian views of spiritual life.<sup>33</sup>

The specific use of *spirituality* in this paper to refer to *Christian spirituality* eliminates the tension observed in the literature between the traditional and contemporary use of the term. Further, Christian spirituality is readily understood as spiritual formation which should be the essence of a Christian education. Learners in Christian education usually desire spiritual growth that is manifested in a change in cognitive understandings and behavioral practices. The experience students have in Christian education must lead to greater commitment to their calling

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<sup>28</sup> Bram de Muynck, Pieter Vos, Jan Hoogland, and Jan Van der Stoep, "A distinctive of Christian Higher Education: Educating for Vocation". *Christian Higher Education 16(1-2)*, (2017) 8. DOI: 10.1080/15363759.2017.1251151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2017.1251151>

<sup>29</sup> Chiroma Nathan, "*Mentoring and the Ministerial Formation of Seminary Students*", Stellenbosch Theological Journal vol 3.n1 (2017)

<sup>30</sup> Nathan, *Mentoring and the Ministerial Formation* (2017).

<sup>31</sup> Chris Kiesling, Marilyn Montgomery, Gwendolyn Sorell, Ronald Cowell, "Identity and Spirituality: A Psychosocial Exploration of the Sense of Spiritual Self." *Development Psychology 42(6)*, pp. 1269-1277 (2006).

<sup>32</sup> Kiesling, Montgomery, Sorell and Cowell, "Identity and Spirituality" *Development Psychology, 42(6)* (2006).

<sup>33</sup> Philip Sheldrake, "Christian Spirituality and Social Transformation", Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.231. <https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-231?rskey=UMeryr&result=1>. (2016)

based on a fuller understanding of the calling and God's expectation of them. It should enrich their knowledge and understanding of the Bible and guide their development of a life of personal commitment to the discipline of the Christian faith. Those learners also develop in their practice of holistic ministry to others, especially to those who are in need. Learners should leave with greater confidence in their relationship with God and a heightened sense of the role of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. Given the impact of a Christian education on all learners, for institutions that are primarily focused on scholastic purposes, those who have not yet had a spiritual renewal may be admitted. However, for institutions that are primarily focused on preparation for Christian ministry, prior to admissions, the learner must be born again.

The two educational concepts that emerged in the Biblical foundation that are crucial in Christian education are experiential learning and transformative learning. These educational concepts point to two groups of educational theories that may provide a basis for a discussion on educational approaches to learning. The theories are Experiential Learning Theories and Transformational Learning Theories.

### **Experiential Learning Theories**

Kolb's developed his theory based on his view of learning as a process of transforming experience into meaning.<sup>34</sup> In other words, he believes learners actively create their own knowledge and meaning based on their experiences. He purports that learners move through a four-step process to gain knowledge. Each successive step builds upon the foundation provided by the previous. The steps are: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. How it works for the learner is that she or he openly and without bias encounters knowledge in a variety of ways and places, usually from a teacher who presents information, whether written or oral, in a traditional classroom or in a lab—that is the concrete experience. Then, the learner reflects on the experience by questioning various aspects in terms of his or her thoughts, feelings, and understandings. Essentially, the learner relives the experience from different perspectives and formulates his or her impressions and thoughts about the experience—that is Reflective Observation. The learner synthesizes his or her thoughts into a coherent set of propositions representing an integrated view of reality—that is Abstract Conceptualization. Finally, the learner tests his or her hypothesis or apply his or her ideas by making decisions and solving problems and noting the outcomes—that is Active Experimentation.

Roger, another experiential learning theorist, advances his own theory of learning which is called meaningful learning. Meaningful Learning is experiential learning where the learner is the most important influence on all major factors affecting the learning experience, that is, the process is initiated, and assessed by the learner based on his or her needs and direct involvement in the

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<sup>34</sup> Nancy J. Evan, Deanna S. Forney, and Florence Guido-DiBrito, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*. California: Jossey-Bass. (2009)

process.<sup>35</sup> This theory is influenced by constructivism where the learner is seen as a co-creator of knowledge. Roger foregrounds the learner's needs as the only suitable measure of the value of the learning. With the role of the teacher being the "*guide on the side*", as facilitator, the teacher is responsible for providing the right resources for learners and assist them in clarifying their needs or goals so they can pursue. Here, learning occurs as the learner discovers and finds the knowledge that he or she needs and are able to apply in order to solve problems. As the name suggests, learning is meaningful so far as it bears relevance to the learner's needs or goals.

### **Transformational Learning Theories**

Like the experiential learning theories, transformational learning theory focuses on the experience of the learner. Experience becomes learning when it transforms the learner through his or her interpretations or meaning making of the experience. Jack Mezirow, the lead theorist, believes that experience is the main source of knowledge but will only prove meaningful when the learner can critically reflect upon the experience and evaluate his or her assumptions, beliefs, and values.<sup>36</sup> When those lenses prove to be inadequate then the learner must replace them with a "*more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective*" set of lens.<sup>37</sup>

According to Mezirow, an experience cannot be transformative without critical reflection. Critical reflection is the process by which the learner examines his or her perspective on self and the world around. The outcome of critical reflection is reflective judgement. This is when an individual arrives at a perspective on his or her own previously held views and ideas. He notes that not all experiences are transformative thus, he is referring to experiences that he describes as disorienting dilemmas. Disorienting dilemmas are personal experiences that bring about crises, usually unexpected and undesired challenges. An individual may choose to ignore those experiences, but he believes that those experiences present opportunities for transformative learning.

A major criticism worth considering and the implications for the immediate context, points to the gap between the theoretical construction of the theory and the implementation to practice.<sup>38</sup> Among strong criticisms on one hand and strong agreement among scholars and practitioners about the value of transformative learning on the other hand, lies a concern for the implementation.

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<sup>35</sup> Dale H. Schunk, "Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective" New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc. (2012). 561

<sup>36</sup> Sharan Merriam, "The Role of Cognitive Development in Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory", *Adult Education Quarterly* 55(1), pp. 60-68. (2004) DOI: 10.1177/0741713604268891

<sup>37</sup> Jack Mezirow, "Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory." In J, Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation* (pp. 7). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (2000).

<sup>38</sup> Merriam, "The Role of Cognitive Development in Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory" (2004).

## **Application to the Jamaican Foursquare Educational Context**

The two educational theories provide key insights about the nature of teaching and learning and the learning environment for ministry training. The key elements relating to teaching approach are synthesized under three emergent themes: knowledge of the learner; nature of interactions; Role of the facilitator. and, the role of the facilitator. Knowledge of the learner – both theories emphasize the learner’s needs and goals as essential for organizing and delivering content. An understanding of the learners’ challenges and strengths as well as a sense of their spiritual and vocational calling will allow for better alignment and engagement. In ministry training, this knowledge is even more important for fostering good rapport and building relationships. The knowledge will assist in bridging gaps and opening opportunities for ministry to the learner as well as by the learner.

**Nature of interactions.** Given the learner centered focus, considerations are about what the learners need to know and are able to do. Strong emphasis is placed on the learner utilizing preferred learning styles or initiating a process that helps them to gain greater insight. The use of dialogue involving self-regulated questions, and introspection leading to deep processing of the learner’s own thoughts and perspectives are essential. This abstract conceptual reflection, while very cognitive, allows for more practical rather than theoretical involvement by the learner. Again, in this ministry context, learners are continuously building their own interpretations and meanings through opportunities to work and share within small and large groups that include facilitators. Therefore, the learners are developing practical skills through experiential learning strategies such as problem-based learning and case studies.

**Role of the facilitator.** Each facilitator must see him or herself as God’s instrument through whom the Holy Spirit will work to meet the learner’s needs. To aid in the process of transformative and experiential learning, the facilitator must be able to scaffold the learners so that they are increasingly able to participate in the learning activities. For complex processes that are new or for which the learners have little or no skills, the facilitator would be the main resource for those learners. As an experienced learner, the facilitator must be patient yet focused on the goals and desired learning outcomes to be achieved. For example, transformative learning, to engage the kind of critical reflection and evaluation required, learners would need the facilitator’s ongoing assistance until they have mastered the skills. This argument is in response to a criticism among scholars that transformative learning requires a very high level of cognitive development which is typically lacking among large numbers of adult learners even at graduate levels.<sup>39</sup> However, having appreciable knowledge about the learners would be the starting point for facilitators that helps them to better navigate the needs of the learners. All learners must be engaged fairly and be supported sufficiently so that they are able to successfully achieve their goals.

**Mentoring.** A primary goal of any ministry training program is to equip individuals who are grounded in biblical knowledge and competent in ministry skills, that include: preaching,

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<sup>39</sup> Merriam, “The Role of Cognitive Development in Mezirow’s Transformational Learning Theory” (2004).

serving, cooperating, delegating, and communicating.<sup>40</sup> Thus, an important learning outcome of such process is for learners to demonstrate the connection between theory and practice. A good measure of the achievement of such outcome is when the learner, being placed in a novel context, is able to engage the space with confidence and functions effectively based on the demands and needs of that context. Mentoring is a means by which learners can build their competence in the integration of theory and practice in healthy and empowering ways. Here, it is acknowledged that academic training provides the concrete knowledge and experience for learners, but the spiritual and ministerial formation required for effective ministry is greatly enhanced through positive mentorship.<sup>41</sup>

Mentorship from a ministry training perspective is where a more skilled and experienced ministry leader commits to devoting the time and effort to build a mutually beneficial relationship with a less experienced minister around practical ministry essentials.<sup>42</sup> Contemporary descriptions of the benefits of a mentorship relationship can be illustrated using examples from the Bible, chief was Jesus and his disciples especially in moments of individual interactions; then there was Paul and Timothy.<sup>43</sup> Mentorship is, therefore, not a new phenomenon neither is it an invention of modern-day thinkers, as such may be freely embraced by even more traditional training systems as a meaningful, time proven complementary training experience for those preparing for ministry. The experience of this nature is not likely within a strict academic environment and so must be an add-on to formal academic training.

According to Nathan Chiroma, mentoring in a ministry training context provides support for three areas of development: spiritual, character, and ministry formation.<sup>44</sup> Thus, mentoring enables the pursuit of ministry skills, establish ministry identity, and integrate theoretical knowledge into dialogue with community.<sup>45</sup> According to Kenley Hall, the focus of mentoring is not the strengthening of what you do but centrally, it is the strengthening of who you are.<sup>46</sup> It facilitates the maturing of the minister as he or she gets the opportunity to make errors under guidance and to benefit from direct observation. The mentoring relationship opens the opportunity for ideas and concepts to be clarified and supported by a more experienced minister. In spite of the large numbers of graduates who never enter or leave ministry between years 1 and 10 after receiving

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<sup>40</sup> Nathan Chiroma and Anita Cloete, “*Mentoring as Supportive Pedagogy in Theological Training*”, HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies 71(3), (pp. 2695 – 2703). <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2695> (2015).

<sup>41</sup> Chiroma and Cloete, *Mentoring as Supportive Pedagogy*, (2015).

<sup>42</sup> Chiroma and Cloete, *Mentoring as Supportive Pedagogy*, (2015).

<sup>43</sup> Desmond Gaius Boldeau, "Developing a Mentoring Model, Based on Christ's Approach to Discipleship, for Intern Pastors in the British Union" (2014). Project Documents. 18. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/18>

<sup>44</sup> Nathan, *Mentoring and the Ministerial Formation* (2017).

<sup>45</sup> Nathan, *Mentoring and the Ministerial Formation* (2017)

<sup>46</sup> Kenley Hall, “The Critical Role of Mentoring in Pastoral Formation”, *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 11(1), pp. 42-53, (2017)



theological training, those who remained 20 years later cited the bonding relationship during mentorship as their reason.<sup>47</sup>

Akira Shinohara offers a compelling perspective on the *role* and *qualification* of the mentor in spiritual mentoring that is to be applied in Christian educational contexts. Her view is rooted in what she describes as the true goal of spiritual mentoring.<sup>48</sup> That goal is to achieve an integrated, truthful, authentic life which she suggests must also be infused in the purpose of Christian education. The role of the mentor, she purports, is a non-hierarchical equal friend. Qualification refers to the character of the mentor who must be intentionally nurtured just as the protégé. This nurturing through self-examination occurs not by being alone but by respectfully listening to the other friend. Hence, both elements are important to spiritual mentoring in that, the stronger the qualification, the more the mentor will be able to perform as friend. She also alluded to tension within the mentor stemming from a perceived lack of internal integrity caused by dissonance between role and qualification. An example of how this tension may occur is when the mentor knowingly has secret pride but acts as though innocent. Another is where the mentor fails to listen attentively as a friend who remains unwaveringly committed to the journey of the other. When mentors fall into these conditions, she describes it as self-deception which she contends need to be addressed but this consciousness may only surface if the mentor submits to self-examination.

In summary, the espoused Christian higher education philosophy is founded upon the Bible, and contemporary educational theories of Experiential and Transformative Learning for adult learners. Mentoring is strongly emphasized as an essential ministry training component for refining the desirable attributes already formed through formal in-class learning. Content focuses on the development of the individual for ministry leadership and the acquisition of skills to develop others for ongoing ministry commitment. Learning is supported by a curriculum rooted in the Judeo-Christian Bible with the appropriate balance of subject matter and experience tailored towards learner characteristics and needs. Finally, there are highly qualified and Spirit-filled faculty that remain flexible and willing to support student development through ongoing interactions in and outside of class. In the next section, a close examination of potential learners is undertaken to determine their mindset towards ministry training in the Jamaican Church.

### **Current Perceptions of Ministry Training in the Jamaican Foursquare Church**

The future of a movement depends in large part on the ability of those leading the movement to secure the upcoming generation's commitment to the cause of the movement.<sup>49</sup> Responsible leadership requires that current leaders communicate vision that includes the preparation of future generations to secure the sustainability of an entity. This practice has been observed across all

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<sup>47</sup> Hall, "The Critical Role of Mentoring" (2017).

<sup>48</sup> Akira Shinohara, *Spiritual Formation and Mentoring: An Approach from the Christian Tradition of Spiritual Direction*. *Christian Education Journal* 6(2). (2002) 14.

<sup>49</sup> Richard L. Draft, *Management* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western (2005). 848

types of organizations, in all kinds of industries, and therefore should be no less important for faith-based organizations. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7a, the principle of preparing the current and future generations for continuity is illustrated in the instructions from God. The training of children was specifically identified as part of the strategy for ensuring that obedience to the commands of the Lord be observed and practiced in the present and also in the future. The Jamaican Foursquare Church with its current focus on understanding the views of the younger generation regarding ministry training is applying such principle which is a good educational leadership, organizational, and biblical practice for sustainable development.

As the Jamaican Foursquare church seeks to expand ministry training for leadership development consistent with Stage 2 of the Four-Stage Model of National Church Development, the leadership desires to better understand the factors that may be contributing to low participation in ministry training. Given that goal, the leadership is especially focused on the perceptions of training for ministry among the young people. Specifically, the leadership sought to examine three main areas: (1) the attitude of the young people towards ministry and ministry training, (2) the extent to which the church promotes ministry training for young people, and (3) the value placed on ministry training opportunities within Foursquare Jamaica by the young people. These areas were examined in relation to improving participation in ministry training.

A recent survey was conducted among the Jamaican Foursquare young people at a major annual youth event in Kingston, Jamaica. A survey approach was chosen for all the known advantages associated with this design.<sup>50</sup> One hundred and eight (108) questionnaires were randomly distributed following an open public invitation to participate. Seventy-one questionnaires were returned resulting in a response rate of approximately 66% and two were later deemed unusable because they were incomplete with approximately 25% of the questionnaire items completed in each case. There were 19 males and 49 females. There were approximately 36 respondents in age range 13–18 years old; 15 respondents were in the age range 19–24 years old; 12 respondents were in age range 25–30 years old; and 5 respondents were in age range 31–35 years old. They were from all the regions of the church across the island: District 1 had 22 respondents, District 2 had 11 respondents, District 3 had 1 respondent, District 4 had 12 respondents, District 5 had 11 respondents, and the “Other” category had 1 respondent. The difference observed in some totals was due to the non-response on that specific item by participants but was retained in sample due to the already relatively small sample size.

The survey instrument had 26 items; four were Likert scale items, two were continuous rating scales, one open ended item, the others were a mix of different types of questions, and three related to demography. In order to examine more closely the young people’s perceptions of ministry training, two scales were developed from the dataset through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in SPSS Version 20: “*Attitude towards Ministry*” and “*Ministry Aspiration*”. The first scale had

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<sup>50</sup> John Creswell, “*Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*” (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication Inc.

11 items with psychometric properties of:  $N=69$ ;  $M=1.96$ ;  $SD=.06$ ;  $\alpha=.83$ ; Skewness=.996. The second was a 4-item scale with psychometric properties of:  $N=69$ ,  $M=2.17$ ,  $SD=.07$ ,  $\alpha=.68$ , Skewness=-.251. Based on these results, the scales were included in the analysis of the Jamaican Foursquare young people's perceptions.

The Attitude towards Ministry Scale captured thoughts, beliefs and behaviors by the respondents that are indicative of a heart towards ministry. The attitude towards ministry construct as operationalized in this study is synonymous with spiritual formation discussed in other sections of this paper. The behaviors and beliefs examined by this scale are similar to those typically considered for spiritual formation since a level of spiritual formation is required as a precondition for participation in ministry training. This presupposition is based on the assumption that spiritual formation shapes worldviews and influences directly the behaviors of individuals. The second scale, "Ministry Aspiration", captures respondents' sense of a call of God on their lives and a desire to function as a major ministry leader who is empowered by the Holy Spirit. This scale is included in order to measure the likelihood of participation in ministry training. The assumption aligned to the development of this scale is based on the views of motivational theorists that individuals will act in ways that lead to the fulfillment of their desires.<sup>51</sup> This scale combined with other variables in the dataset were crucial in this analysis.

In the Jamaican Foursquare Church, an overwhelming majority of the young people (approximately 96%), indicated a desire to study and learn more about God and His word. Several of them (approximately 80%) believed that studying should occur in an institutional context. Collectively, they have interest in two main areas of studies: General Ministry (44%) and Biblical Studies (44%). They reported strong mean scores for their zeal for and commitment to God, 8.2 and 8 on a 10-point scale respectively. When asked about the church's promotion of ministry training, approximately 42% indicated that promotion was with some measure of regularity, approximately 31% indicated that promotion was seldom if ever done, and approximately 25% were not sure if enough was being done to promote training.

**Attitude Towards Ministry.** Results from Kruskal-Wallis H Test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in Attitude towards Ministry scores between age groups,  $\chi^2(3) = 11.774$ ,  $p = 0.008$ , with a mean rank attitude score of *41.61* for age group 13 -18 years old, *24.47* for age group 19-24 years old, *32.13* for age group 25-30 years old, and *19.10* for age group 31-35 years old. Post-hoc analysis using Mann-Whitney U Test found that attitude towards ministry was stronger among younger teenagers ( $U=133.000$ ,  $p=0.005$ ) than the 19 to 24 years old. However, with an effect size of 0.002, the difference observed was considered trivial. Similarly, there was a statistically significant difference in the attitude scores between districts,  $\chi^2(5) = 13.071$ ,  $p = 0.023$ , with a mean rank attitude score of *36.48* for district 1, *31.45* for district 2, *1.00* for district 3, *18.00* for district 4, *35.68* for district 5, *24.00* for district 6. Post-hoc analysis using Mann-Whitney U Test found that attitude towards ministry for those in district 1 ( $U= 34.00$ ,

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<sup>51</sup> Dale Schunk, Paul Pintrich, and Judith Meece, "*Motivation in Education: Theory, Research, and Applications*" (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc. (2008).

$p=0.000$ ) was stronger than those in district 4. However, with an effect size of 0.001, the difference observed was also considered trivial. Effect size calculation was  $r = z/\sqrt{N}$ .

**Ministry Aspiration.** Based on the Kruskal-Wallis H test, there was statistically significant difference in the ministry aspiration scores between age groups,  $\chi^2(3) = 16.492$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , with a mean rank aspiration score of 40.86 for age group 13 -18 years old, 37.20 for age group 19-24 years old, 22.17 for age group 25-30 years old, and 10.20 for age group 31-35 years old. Post-hoc analysis using Mann-Whitney U test found a statistically significant difference between 13-18 years old and 25 to 30 years old ( $U=94.000$ ,  $p=0.003$ ), with an effect size of 0.002 which was trivial. When comparing the young people's attitude and aptitude scores, a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test showed a statistically significant ( $Z=-2.389$ ,  $p=0.017$ ) difference in the mean score for Attitude towards Ministry ( $M=1.96$ ,  $SD=0.49$ ) and Ministry Aspiration ( $M=2.17$ ,  $SD=0.60$ ).

To examine the relationships among the key variables in this study related to participation in ministry training, the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Test was used because of the violation of assumptions for the Pearson Correlation Test. These key variables included: Ministry Aspiration, Attitude towards Ministry, Desire to Study, Institutionalized Training, Area of Ministry Training and Training Promotion. A statistically significant relationship between Attitude towards Ministry and Ministry Aspiration ( $r_s(69)=0.24$ ,  $p=0.05$ ) was found. Also, the relationship between Attitude towards Ministry and Institutionalized Training ( $r_s(68)=0.27$ ,  $p=0.03$ ); as well as Training Promotion ( $r_s(67)=0.27$ ,  $p=0.03$ ) were found to be statistically significant. Additionally, there was a statistically significant relationship between Ministry Aspiration and Desire to Study ( $r_s(69)=0.24$ ,  $p=0.04$ ). Further interrogation of the data, revealed additional statistically significant relationship between Attitude towards Ministry and Zeal for God ( $r_s(65)=-0.29$ ,  $p=0.20$ ); and a highly statistically significant negative relationship with Commitment to God ( $r_s(67)=-0.36$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Ministry Aspiration also had a highly statistically significant negative relationship with Commitment to God ( $r_s(67)=-0.33$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). These negative patterns of associations are counterintuitive and necessitate further investigation to better understand the reason for the observed patterns. Such investigation is beyond the scope of this study but would be part of a future study.

A more detailed analysis was conducted on the data to determine if the prospects of doing ministry in the Jamaican Foursquare church was appealing for young people. Majority (80%) of the young people reported that they found Foursquare ministry appealing. Eighteen percent (18%) remained undecided. When Ministry Appeal was examined for correlation with the other key variables, statistically significant relationships were observed for Training Promotion ( $r_s(66)=0.26$ ,  $p=0.04$ ); and Area of Study ( $r_s(66)=0.25$ ,  $p=0.04$ ).

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the young people in the Jamaican Foursquare Church appeared to be more homogenous in their zeal for and commitment to God, as well as in their desire to study about God and the Bible. These young people appeared to be beyond the point of salvation and have developed some thoughts and responses to activities typically practiced by those characterized as maturing in their faith. These activities help to shape their spiritual character by embracing some Christian discipline. For example, they engage in prayers for self

(approximately 79%), and for others (approximately 69%), regularly participate in church or ministry related activities (approximately 87%), and their lives are influenced by their pastors (approximately 76%). The outcome was measured using the Attitude towards Ministry Scale which yielded an average score above the midpoint of the scale which implies a positive direction.

For these young people, the Ministry Aspiration Scale developed as part of this study, revealed that their average score was above the midpoint of the range of the scale, which also implies a positive direction. An important component of aspiration for ministry is empowerment by the Holy Spirit.<sup>52</sup> From a Pentecostal perspective, Spirit empowerment is considered absolutely necessary for ministry effectiveness. Thus, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit plays an essential role in the preparation of the believer for ministry. The study revealed that approximately 58% of the young people had never spoken in tongues. This high percentage prompted more detailed analyses of Spirit Empowerment in relations to Attitude towards Ministry and Ministry Aspiration. Spirit Empowerment was a dichotomous variable created in the dataset based on those who spoke in tongues and those who did not. Mann–Whitney U Test found statistically significant difference in Attitude and Aspiration scores for those who spoke in tongues and those who did not. Those who did not speak in tongues scored higher on Attitude towards Ministry mean rank= 38.81,  $U= 387.500$  ( $Z=-2.154$ ),  $p=0.031$ ; and Ministry Aspiration mean rank 46.63,  $U= 75.000$  ( $Z=-6.093$ ),  $p<0.001$  than those who spoke in tongues (mean rank=28.34 and 17.18 respectively). These results do not align to generally accepted beliefs primarily among Pentecostals regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in preparation.

As was reported earlier, the young people's aspiration score is in fact stronger than their attitude towards ministry score. In other words, their desire for ministry engagement was stronger than their attitude. This scenario may prove helpful in connecting them to the ministry training program by appealing directly to their desires. Therefore, a deeper understanding of those desires will help in making strategic decisions regarding increasing participation. In spite of the difference in mean scores, the two factors share a positive relationship and are conceptually considered necessary for participation in ministry training and ultimately succeeding in ministry.<sup>53</sup> Of note is that the young people's attitude towards ministry has a positive association with their zeal for God. Their zeal for God has a moderately positive association with their commitment to God. This network of direct and indirect associations among variables may also provide further opportunity for increased participation.

The study revealed that there has not been a targeted and consistent promotion of ministry training within the churches. However, the findings confirmed that promotion of ministry training opportunity and the area of study contribute positively to how the young people viewed ministry in Foursquare. Combined, the two variables explain approximately 13% of the variance observed

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<sup>52</sup> John Amstutz, "Spiritual Gifts". In J. Amstutz (Ed.), *Disciples of all Nations: A Reader. Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (2018). 114-118. EditorialRenuevo. [www.EditorialRenuevo.com](http://www.EditorialRenuevo.com).

<sup>53</sup> Stephen Gorard, Beng Huat See, and Peter Davies, *The Impact of Attitudes and Aspirations on Educational Attainment and Participation*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/education-young-people-parents-full.pdf> (April 2012).

in Ministry Appeal. This finding suggests that increasing frequency of promotion in the churches would help the image of Foursquare ministry. Additionally, having the young people commit to an area of study is helpful.

Largely, the results showed that the young people desire formal institutional ministry training. The insight based on this finding has implications for how we present training opportunities. It appears that our young people are more likely to disregard training opportunities that lack institutional representation which may explain the low participation in training overtime. The more training by Foursquare reflects standard or universal elements of institutionalized learning, the more likely Attitude Towards Ministry among the young people will improve. Also, the more that promotion of training is done in the churches, the more likely Attitude Toward Ministry will improve.

The study found a positive relationship between Ministry Aspiration and the young people's desire to study. This association between these two variables, while of a small effect, represents a direct influence on a decision that could lead to participation. Creating an environment in which the young people can discover and be affirmed in their calling by God would increase their aspiration for ministry which should influence an increase in their desire to study. The corollary argument for leadership would also hold true. Thus, the church has this opportunity to focus more intentionally on building such an environment that would simultaneously support multiple goals resulting a great outcome for all.

The implications for the national church are that the leaders, especially the pastors, remain a significant link in the strategy to raise up a new generation of leaders. Their role extends beyond being a role model to being champion and chair-leader for the training and development of new leaders. As is underscored in this study, the promotion of ministry training by the pastors may result in increased strength in attitude towards ministry. Encouraging young people, especially teenagers to become involved in activities that enhance their spiritual development also shape their attitude towards ministry. A positive attitude towards ministry influences aspiration for ministry leadership. As aspiration becomes stronger, the desire to study God's word grows and may ultimately lead to participation.

Where pastors are ill-equipped and uncommitted to the training, the responsibility for increasing promotion of ministry training opportunities should be undertaken by the national church. Resources should be made available to the Bible training institution to facilitate and enhance the communication of updated programmatic information and opportunities. A deliberate recruitment strategy by the institution to target different age groups with specific program information should also prove helpful in addressing low participation.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of developing leaders who can reproduce leaders remains essential for a national church, like Jamaica, that must carry on its mandate of preparing all saints for every good work. ICFG's Stage 2 of the Four-Stage Model for National Church Development is the pivot on which learning, training, and advancement are balanced, and movement through the other stages are

secured. This goal is best served in a healthy and thriving Christian ministry context that consistently supports its leaders and increasingly sends missionaries who can effectively fulfill their calling and assignments. Maintaining a healthy Christian ministry context, which is a highly desirable goal among those who lead, requires shared core values and knowledge of the ministry's direction. Thus, the future leaders are critical in maintaining those core values and practices that will sustain the work and allow for its continuity. How the ministry leadership aligns itself in relation to the ever-changing environment will determine the strategy employed to address the challenges in such a dynamic space. Therefore, it is the preparatory training, highlighted in Stage 2, that is the primary tool available for knowledge and skills development which ensures that groups of leaders understand the fundamentals and are equipped to advance amid uncertainties. Stage 2 requires an intentional training design for ministry leadership development.

The nature of ministry training is paramount to the quality of the leaders who come from such training. Strong continuously focused training provides individuals with the capacity to conceptualize courses of action that will lead to successful navigation of difficulties. In other words, the training should enable those leaders to maintain a very clear and distinct vision for the national church and the direction in which the Lord is leading. For such outcomes to be achieved, as emphasized in Stage 2, the training must be based on a curriculum that is purposeful about the product and the process. Curriculum is shaped by the philosophy of education that guides its development. Thus, a Christian higher education philosophy sets the foundation on which the framework for meaningful learning experiences are designed and enacted. These learning experiences must have a transformative effect on the individual such that an acute sense of critical consciousness is fostered within. Without this critical consciousness, the depth of capacity required to navigate uncharted paths may not be fully developed.

The role of the Holy Spirit is highlighted by the need for clear discernment when making choices about strategies. While there is the development of competence in biblical exegesis and application, twinned with an ability for strategic visioning and planning, the individuals will need to be spirit empowered to know with precision the Will of God. Thus, knowledge and skill enveloped in spirit empowerment becomes the defensible outcome of Christian education, which is necessary for Christian ministry, especially within Pentecostal contexts. This kind of learning environment for ministry training is desired by the Jamaican ICFG and its appeal to the younger generation is critical to the future of the church.

The younger generation in the Jamaican church demonstrated a readiness for the ministry by their attitude and aspiration. These young people have desires to become ministry leaders with a sense of a calling from God. They also have a positive attitude towards ministry even though not as strong as their aspiration. These attributes combined with a desire to study God's word and a belief that this should take place in an institution present the young people as potentials for ministry training. Should the churches and the Bible training institution engage in ongoing promotion of the ministry training opportunities, many of these young people would be more inclined to participate in the program. The pastors occupy a privileged position at the intersection of support

and discouragement and are very influential in the lives of the young people. Given such level of influence, pastors should be more instrumental in a strategy for increasing participation.

The conclusion is that the young people in the Jamaican Foursquare church are well poised for ministry and ministry training, however, there must be more deliberate attempts at engaging them in training that is available. While engaging the young people will not be a simple task, the efforts will be worth it and the returns phenomenal. Therefore, the Jamaican ICFG should move forward with expediency to capitalize on the interests of the young people as the future of the national church depends on the outcome.



# The New Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission

George Butron<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT:

This paper will provide an overview and assessment of several key areas of missions progress and challenges for the US Foursquare Church using the Modality/Sodality paradigm of Dr. Ralph Winter. Beginning with a review of his article, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission” the focus will then turn to the global growth of the Foursquare church and the structures behind the growth as well some of the changes, challenges and opportunities that have resulted in the development of new structures in the past 20 years. Key questions to be explored (if not fully answered) and considered include: “Are these new Foursquare structures operating as modalities or sodalities?” “Are the new structures missionally aligned and functional?” “Can we continue to make the structural changes that will result in effective sending, discipling, equipping and multiplying until He comes?”

## Background and Purpose

The title of this article, “The New Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission” is a play on words from a famous paper called “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission” by Dr. Ralph D. Winter which was originally presented at the All-Asia Mission consultation in 1973.<sup>2</sup> His key insight was that there are two “redemptive structures” that God uses in every human society. These structures are recognizable in the Bible and throughout church history and are expressed as “the church fellowship” (or “modality”) and the “missionary band” (or “sodality”). The church is local while the missionary band is mobile and both structures—represented today by the local church and the mission organization—are equally “legitimate and necessary.”<sup>3</sup>

Winter also observed that the model of the local church as well as that of the missionary team were borrowed from existing structures that were very familiar to a first century Jew. These existing structures were the Jewish synagogues that were commonly found in the Roman Empire and the Jewish proselytizers who were an active missionary force at that time. Regarding the synagogue, he wrote:

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<sup>2</sup> In his address given to the All-Asia Mission Consultation in Seoul, Korea, in August 1973 (the founding of the Asia Missions Association), Ralph Winter describes the forms that God’s two “redemptive structures” take in every human society, and have taken throughout history. His thesis has two major implications: (1) We must accept both structures, represented in the Christian church today by the local church and the mission society, as legitimate and necessary, and as part of “God’s People, the Church”; and (2) non-Western churches must form and utilize mission societies if they are to exercise their missionary responsibility.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph D. Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission”, 230. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*. Third Edition. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, (1999): 220-230.

First of all, let us recognize the structure so fondly called “the New Testament Church” as basically a Christian synagogue. Paul’s missionary work consisted primarily of going to synagogues scattered across the Roman Empire, beginning in Asia Minor, and making clear to the Jewish and Gentile believers in those synagogues that the Messiah had come in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; that in Christ a final authority even greater than Moses existed; and that this made more understandable than ever the welcoming of the Gentiles without forcing upon them any literal cultural adaptation to the ritual provisions of the Mosaic Law. An outward novelty of Paul’s work was the development eventually of wholly new synagogues that were not only Christian but Greek.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding Jewish proselytizers, Winter recognized that:

Very few Christians, casually reading the New Testament (and with only the New Testament available to them), would surmise the degree to which there had been Jewish evangelists who went before Paul all over the Roman Empire—a movement that began 100 years before Christ. Some of these were the people whom Jesus himself described as “traversing land and sea to make a single proselyte.”

Saul followed their path; Paul built on their efforts and went beyond them with the new gospel he preached, which allowed the Greeks to remain Greeks and not be circumcised and culturally assimilated into the Jewish way of life. Paul had a vast foundation on which to build: Peter declared “Moses is preached in every city (of the Roman Empire)” (Acts 15:21).<sup>5</sup>

In the New Testament, therefore, cultural models and structures were adopted and adapted to the needs of early believers to gather for worship, instruction and fellowship (the church) as well as to obey the commission to send workers to carry the Gospel to new peoples and places (the apostolic mission team).

Dr. Winter affirmed the necessity of these two structures and the need to nurture and strengthen both in order to fulfil the great commission. A generation of missionaries and missions thinkers were shaped by this giant who is considered by many to be “the most influential person in missions of the last 50 years.”<sup>6</sup> In today’s missions environment, Dr. Winter’s contributions continue to inform our approach to fulfilling the Great Commission. His brilliance, creativity and passion to see the gospel reach every people group (a concept that he introduced) has moved the global church into new efforts of missions sending, evangelism and church planting.

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<sup>4</sup> Ralph D. Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission”, 220

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 220-21

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Ray Tallman. (MAY 22, 2009) The Christian Post <https://static.christianpost.com/news/ralph-d-winter-remembered-as-giant-in-mission-field.html> Accessed on July 12, 2020

As a missionary, pastor and practitioner who is deeply indebted to Dr. Winter, I have spent more than 30 years in missions and have operated with a “two structures” paradigm. Living and working with both structures creates certain tensions and frustrations between the function of the local church and the function of the apostolic or missionary team. These tensions have been highlighted by many including Dr. Mike Larkin, former Director of Foursquare Missions International and founder of IGNITE. In his contribution to QUADNUM Vol 1 Issue 2, he observes:

Throughout Church history, the two structures of church and mission have served the Body of Christ and His purpose in the fulfilment of The Great Commission. There are several historic complimentary structures where church and mission have functioned simultaneously; however, they have not always existed in concert with one another.<sup>7</sup>

The focus of this paper is to make observations on some of the “new structures” that have developed over the past 20 years within the US and worldwide Foursquare church regarding our global mission. There have been a number of new innovations, changes, tensions, challenges and opportunities that have emerged and are appearing on the horizon. My main objective is to highlight some key elements of the new structures and make some preliminary comments on their overall impact. I will also review and highlight some features of the basic strategy and missions approach used by Foursquare Missions. In particular, I will look at the Four Stage model of National Church Development articulated by Dr John Amstutz and the missionary selection and sending model and structure that Foursquare Missions primarily used from the 1960’s until the late 90’s to early 2000’s and the new approach that has replaced it.

While objective evaluation and assessment of our structures and efforts should always take place, my primary objective here is not to critique but to try and recognize some ways that we can respond to a rapidly changing global environment and, hopefully, try to identify appropriate biblical, organizational, structural and strategic approaches to advance the Mission of God<sup>8</sup> and fulfil the prophetic mandate of Jesus that. “. . . this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matt 24:17 NIV).”

Finally, I will not attempt to engage in the broader discussion about alternative or hybrid structures such as Mike Larkin’s “Tridality” concept. I recognize that this is a very worthy discussion and a review of the World Base model that was introduced under Mike’s leadership as Director of FMI would be a worthwhile exercise. While this does have a bearing on my subject,

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<sup>7</sup> Mike Larkin, “Tridality: A Missiological Test Case of a Diagnostic Methodology for the Evaluation of a Thriving Collaborative Organization”, 174. *Quadrum Journal of the Foursquare Scholars Fellowship* Volume 1, Issue 2 (November 2018): 161-185

<sup>8</sup> My understanding of “the Mission of God” has been greatly informed by the work of Christopher J. H. Wright and his book, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*. (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2006).

the limitations of this paper constrain me to limit the scope of this brief study to concentrate on recognising and commenting on some existing and newer Foursquare structures within the basic framework of modality and sodality.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Mission of God and the Adaptive Use of Structures**

Following His resurrection, Jesus restated the prophetic prediction of Matthew 24:17 as an imperative commission and command for His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations.” (see Matthew 28:18-19). The book of Acts demonstrates how this was done and serves as the template for both the development of the local church as well as the advent the apostolic teams who carried the Gospel to the far corners of the Roman empire. The presence of the early modality and sodality structures in Acts and the New Testament Epistles informs our understanding and approach to the expansion and growth of the Christian movement. At the same time, we are not historically or culturally bound to rigidly follow these original structures as they appeared in biblical times. History demonstrates that believers were able to adapt and use existing structures that were functionally appropriate and effective in helping them to organise the local church and mobilize workers for the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

Winter highlighted this in his original paper saying:

In fact, the profound missiological implication of all this is that the New Testament is trying to show us how to borrow effective patterns; it is trying to free all future missionaries from the need to follow the precise forms of the Jewish synagogue and Jewish missionary band, and yet to allow them to choose comparable indigenous structures in the countless new situations across history and around the world—structures which will correspond faithfully to the function of patterns Paul employed, if not their form!<sup>10</sup>

While the early Christian movement built itself upon two structures of the synagogue and the practices of the Jewish proselytizers of that era, “the functional equivalents of these same two structures were to appear in later Christian cultural traditions as the gospel invaded that larger world.” Later, a more Gentile church appropriated the Roman administrative term “diocese” as “the more ‘congregational’ pattern of the independent synagogue became pervasively replaced by a ‘connectional’ Roman pattern.” The result was the Christian “parish” structure which served the churches of that time and place and can still be found today.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Mike Larkin has done extensive work in this regard and I recommend his Quardum article on “Tridality” (mentioned above) as well as his doctoral dissertation on the same subject. My hope is that this paper might be a stimulus for Mike and others to continue to contribute their thoughts in this area.

<sup>10</sup> Ralph D. Winter, “The Two Structures”, 222.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 222.

Again, while the two structures are recognized and affirmed from Scripture and history, they are also borrowed from existing structures in society. Rather than creating something entirely new and unfamiliar, both early and later Christians borrowed ideas from within their particular time and space to create redemptive structures that can generally be described as modalities or sodalities in function. Various forms are present and shaped by the cultures from which they arise, but the essential functions are what matters.

Finally, we should also recognize the obvious point that not every structure is appropriate and/or successful. Some structures may become outdated (old wineskins) and need to be renewed or replaced. New or improved structures may or may not be appropriate and helpful as shall be demonstrated. Also, even the best structures do not guarantee the success of dedicated efforts because there are non-structural elements that also determine fruitfulness. Every good endeavor undertaken under the Lordship of Jesus includes the issues of effective leadership, godly character, spiritual health, biblical foundations, unity and love in relationships and sacrificial obedience. The processes of Christian discipleship and maturity cannot be unhitched from the success of God's mission. The issues of the heart are a kingdom measurement that carries more weight than structures.

### **A Review of Some Structures Impacting Foursquare's Global Mission**

With this introduction and the background, the rest of this paper will review some previous and new structures in the US and Global Foursquare Church. The review will include observations based on the modality/sodality framework described above. Rather than a comprehensive review, the parameters will be limited to the following areas: (1) The global growth of the Foursquare Church and the key structures undergirding the growth; (2) New organizational selection, sending and support approaches; (3) New funding structures—the Foursquare Foundation and the Foursquare Endowment; (4) New global structure—the Foursquare Global Council; (5) Concluding observations.

### **The Global Growth of the Foursquare Church and the Key Structures Undergirding the Growth**

We live in a time of rapid and unexpected changes. The ability to quickly pivot and adjust is a necessary skill of this era. Regarding changes in missions, there is no shortage of futurists, strategists and practitioners who are writing, posting, podcasting and broadcasting on this topic. The western church has become particularly adept at making adjustments to the changes and challenges that have emerged in this new millennium and at the time that this paper is being written, the unexpected global impact of the Covid-19 epidemic is forcing some very significant recalibrations and adaptations.

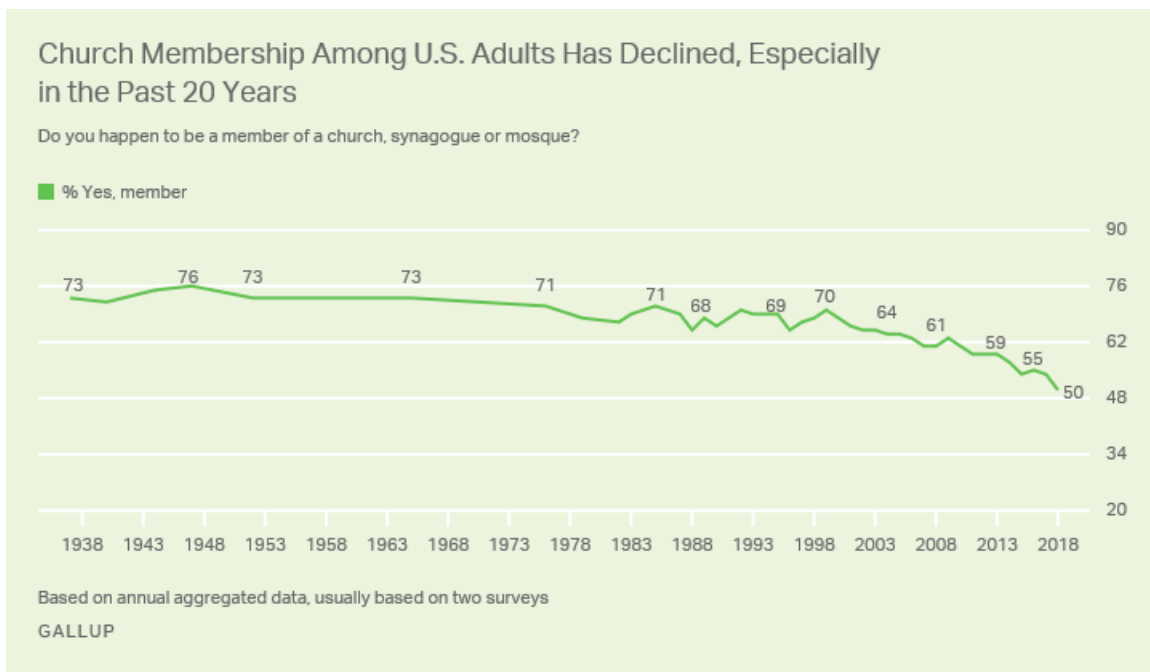
Stepping back to look at the bigger picture of the global expansion of the Foursquare Church, there have been some obvious organizational developments and creation of several new structures and approaches to mission. Finding ways to measure the impact of these developments and changes on the overall progress of the global missions task is not always easy. There are,

however, some recognizable metrics from the past and present that are worth reviewing prior to looking more deeply at new structures.

The most significant development in the global Foursquare church in the past 45 years has been the remarkable growth of Foursquare churches outside of the United States. The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in the USA (along with most other denominations), has remained largely plateaued in terms of overall growth and multiplication of churches with just under 2000 congregations nationwide. In spite of some strong vision casting in the 90's of "2000 before 2000" the US Foursquare church has never had more than 2000 congregations.

In March of 2019, global analytics and advice firm, Gallup, released the following update on overall church membership in the USA.

U.S. church membership was 70% or higher from 1937 through 1976, falling modestly to an average of 68% in the 1970s through the 1990s. The past 20 years have seen an acceleration in the drop-off, with a 20-percentage-point decline since 1999 and more than half of that change occurring since the start of the current decade.



The decline in church membership is consistent with larger societal trends in declining church attendance and an increasing proportion of Americans with no religious preference.<sup>12</sup>

A well-known development is that the lack of growth in the USA (and most other western nations) is not the norm in many other parts of the world. The global growth rate of Christianity in

<sup>12</sup> Jeffery M. Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades" Gallup church Resources. April 18, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>

2019 was 1.27% (slightly faster than the average population growth of 1.20%).<sup>13</sup> At the end of 2017, the global Foursquare Church reported around 80,000 churches in 144 countries with 8.47million members as shown in the Foursquare Missions Annual Report.<sup>14</sup> Dr John Amstutz describes the global growth of the Foursquare church from its inception:

From its beginning in the 1920s the Foursquare movement has been “dedicated unto to the cause of inter-denominational and world-wide evangelism.”<sup>4</sup> The command of Jesus Christ to “make disciples of all nations” is the foundation of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. To fulfil its biblical purpose and historic mission, The Foursquare Church has sought to follow the pattern of Spirit-empowered church development found in the New Testament by evangelizing, releasing indigenous leadership, cultivating church planting and reproducing missionary-sending churches. In other words, the Foursquare movement is committed to the development of strong, reproducing national churches. Both the history of the first-century Church and the history of the Foursquare movement have confirmed the need for developing infinitely reproducible churches that make possible the continuous spread of the gospel to those yet unreached. Therefore, the pattern of a four-stage developmental process has been intentionally taught and increasingly practiced by national churches around the world.<sup>15</sup>

Statistical growth of the global Foursquare church reflects significant progress. Referring to data from 2006-2007, Amstutz noted: From less than 3,500 churches and meeting places in 32 countries in 1975, The Foursquare Church has grown to more than 50,000 churches and meeting places in nearly 140 countries.<sup>16</sup>

Using the figures that Amstutz provides, from 1975 to 2007, Foursquare grew from 3500 congregations and meeting places to around 50,000. During this 32-year period the average annual growth rate for churches and meeting places was a remarkable 41.5% per year (41.5% of 3500 = 1442.5 new churches per year for 32 years).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Aaron Earls, “7 SURPRISING TRENDS IN GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY IN 2019” LifeWay Christian Resources, <https://factsandtrends.net/2019/06/11/7-surprising-trends-in-global-christianity-in-2019/> June 11,2019.

<sup>14</sup> “Foursquare Missions International 2018 Annual Report.” An unpublished Document presented at the Foursquare Cabinet Meeting in March 2018, Glendale, CA.

<sup>15</sup> John L. Amstutz, *Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (Los Angeles, Foursquare Missions International/Foursquare Media, 2009), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Amstutz, *Disciples of All Nations*, 9

<sup>17</sup> Several countries, including Brazil and Nigeria reported significant growth during this period. Also, better communication and technology meant that more countries began reporting more accurately. Another significant increase occurred in 2005 when an independent Pentecostal church movement in Indonesia, The

Five years later, in 2013, Dr. James C. Scott, Director of Foursquare Missions International, presented the 2012 report below to the Foursquare Cabinet.<sup>18</sup> During this 5-year period, the average annual growth rate was 6.5% per year.

2013 Foursquare Cabinet

Foursquare Missions International

**Comparative Report of Global Membership and Spiritual Activity**

<b>Foursquare Non-U.S.</b>	<b><u>2012 Reported*</u></b>	<b><u>2011 Reported</u></b>
Salvations	<b>2,361,883</b>	2,524,412
Water Baptisms	<b>822,627</b>	577,210
Holy Spirit Baptisms	<b>962,399</b>	822,273
Members	<b>7,275,324</b>	7,198,516
Churches and Meeting Places	<b>66,393</b>	65,096
Ministers	<b>92,123</b>	82,141
Non-U.S. Countries and Territories with Foursquare Works	<b>135**</b>	136**

\* A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES HAVE NOT YET REPORTED.  
 \*\* THIS NUMBER DOES NOT INCLUDE THE U.S.

From 2013-2017 the reported growth in the annual report presented at the 2018 Foursquare Cabinet Meeting was an additional 14,211 church and meeting places added in 5 years for a total of 80,604 with a more modest average annual growth rate of 4.28% per year.<sup>19</sup> The recorded increase is considerably beyond the average annual growth rate for global Christianity in 2019 of 1.27% as well as the 2.26% growth rate reported for all Pentecostals and Charismatics in 2019.<sup>20</sup>

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Pentecostal Church of Indonesia (GPDI) officially joined Foursquare and added 15,000 congregations to the global Foursquare Church.

<sup>18</sup> James C. Scott, Jr. *2013 Annual Report, Foursquare Missions International*, An unpublished report presented at the Foursquare Cabinet Meeting in Glendale, CA in March 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Ted Vail. *2018 Annual Report, Foursquare Missions International*, an unpublished report presented at the Foursquare Cabinet Meeting in Glendale, CA in March 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Status of Global Christianity, 2019, in the Context of 1900–2050, Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/13/2019/04/StatusofGlobalChristianity20191.pdf>. accessed on May 13, 2020





## GLOBAL SPIRITUAL REPORT

### Comparative Report of Global Membership and Spiritual Activity

Global Foursquare	2017 Reported*	2016 Reported
Salvations	2,361,238	2,431,646
Water Baptisms	280,150**	554,156
Holy Spirit Baptisms	923,072	959,653
Members	8,470,402	8,557,587
Churches and Meeting Places	80,604***	68,503
Ministers	73,780	71,311
Total Countries and Territories with Foursquare Works	144	144

\*This report includes two U.S. Territories, Guam and Puerto Rico.

\*\*The decrease in baptisms reflects updated reports from South America.

\*\*\*The increase in the number of churches and meeting places does not represent growth in 2017 alone. This is an increase over the last five years as we have standardized our reporting with more accurate and conservative amounts that is inclusive of communities of faith. Numbers from North Asia reflects an updated and conservative report for countries that cannot be listed due to security concerns.

^ Some personal names withheld due to security concerns.

Note: A number of countries have not yet reported.

### Some Observations

Obviously, the statistics above demonstrate rapid double-digit church growth followed by a gradually reduced rate of growth that is trending downward but still represents substantial progress. More statistical and historic research is needed regarding the peak growth period from 1975-2007 to look more closely at the major contributing factors.<sup>21</sup> There are, however, several foundational structural issues that can be highlighted.

1. A four-stage developmental strategy underlies the growth. The strategy uses the broad categories of:
  - INITIATE (Pioneer Evangelism that multiplies believers)
  - NURTURE (Developmental discipleship processes that multiply and mature) to
  - EXPAND (Development of national church governance and leadership structures for multiplication) and, finally,
  - SEND (cross cultural missionary initiatives into new and unreached areas).

<sup>21</sup> Writing from Singapore during the Covid 19 lockdown period created limitations in my access to historic records which are not available on the internet. My hope is that more research can be done to look at growth areas and the contextual issues underling the growth.

This four-stage model has been articulated by Dr. John Amstutz and is not only the adopted strategy of FMI and ICFG but has also been embraced by the global Foursquare church in developing healthy, reproducing national church movements.<sup>22</sup>

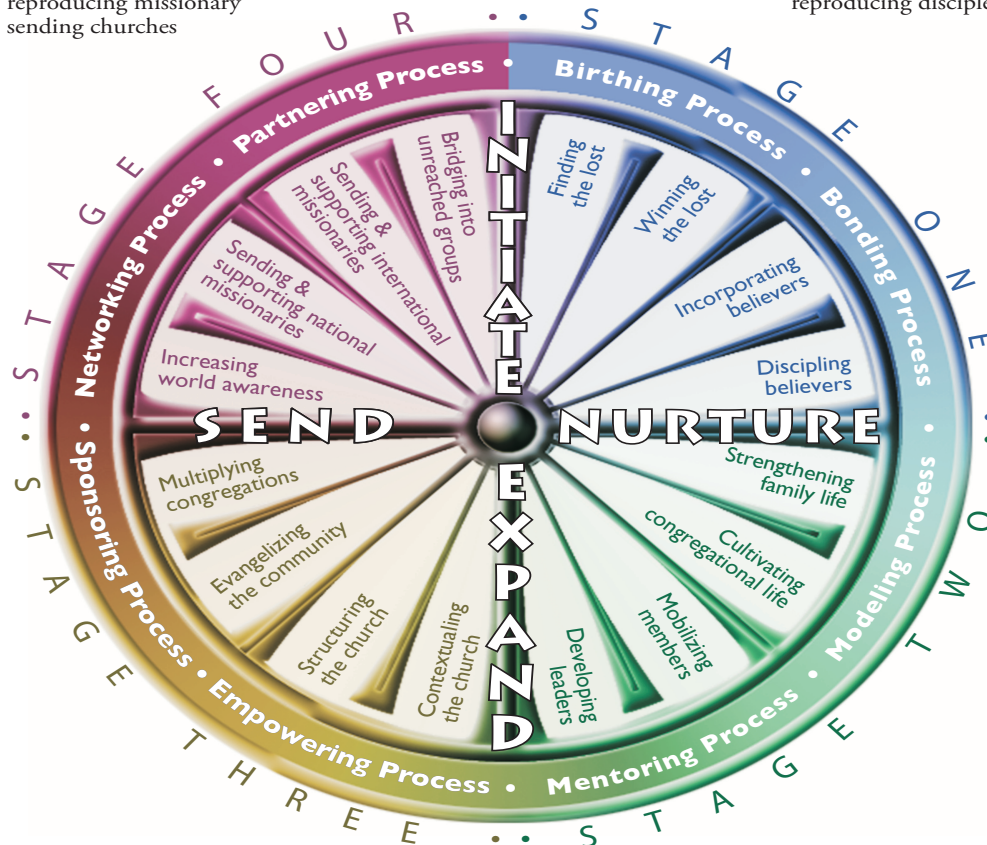
## National Church Development – Four Stages

### Stage 4 - Send - extending

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing missionary sending churches

### Stage 1 - Intitiate - evangelizing

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing disciples



### Stage 3 - Expand - multiplying

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing congregations

### Stage 2 - Nurture - strengthening

Goal: to make responsible, reproducing leaders

Of particular importance in the Four Stage Model above is the idea of National Church movements maturing beyond dependence on missionaries and foreign support. National churches are encouraged to become self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating movements that will eventually send missionaries of their own to start new works. Foursquare USA has sought to move

<sup>22</sup> The key work on this subject is John L. Amstutz, *Disciples of All Nations: Continuous Mission Until He Comes* (Los Angeles, Foursquare Missions International/Foursquare Media, 2009), 31-81, Four Stages Graphic, 34

away from a paternal pattern of relationships with other national churches and to create global partnerships. Ed Stetzer, who has served as a consultant to the Foursquare Church has commented about this: “Like many denominations, [Foursquare] churches in different countries are in separate (and self-governed) national organizations.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Changes in Missionary Selection, Sending and Support**

The Growth and development of the Global Foursquare Church must also include a review of the missionary selection, sending and support structures and the role that missionaries have played. Amstutz and others have pointed out that for many years, Foursquare Missions International did not send out a large number of missionaries but many of those who were sent out were exceptionally fruitful and effective in ministries that demonstrated the four-stage model (even though for many of them, this strategy was not yet articulated in its current form during their time). Many of these early missionaries were sent to open countries and pioneer new fields and there were remarkable results that have been well documented over the years.<sup>24</sup>

At that time, the majority of FMI missionaries were fully funded through the missions giving of Foursquare churches in the USA. Missionaries did not raise their own support but they did have to demonstrate competence and fruitfulness in a senior pastoral role and be assessed in terms of gifts, maturity, family life and likelihood of success in a cross-cultural assignment. This was the norm for Foursquare Missionary selection and while the missionary numbers remained small, the results on the field generally demonstrated a disproportionate amount of fruitfulness for the modest size of the missions force.

In his article entitled “Doing More with Less,” Amstutz makes a case to show how the “full circle” Four-stage developmental strategy helped Foursquare Missions to maximize limited personnel and resources. In other words, a good structure along with a good missionary selection and sending strategy is a key factor in producing good results.<sup>25</sup>

When my wife and I were working through our calling to missions in the 1980’s, the most obvious pathway was to work through a mission agency. We applied to serve under FMI and from our first enquiry and contacts with FMI leadership until we were actually commissioned and sent out was a five-year process. We went through interviews, training events, retreats and spent time with a number of FMI leaders during these years. Our initial application was reviewed and declined by the ICFG Board of Directors because we had no senior pastoral experience and we were asked to look for a pastoral assignment and plan to commit ourselves to at least 2 years of serving a Foursquare church in the US before we would be considered again.

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<sup>23</sup> Ed Stetzer. “The Foursquare Church Convention and Global Partnership” in *Christianity Today*, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/may/foursquare-church-convention-and-global-partnership.html> (accessed on 20 July 2020).

<sup>24</sup> For an excellent summary of some of these Foursquare pioneer missionaries, see John L. Amstutz, “Foursquare Missions: Doing More With Less,” *Pneuma* (Spring 1994): 21-29

<sup>25</sup> Amstutz, “Foursquare Missions: Doing More With Less”, 21-29

After pastoring a church for three years, we were approached and offered an assignment in Singapore, where we worked under a veteran missionary couple, Mason and Virgene Hughes. The mentoring and example of their lives along with regular visits and coaching by our Asia Field Representative, Don McGregor, began to shape and equip us for long term missions ministry. We have worked under eight different Directors of Foursquare Missions these past 32 years and, needless to say, we have seen quite a number of challenges and changes.

There have been seismic shifts in the way that Foursquare selects, sends and supports missionaries in the past 20 years. Other denominations have also walked through significant changes in this regard. Asbury Theological Seminary President Timothy C. Tennent observes that we “. . . need to be aware of these shifts and realize that the global missionary effort is being extended from a wide range of initiatives including the local church, denominations, para-church organizations, professionals and by a whole range of efforts by indigenous churches throughout the world”<sup>26</sup>

In general, the primary shift for Foursquare (and most other denominations) has been limited and diminishing funding along with a diminishing number of mature and proven candidates who have both theological/ministry/missions education and fruitful senior vocational ministry experience. The shrinking number of qualified candidates has been widely recognized and discussed by a number of leaders, sometimes with concern and sometimes with celebration.<sup>27</sup> The concern primarily centers around the questions of “Why are we getting fewer qualified applicants?” and “Why are so many Foursquare people choosing to serve with other missions organizations and not FMI?”

The answers to these questions are complex but almost certainly involve the following factors:

- a. The perception that it is not easy to work with a denominational mission agency while other organizations (Youth with a Mission, Operation Mobilization, etc.) are readily recruiting people for service and offer a more direct pathway to service which includes on the field training and living in a missionary community.
- b. There are fewer calls and opportunities for apostolic and pioneering missionaries to open new countries and evangelize new people groups. In other words, the nature of missionary assignments is changing. We have moved from a mission that

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<sup>26</sup> Timothy Tennent, “*Top Ten Mission Trends in the 21st Century: Rise of the Non-Western Church*” April 15th, 2010. <https://timothytennent.com/?s=ten+mission+trends>

<sup>27</sup> During our 32 years of service with Foursquare Missions, every one of the FMI Directors has had conversations about the changes taking place in terms of the types of people who are applying for missions service. Most of these conversations celebrate the fact the Foursquare churches in Brazil, Nigeria, Philippines, Papua New Guinea and other stage 4 nations are pioneering new nations, regions and people groups while at the same time lamenting that there are decreasing has gradually shifted towards sending support personnel rather than those who pioneer and plant.

was pioneering new fields and opening new nations to one that is largely supporting national churches. As a result, there has been a distinct change in the profile of a Foursquare missionary from a role of primary leadership to that of secondary support.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, we are a “victim of our own success.”

- c. The emerging missions force in the 2/3 world is stepping into more pioneering roles, sometimes in nations where western missionaries are often less eager to go or are no longer welcome.<sup>29</sup> Missionaries from Foursquare churches in Brazil, Nigeria, Philippines, Papua New Guinea and other stage 4 nations are now being sent to pioneer in new nations, regions and people groups while the USA has gradually shifted towards sending more missionaries who fill support roles rather than those who pioneer and plant.
- d. Finally, Van Engen points out two more newer developments that impact traditional missions structures in Foursquare as well as other denominations and organizations.

... for the past 40 years or so, the rise of very large mega-churches has spawned a new kind of hybrid, a mission sodality within a church modality. A host of mega-churches have spawned their own sodality mission organisations. At the other end of the spectrum, there is a rise of individual "mom-and-pop shops" of persons or families who create their own support base, run their own non-profit, and do their own "thing" in mission. In both instances, partnership with other Christian and mission structures is often unclear, challenging and, at times, difficult.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Foursquare Response to Fewer Missions Dollars and Applicants**

Like many other denominational missions and agencies, there have been structural changes made to adapt to changing circumstances which include reduced general giving and fewer applicants with high qualifications. Both recruitment and sending have been impacted by changes in giving patterns. The points below outline what took place:

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<sup>28</sup> There are exceptions to this trend. Ted and Sou Olbrich have pioneered a national church movement in Cambodia and Gary and Paula Hays have seen remarkable fruit in evangelizing and discipling children. In general, however, more missionary assignments are supporting existing national churches which is a natural outcome of our success in developing healthy national church movements as described by Amstutz and others.

<sup>29</sup> Tennent, “*Top Ten Mission Trends in the 21st Century: Rise of the Non-Western Church*”

<sup>30</sup> Charles van Engen, “PRESENT-DAY MISSION PARTNERSHIPS,” *Acta Theologica*, Suppl 28:53-71 (6 Dec 2019), 63.

- The competition between the older and newer missions agencies for missionaries and missions dollars has continued
- Centralised funding and sending models (i.e. denominational mission agencies) are generally receiving less money and sending fewer missionaries
- Mission agencies who recruit and train “faith” missionaries (who raise their own funds) are sending a larger percentage of the missionary force.
- In addition, there are increasing numbers of missionaries going out as professionals who support themselves through employment in the countries where they serve. Some of these serve with existing agencies, organizations and churches while others are independent. The title of “tentmakers” is appropriate for most of these working professionals.
- After a long period of consideration, beginning around 2000, FMI began making steps towards moving from a fully funded to a self-funded support model.

Today, with the exception of 10-12 Area Missionaries who oversee large geographic regions and only 1 or 2 remaining missionaries who were originally sent out as fully funded through FMI, all other missionaries currently serving are raising their own support. This has resulted in an increase in the overall number of US Foursquare missionaries serving overseas (now approaching 100 with more in various stages of preparation).<sup>31</sup>

Foursquare Missions has also developed a much more robust training and field preparation program that covers a wide variety of areas that provide foundational understanding, skills and competencies.<sup>32</sup>

### **Considerations in Light of the Changes**

Self-funded missionaries have resulted in more workers serving and more funds being raised than at any time in the history of Foursquare Missions. Area Missionaries (who generally have oversight of field missionaries) as well as national churches are assessing the results of these changes. A comprehensive system of evaluation and review for FMI workers is being developed as well as ways to provide care, coaching and on the field development of a much larger and more diverse missions force than in earlier times.

The evaluation process must consider the contributions of missionaries in terms of the four-stage model. More missionaries do not automatically correspond with more impact and fruit and the four-stage model is an obvious template to use in both creating and reviewing missionary

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<sup>31</sup> Ted Vail. *2018 Annual Report*, p 1

<sup>32</sup> Information on the three levels of training can be found at: [https://thehub.foursquare.org/prod/FoursquareLeader/FoursquareLeader/Content/Ministries/Go/Missionary\\_Training.aspx](https://thehub.foursquare.org/prod/FoursquareLeader/FoursquareLeader/Content/Ministries/Go/Missionary_Training.aspx)

assignments and effectiveness. Other considerations include the spiritual, physical, relational, financial and emotional health of workers.

### **New Funding Structure: The Foursquare Foundation**

At the 2004 Foursquare Convention in San Francisco, CA, an announcement was made about the formation and imminent launch of The Foursquare Foundation which would oversee around \$200 million of the proceeds of the sale of the Foursquare owned and operated radio station KSFG in Los Angeles. Broadly speaking, the Foundation would have two functions: 1. Overseeing the corpus by investing the funds and 2. Creating a grant process aimed at accelerating evangelism. Foundation executive director Dr. Greg Campbell explained, "Our goal is to fund Christian evangelism with the greatest potential for impact. . ."<sup>33</sup>

The Foursquare Foundation was a new funding structure with a clearly stated Purpose, Mission and Vision:

The Foursquare Foundation was created for a single **PURPOSE**: To accelerate world-wide interdenominational evangelism. It is the **MISSION** of the Foursquare Foundation to invest in leaders who accelerate evangelism to transform people, cities and nations in order to maximize the number of people who will be spending eternity with Jesus. In the next decade, it is our **VISION** to accelerate the most fruitful evangelism in the most spiritually fertile regions of the world to reach over 20 million **additional** people who will follow Jesus Christ by 2015.<sup>34</sup>

As a funding structure, the Foundation was positioned between the modality functions and priorities of the US Foursquare Church and the sodality function of its global mission. Grant funding was to be divided in the following ways: “. . . 65 percent of funds will be distributed overseas while 35 percent of funds will remain in the United States. . . . The Foundation's target goal is that 90 percent of funds will be distributed to Foursquare-affiliated ministries while ten percent of grant awards will fund ministries outside of the denomination.”<sup>35</sup>

The launching of a new funding structure in Foursquare proved to be far more challenging than anticipated and the complex story of the problems and challenges that surfaced over the next few years are beyond the scope of this paper. What did become obvious is that eventually Foundation emerged not just as a funding structure but as a second missions structure within Foursquare that operated with different and often conflicting strategies and approaches.

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<sup>33</sup> Greg Campbell (April 01, 2005) Business Wire press release, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20050401005331/en/New-Foursquare-Foundation-Leverages-Big-Dollars-Eternal> accessed August 21, 2020

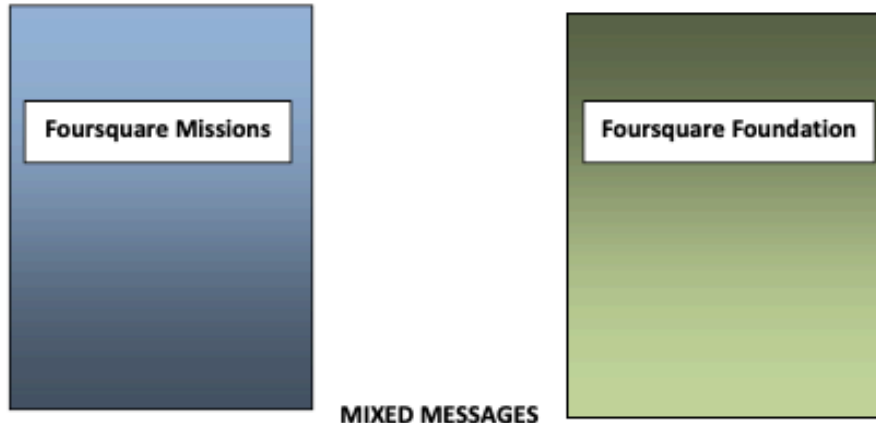
<sup>34</sup> “*Foursquare Foundation Grant Application Guidelines (v. 9, 2007)*” An unpublished document created by the Foursquare Foundation. p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Greg Campbell, Business Wire.

In 2010, I wrote a letter to Foursquare leadership with the title: “An Appeal for Resolution, Reconciliation and Resonance between the Foursquare Foundation and FMI” and is included below.

**An Appeal for Resolution, Reconciliation and Resonance between the Foursquare Foundation and FMI**

The Foursquare Church now has two departments/entities that are specifically dedicated to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. In essence, we have two missions organizations within Foursquare that are housed in the same building but operate from vastly different paradigms and value systems. While their purposes and goals appear to be the same, the operations, philosophy and message they send are not. A few examples are below:



<i>We need a mountain of money to do missions</i>	<i>We have a mountain of money to do missions</i>
<i>Send us money to help accomplish our vision</i>	<i>We send you money to help accomplish your vision</i>
<i>We work for long term results and fruit</i>	<i>We are focused on short term, immediate results</i>
<i>Funding based on strategy, fruitfulness, maturity</i>	<i>Funding based on ability to complete an application</i>
<i>We form long term relationships</i>	<i>We fund short term projects</i>
<i>We are cross-cultural and seek to build trust</i>	<i>We are mono-cultural and wrestle with mistrust</i>
<i>We try to work through face to face relationships</i>	<i>We work through reporting, results and policies</i>

While there may be the appearance of potentially complimentary elements in the chart above, in practice, the relationship between the Foundation and FMI has seen conflicts, disagreements and incompatibilities surface and this has created an atmosphere of frustration, suspicion and criticism. The Foundation continues to independently fund some projects that are potentially undermining to FMI strategies and overseas works (i.e. funding non-Foursquare ministries in a nation while rejecting Foursquare applications, having an application and reporting system that eliminates those who do not have the education, language and technology to meet their standards). In addition, the Foundation is now moving towards becoming a missions sending organization. At least one FMI missionary was approached by the Foundation with an offer to remain in their overseas posting, carry on with their missions work but become an employee of the Foundation and operate under their leadership rather than FMI’s.

While we all recognize the possibility of a great partnership between FMI and the Foundation, and while there has been substantial Foundation funding of Foursquare projects around the world which has been a great help as FMI funding has diminished, the tensions remain. I am appealing for the leadership of the Foursquare Church to address these issues and review the approach and results of the Foundation. The following article on “Servant Leadership in Foundations” from the book: [Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness](#) by Robert K Greenleaf, provides helpful insights into the challenges of effectively running a Foundation.

Respectfully Submitted by George Butron July 28, 2010



The letter was based on several years of working with the Foundation, applying for and overseeing grants in SE Asia and regular interactions with leaders, colleagues and others who saw conflicts and incompatibilities that were present between these two structures which were trying to coexist and cooperate within the larger Foursquare Church. Here is an example of what can happen when new structures are created and introduced alongside existing ones without careful evaluation and integration.

### **The Foursquare Foundation: Modality/Sodality Observations**

First, the Foundation was created as a funding arm of a modality (ICFG) which was designed to function with an independent board and leadership but was still under the authority and direction of the ICFG board. The Foundation operated as a typical hierarchical top-down structure with strict policies, application guidelines and reporting requirements. In other words, the Foundation itself was shaped to be a modality operating under the oversight of a modality for the purpose of accelerating objectives that are more suited to sodalities (evangelism and growth). While this was intended to be a complimentary relationship and strategy, it proved otherwise.

Second, some Foundation funds were used for projects that were not evangelistic objectives (a parking structure, a retirement home to name two). While there were legitimate and purposeful reasons for these projects, it is also apparent that from the outset, there was a pull towards using funds to meet US church institutional needs. Modalities are particularly prone towards diversification which means that funding for special projects, operational and administrative expenses are always in short supply. There were also occasions when Foundation funds were used for unwarranted investments and this created considerable negative fallout. Not surprisingly, the Foundation was seen by some as a “go to” option when urgent needs and opportunities arose that were outside of its stated purpose for existence. Competing priorities with limited resources made it easy for the missional objectives to erode.

Third, in terms of how the Foundation functioned with international grants, there was a gradual evolution and change as the modality financial structure attempted to operate more like a sodality and to develop its own independent missions protocols and policies. The letter above describes how a number of leaders (particularly Foursquare Area Missionaries) described what emerged and the tensions that it created. What happened with the Foursquare Foundation seems like a classic example of the challenges involved in finding ways for modalities and sodalities to co-exist and function together in a synergistic and complimentary manner.

Fourth, in May of 2018, the Foursquare Convention body confirmed a proposal to align the Foursquare Foundation to resource and support the overall mission of the US Foursquare Church and the result of this re-alignment marked the conclusion of the Foursquare Foundation and the formation of the Foursquare Endowment.<sup>36</sup> The result has been an elimination of much of the earlier tension and conflict but time will tell if the constant pull towards the institutional needs of

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<sup>36</sup> The “*REIMAGINE FOURSQUARE TIMELINE*”, 1 [https://foursquare-leader.s3.amazonaws.com/about\\_us/what\\_we\\_do/ReimagineTimeline.pdf](https://foursquare-leader.s3.amazonaws.com/about_us/what_we_do/ReimagineTimeline.pdf) (accessed Aug 28 2020).

the US church will attract more and more of the Endowment funding.<sup>37</sup> The question is, can a financial modality structure partner effectively to bring about sodality results?

### **A New Global Structure: The Foursquare Global Council**

One of the most significant new structures in Foursquare is the Foursquare Global Council. Although it has been in development for several decades, in the past 10 years it has emerged as a body with a significant role in global missions. Writing in the July/August 1982 edition of the Foursquare Advance Magazine, Phil Starr described the history and origin of the Global Council in some detail:

The genesis of The Foursquare Global Council actually originated in the DNA of our Foursquare heritage. When we consider our early beginnings as a Movement, it is evident that our founder, Sister Aimee Semple McPherson, had in her heart and vision a global family and a global reach that ALL the nations of the world would come to know Christ. The cornerstone at Angelus Temple states: “Dedicated to the cause of worldwide evangelism.”

In April 1982, the first Global Leadership Conference was held at Lake Arrowhead, California. All international delegates who had attended the 1982 Annual Convention held at Angelus Temple came to the event. Speakers were Leland Edwards, Dr. McPherson, Jack Hamilton, and Jack Hayford. Special guest speaker and teacher was Ralph Mahoney, President/Director of World Missionary Assistance Plan.

Five years later (May 1988) the second Global Leadership Conference convened, again at Lake Arrowhead, California. Delegates from 36 countries and five continents attended. The Theme of the conference was: “PROCLAIM! THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLES to Every Kindred, Tribe, Tongue and Nation.”<sup>38</sup> The official launch of the Foursquare Global Council took place in 2005.

2005 marked the historic first meeting of the Foursquare Global Council. The appointed regional council leaders met for the first time as the Foursquare Global Council during the U.S. Foursquare Convention held in Chicago, Illinois. . . Specifically, the Global Council seeks for global strategies to delineate how the Foursquare Church can be most effective in coordinating missions efforts; and, ultimately, determine how best it can propagate the spread of the gospel and empower nationals to manage the national church through global structures.<sup>39</sup>

As a new Foursquare structure, the Global Council is a natural outcome of the four-stage national church development strategy and as the council has continued to meet, their purpose has been clarified. In 2012, four objectives were identified:

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<sup>37</sup> The original distribution of Foundation funding was 75% for international grants and 25% for domestic. This was soon revised to 65% international and 35% domestic. Over time it became closer to 50/50. With the Foursquare Endowment designed to be aligned to the mission of the Foursquare church, monitoring and evaluation of missional investments and results versus institutional and administrative funding would be appropriate and necessary.

<sup>38</sup> This material is posted at: <http://foursquareglobalcouncil.com/our-story/> (accessed August 18, 2020)

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

- **Establish a Global Eldering Community** that will help serve our Foursquare Family with both covering and accountability. The Lord has blessed our Movement since its founding in 1927. We have a spiritual and moral responsibility to steward this work among us.
- **Build Together a Global Strategy to reach every nation with the Gospel of Jesus Christ** through the Foursquare Church. There are 79 nations that do not have a Foursquare presence. Our objective will be to begin the framework for a joint accelerated effort to make disciples of all nations.
- **Refine and Strengthen our Global Infrastructure** for national and regional support of Foursquare Movement around the world.
- **Establish a Global Networking Partnership.** There is a window of opportunity to strengthen the work of the Kingdom according to its needs. Help every nation to evangelize, disciple, multiply and send.<sup>40</sup>

The Global Council has continued to clarify its primary purpose. Another significant development is the articulation of 6 Global Distinctives which “make The Foursquare Church around the world distinct as a movement and as a denomination.”

### **Global Distinctive 1: Kingdom Partnerships**

We will work alongside other Christians and churches with whom we can partner in mission. We will be a distinct movement, but will also hold a collegial spirit and maintain a helpful and cooperative posture.

### **Global Distinctive 2: Sound Doctrine**

The Declaration of Faith of the Foursquare Church will guide our practice, church polity, and call of believers into the work of the Kingdom. It will be a biblical statement, apply to all members, and be the Declaration of Faith for all churches and all member nations. Its roots are deeply rooted in the sole source of spiritual authority – the Word of God.

### **Global Distinctive 3: Empowering Leadership**

According to God’s gifting and calling, we will intentionally prepare and release men and women across generations and cultures into all positions of leadership and areas of ministry.

### **Global Distinctive 4: Family Relationships**

We will relate to each other with love in our Global Family. We acknowledge that relationships are the heart of God’s Kingdom and will extend grace to fellow believers through ministry, cooperation and mutual submission in our global church.

### **Global Distinctive 5: Spirit Empowerment**

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<sup>40</sup> This material is posted at: <http://foursquareglobalcouncil.com/our-story/> (accessed August 18, 2020)

As a Spirit-filled movement, we will consistently minister the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and teach and encourage believers to fully express the gifts of the Spirit in their daily lives. We totally submit ourselves in obedience to the Spirit's use of our lives and His miraculous works in our day.

### **Global Distinctive 6: Shared Mission**

We will focus our mission and ministry efforts on multiplying disciples, leaders, churches and national movements. Holding to God's passion for the lost, we will seek a movement of evangelism, mercy ministries, contextualized church planting and mobilizing indigenous believers in ministry among all peoples.<sup>41</sup>

As the Council was being formed in 2012, US President Glenn Burris was asked to serve as the Chairman. He agreed to do this with the understanding that within 5 years he would step out of that role and that a non-US Chairman would be selected and appointed by the members of the council. The baton of leadership was passed from Glenn Burris to Leslie Keegel in 2017 and the council continues to develop strategies to strengthen and deepen the global growth and outreach of the church.

In particular, 6 Committees have been formed to advance the ministry of the Global Foursquare church and these are:

1. The Functional Structures Committee
2. The Global Prayer Committee
3. The Shared Missions Committee
4. The Training and Education Committee
5. The Women's Committee

My exposure and interaction with the global council, its leadership, operation and objectives has led me to make the following observations and conclusions.

First, the Global Council has been created to be a representative and missional body which reflects the Four Stage strategy and, in my opinion, represents the most obvious expression of a new sodality that has appeared in our movement in recent times.

Second, the Global Council is still a fairly new body and will need to be nurtured to maintain a dynamic missional stance and avoid creeping institutionalism and modality tendencies which could become weights and distractions.

Third, the Global Council has identified discipleship as the core issue before the Foursquare Church. There is real clarity about the urgency of making disciples and significant work is being done to help the church return to this singular priority.

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<sup>41</sup> These Global Distinctives have become one of the most widely circulated and translated documents in Foursquare and is now included in the "*What We Believe*" section of the US Foursquare website: [https://thehub.foursquare.org/prod/FoursquareLeader/FoursquareLeader/Content/About\\_Us/What\\_We\\_Believe.aspx](https://thehub.foursquare.org/prod/FoursquareLeader/FoursquareLeader/Content/About_Us/What_We_Believe.aspx)

Fourth, the Global Council is largely funded by the Foursquare Endowment and this is a reflection of the realignment to our core mission that happened with the discontinuation of the Foursquare Foundation and the formation of the Endowment. At the same time, primary funding from the US church might also begin to include expectations and controls which could inhibit rather than release mission. Modality priorities along with the unintentional but very real tendency towards paternalistic practices that western missions organizations often fall into could pose a threat to the effective functioning of the Global Council. Charles van Engen identifies nine paternalism syndromes that can creep into international missions partnerships and ‘the financier syndrome’ is one of several that could become a challenge.<sup>42</sup>

One encouraging development is that some regions are beginning to give offerings to the Global Council. While only a small beginning, this is a healthy development and suggests a growing ownership and partnership.

Additionally, the US government and nations around the world are now creating and enforcing laws designed to protect against the funding of terrorism and this has created many new challenges in funding global mission. An array of new policies and funding agreements are being created to comply with these laws.

Fifth, the Global Council is a community of elders and they are making progress in learning to walk in spiritual unity and are casting vision as well as finding ways of addressing the problems and challenges that arise in national churches in various parts of the world. For the first time, the Global church (instead of just the US church or FMI) has a structure and the leadership that is able to offer direction, counsel, correction, oversight, encouragement and assistance to churches and leaders from nation to nation.

Finally, the Global Council is positioned and has the intention of helping to bring spiritual health and renewal to Foursquare churches around the world. Here are some of the ways this is happening: (1) There was a time when US missionaries were sent out carrying the fire of Pentecostal revival to nations that were in darkness. Now the US Church is struggling while many national churches are flourishing. The fire that was once carried out needs to come back to the American and other languishing Western churches and the Global Council can help this happen. (2) The priorities of healthy churches, leaders and reproducing disciples is not detached from evangelism, church planting and penetrating unreached peoples. The GC committees are launching initiatives to reach cities, youth, Muslims and have identified unreached nations and peoples that are now targeted for new outreaches. (3) The Global Council is creating policies and approaches to help coordinate the sending of missionaries from multiple nations and finding ways to partner for greater impact. The emerging missionary force from the non-western world is often able to access nations that no longer welcome American or European mission workers. Missions partnerships are fundamental to the existence and purpose of the Global Council. (4) Perhaps, most importantly of all, the primacy and place of prayer is being promoted and pursued by the Global Council. When Leslie Keegel became the new Chairman of the GC, he spoke of a dream for a global prayer network.

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<sup>42</sup> Charles van Engen, “PRESENT-DAY MISSION PARTNERSHIPS,” 64-69

Looking ahead, Leslie speaks of hopes for a global 24/7 prayer chain, and encouraging prayer and Spirit-filled life and ministry in every national church. “We must see more and more the preaching of the Word being confirmed by signs, wonders and miracles,” he asserts. Among his requests for prayer as he begins his new role is his earnest prayer that he might receive “anointing and wisdom to see as God would want me to see, and boldness and faith to be decisive in taking the global family forward.” He also prays for national leaders to know an increased “heartfelt passion and God-given vision to pray passionately and lead decisively.”<sup>43</sup>

The Foursquare Global Prayer Network was officially launched in November of 2018 and, while there has been very little promotion or visibility of this new initiative in the USA, churches from many nations have joined and are mobilizing global prayer.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, the Covid-19 Pandemic has advanced the prayer network more than any other factor. Global, Regional and National Prayer calls are now becoming a gathering point for the nations.

## **Conclusion**

The emergence of new structures for global missions efforts should come as no surprise. Rapid innovation and change are now part of the landscape for every institution and organization. The dynamics of cross-cultural ministry are becoming increasingly complex and this has necessitated adjustments in terms of recruiting, training, funding, sending, oversight, communication, strategies, partnerships and the growing issues of security in parts of the world that are increasingly resistant and/or hostile to Christianity and Christian workers.

Foursquare has had the courage to try to renew existing wineskins as well as create new ones. Not every effort has been successful but the fact that attempts have been made demonstrates that leaders understand and embrace the urgency and priority of the task of bringing the Gospel to every nation and people. There are visible efforts to strengthen and deepen the kingdom value of making Christ and the Good News of Salvation known.

One of the difficulties of advancing the Mission of God is the inflexibility and institutionalization of modality structures. Over time, modalities tend towards numerous internal maintenance and development functions rather than external expansion.

Modality structures such as denominational organisations tend to be vertical, hierarchical, and chain-of-command structures. Sodality structures such as faith-mission agencies, or Christian non-governmental organisations tend to be horizontal, more associational, cooperative fellowships of persons who share a particular vision and agenda. Modality structures tend to carry out many different types of activities. Sodality structures tend to focus on doing one kind of activity with a specific, focused purpose.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Andy Butcher, “LESLIE KEEGEL APPOINTED CHAIR OF FOURSQUARE GLOBAL COUNCIL ” [https://resources.foursquare.org/leslie\\_keegel\\_appointed\\_chair\\_of\\_foursquare\\_global\\_council/](https://resources.foursquare.org/leslie_keegel_appointed_chair_of_foursquare_global_council/) (accessed August 3, 2020).

<sup>44</sup> The most accessible resource for the Foursquare Global Prayer Network in the FGPN Facebook page @FoursquareGlobalPrayerNetwork (Foursquare Global Prayer Network).

<sup>45</sup> Charles van Engen, “Present-day Mission Partnerships,” 60-61

The reality, however, is that we need to work with both modality and sodality structures and find ways to enhance and maximize both. Van Engen affirms that, “Nowadays, global mission endeavours may need both modality and sodality mission structures, as Winter emphasised some years ago. Both kinds of structures represent unique opportunities and challenges.”<sup>46</sup>

Structures, both new and old must be vigorously assessed, adjusted and/or abandoned if they have lost their effectiveness and impact. The urgency of the mission demands a very intentional diligence in how we operate and invest. Stewardship of what has been entrusted to a person, group or organization will certainly be examined by the One who calls His people to participate in His mission and provided resources for the work. While the development of organizations and institutions inevitably creates an increasing variety of funding obligations and demands, maintaining the priority of the mission is the primary objective.

Can the Foursquare church succeed in adapting to change, renewing old wineskins and creating new ones? Can the vitality of the emerging church from other nations bring renewal to the US church? Can a global prayer movement relight the fire of Pentecost and ignite a revival that results in a new wave of missions and world evangelism? There are encouraging signs both currently and historically that all of these things are possible, and some are already underway. What is required for this to happen is a particular view of the future.

I have been unable to find the original source of quote below, but it is widely attributed to Dr. Ralph Winter. Since his influence has been the catalyst of this paper, I will close with these memorable and challenging words which are apparently his and which resonate with possibilities and promise.

“Unless and until the future of the world becomes more important than the future of the church, the church has no future.”

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 63

## UNTIL WE ALL ARRIVE...

Obed Sanabria Jaimes

One of the characteristics of today's world is individualism<sup>1</sup> supported by self-centeredness—the search for personal good over the common good. In these times of pandemic, this aspect has increased to such an extent that the "other" is considered a focus of contamination, even if he or she has no symptoms;<sup>2</sup> thus, little by little society and the special circumstances we live in today, lead us to a kind of social ostracism.<sup>3</sup> In a world of advancing communications, people are increasingly distant from each other in their hearts.

The saddest thing is that we have brought this way of thinking into our Christian lifestyle. In Colombia, for example, the "mega-churches" held massive services (today this is not possible due to confinement), with dark walls, and large lights focused only on the altar. The church was seen as a "mass" and, although the experience moves sensations, little by little the individuality of the ministry is changed by the multitudes, which become attractive for the pastor and his dream of *iglecrecimiento* (church growth).

This way of doing church created a kind of worship of the cult, the image of the pastor, music, etc; however, this does not necessarily mean worship of God. In this sense, we begin to worship the things that are done "for God," leaving aside our love for God Himself and our neighbor, which are the central commandments.

For a long time, a "holy indifference" to the world around us and a "practical indifference" to our brother has been created. Since "I" am doing well, it makes me insensitive to the need of my neighbor. This reality of our time was also seen in the time of Jesus; there was an exclusive and excluding society to which a group of privileged people belonged. Jesus uses a beautiful parable to call the attention of the religious leaders of that time: we know it as the parable of the Good Samaritan. This wonderful teaching of our Lord is still very current and relevant for this time, because, in the face of the pain and suffering of those around us, we prefer to "pass by" and have excuses like the priest and the Levite had. Their excuse was: "I am a servant of God and my position does not allow me to contaminate myself with blood (let's remember that the man was wounded), nor to go near a dead person (the scripture says that he was half dead, so he could

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<sup>1</sup> Individualism: Used in this article to refer to the tendency to think and act not only in terms of one's own interests, but also in terms of personal pleasure and self-satisfaction. This can be understood as the conjunction of selfishness, narcissism, hedonism and consumerism.

<sup>2</sup> One of the great difficulties presented by the current pandemic is the fact that there are healthy infectors, who are called asymptomatic carriers, that is, people who carry and transmit the virus without knowing it or showing any symptoms.

<sup>3</sup> Social ostracism is the distancing, in this case voluntary, of an individual from the social environment or from participation in activities that were previously habitual.



already be dead, it could not be verified without the risk of contamination).<sup>4</sup> By law, anyone who touched another person's blood or approached a dead person was unclean. For these reasons, their excuse was to be faithful to the law and, very possibly, not to want to become contaminated.

It is curious that, whoever asked the question to test Jesus in Luke 10:25, was a "doctor of the law."<sup>5</sup> In his arrogance he addresses Him as a simple "teacher." This interpreter of the law went to Jesus with the intention of evaluating him or, even more, ridiculing him in front of his followers. However, the Lord answers him with two questions: "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26). The Word of God tells us that the "doctor of the law" answers correctly: "*He answered and said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*" (Lk. 10:27). So why does Jesus answer you with those two questions? I think the Lord is showing the "doctor of the law" that he had two privileges over others: the first was that he could *read*, something that only a few people could do, so the common people had to be content with hearing the Law. Secondly, he had access to God's Law directly; having a manuscript was very expensive, he had to be wealthy, or in many cases entire communities saved up to buy a single scroll.

This privileged character, who knows the law, very surely answers with the eloquence of his position. It is interesting that Jesus himself backs up that answer. In Matthew's gospel, he tells us that it is Jesus who answers and Luke tells us that he is the doctor of the law. How can we reconcile the two accounts? Matthew tells us that they both said these same words. So, Luke's gospel is emphasizing the words of the doctor of the law, which were correct and reaffirmed by Jesus himself.

Now, the issue is that whoever came to evaluate ends up being evaluated, because Jesus did not ask him one question but two. The doctor of the law answered one well, the one that had

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<sup>4</sup> Both the Priest and the priest were aware that if they touched a dead person, he was left in a state of legal impurity for seven days (Num\_19:11). This would prevent him from fulfilling his duties in the temple, and he could not take any chances. The ritual demands were above the love of neighbor.

<sup>5</sup> Nomikos (νομικός, G3544), adjective; means: understood in the law (Tit\_3:9). It is used as a name, an "interpreter of the law" (Mat\_22:35; Luc\_7:30; Luc\_10:25; Luc\_11:45-46, Luc\_11:52, Luc\_11:53 in some mss.; Luc\_14:13; Tit\_3:13, where Zenas receives this name). As there is no evidence that he was an expert in Roman jurisprudence, the term can be considered in its normal New Testament sense, applied to an expert in the Law of Moses. The usual name for a scribe is *grammateus*, man of letters; for doctor of law, *nomodidaskalos* (DOCTOR). "A comparison of Luk\_5:17 with Luk\_5:21 and Mar\_2:6 and Mat\_9:3 shows that the three terms were used synonymously, not denoting three classes. The scribes were originally simple men of letters, scholars of the Scriptures, and the name given them first contained no reference to the law in itself; however, as time went on, they devoted themselves primarily, though not exclusively, to the study of the law. They became jurists rather than theologians, and were given names that already called attention to this fact. Undoubtedly, some would devote themselves more to one specialty than to another; but an 'expert in the law' or 'interpreter' could also be a 'doctor', and the case of Gamaliel shows that a 'doctor' could also be a member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:34)." (Eaton, in Hastings' Bible Dictionary).

to do with knowledge, but he failed in the practice of that knowledge. That is why he answered "do this, and you will live. We Christians have taken pride in our biblical knowledge and sound theology; however, what we know is of no use if we do not put it into practice. Many of our prayers have focused on asking God to give us things: work, car, health, money, etc., like the youngest son in the parable of The Father and His Two Sons: "give me my share of the goods. However, we ask little or nothing of God to help us "be" or "do" according to His will. I think we should pray a little less about "giving" and more about "doing" as You do.

The doctor of the law, who initially asked the question to test Jesus, ends up being exposed in his lack of coherence. For that reason, Scripture tells us: "*The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' (Lk 10:29 NTV).* Let us imagine the scene: a man approaches Jesus with the arrogance of his position and ends up exposed in his fault and recognizing that he does not know. What irony! An interpreter of the law recognizes before Jesus that he has not understood well who his neighbor is.

To understand his trade, let us put his work in context. As a general rule, every nation has a "Constitution" that supports all "institutions", whether public or private. The Constitution contains articles that describe the duties and rights of the citizen and is his navigation chart. Any judicial or jurisprudential decision must be framed by the Political Constitution of the country. However, it is possible that there are different interpretations of an article, according to what is being defended. Thus, when there is a conflict over the interpretation of an article, in Colombia, for example, it is decided by the judges of the Constitutional Court; they are the ones who ultimately decide how to interpret the norm. In the case of the people of Israel, the legal, religious, and spiritual support is the Torah. It contains the commandments on which every Israelite should be governed. However, many considered that light needed to be shed on the interpretations of God's laws in a timely, specific way and adapting them to the changing conditions in Israel. This led to the Hebrew ethic distorting the intentions of God's law, turning the relationship with God into excessive legalism. Thus, the Law of God given in the Ten Commandments included 613 systematized precepts that very soon acquired priority over those given by the Lord Himself.

This was the work of the teachers of the law or "doctors of the law." They were in charge of *interpreting* God's commandments. That is why it is ironic that a "Doctor or interpreter of the law" did not know how to interpret in God's commandment "*who is my neighbor.*" It is in the context of the humiliation of the Doctor of the Law that Jesus now responds to him and in what way! The Lord tells him a story that, most certainly, resonated in his ears, since anyone would consider that the hero of this story would be a priest or a Levite or a Pharisee; contrary to this, the Lord puts a Samaritan as a reference of obedience to God. This must have been very difficult for the "doctor of the law" to assimilate, since the Lord was telling him that those who should be the moral references and helpers of others were not. What Jesus shows him in history is that there is more sensitivity on the part of those outside the "ministerial circle" than on the part of their leaders.

This is also a word for us as a church. How sensitive are we to the world that is suffering, that has been stripped, wounded and is dying physically, morally and spiritually? It is a call for attention to our practice of love.

What did this Samaritan do that made a difference? First of all, Jesus says that "he was moved to mercy". Mercy is a word that we sing, pray, ask God for, but little do we understand. When we speak of having mercy on our neighbor we confuse it with "pity" or "sorrow" for the one who suffers. However, mercy is putting myself in the other's shoes, it is putting myself in their place;<sup>6</sup> it is loving them as I love myself. This idea is reflected in what the Samaritan does, he attends to him beyond duty; he not only heals him, bandages his wounds and carries him on his horse, that is, he gives him the honor and comfort that he himself had and takes care of him, paying for everything.

Here we can see three important aspects: First the "Download", that is, to assume the reality, to understand that we have a responsibility as Christians and we have to share with the needy. The Lord expects us to be a blessing to those who need it. Secondly, "Charging" this is "Getting involved with reality"; it is not just a welfare aid, but it gets involved itself. And thirdly, "Charging" which has to do with providing a structure of sustainability to those we help.

This is the mercy God gave us in the person of his Son. He took our place on the cross of Calvary, paying for our sins and left us His Holy Spirit who is our helper. This is the mercy we should have for those around us, a mercy that goes beyond feelings of sadness or pity, and is transformed into actions of love.

We do not have to have a great name or a famous ministry; like the Samaritan, we can be a "nobody" but known by God. The important thing is not how well known we are by multitudes, but how well known we are by God.

Now, this Samaritan not only healed his body, but also healed his soul by changing the course of his history. For many years, Samaritans and Jews could not even speak to each other, there was a historical hatred between them, but this simple man changed hatred into love. At least this Jew would be grateful for life and would no longer hate the Samaritans... his heart was healthy.

Let us imagine for a moment the family of this Jew, their concern about his disappearance, surely without news. They might have thought the worst. The story, then, could end in two ways: a short one, in which this Jew comes home and tells his family what happened, or the longer and,

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<sup>6</sup> In *Commentary on the New Testament vol. 1: Matthew*, William Barclay, (Editorial CLIE) commenting on "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt. 5:7) says: "The Greek word for merciful is *eleêmôn*. But, as we have seen repeatedly, the New Testament Greek as we have it goes back to an original Hebrew or Aramaic. The Hebrew word for mercy is *jessed*; and it is an untranslatable word. It doesn't mean simply to sympathize with a person in the popular sense of this word; it doesn't mean just to pity another who is having a hard time. *Jessed*, mercy, means the ability to put oneself totally in the place of another in such a way that one sees with one's eyes, thinks with one's mind, and feels with one's feelings. It is clear that this is much more than an emotional wave of pity; it requires a deliberate effort of mind and will. It denotes a sympathy that is not given, so to speak, from the outside, but comes from a deliberate identification with the other person to the point of seeing and feeling like him. This is what the word sympathy literally means. Sympathy is derived from two Greek words-syn, meaning together with, and pasjein, meaning to experience or suffer. Sympathy means etymologically to experience things together with another person, to literally pass on what is happening."

in my opinion, more probable one, a Samaritan accompanying this Jew home. Whichever way it ends, I think the effect is the same, a social transformation.

Let me use my imagination to explain the impact on this Jew, giving details of the second option at the end. When the Jew's family sees him arrive, after several days of worry, would at first think that this misfortune would be caused by their "enemy," the Samaritan who comes with him. However, this Jew would tell them: "this Samaritan, far from being my enemy, is the reason why I am still alive" and he would tell them the story. We can imagine the impact on the family. From that moment on, the image of the Samaritans is totally different; this Samaritan produces, in turn, a wonderful social transformation. It is with this kind of love that God hopes we can change the world. This parable is one of denouncing hatred, and how to tear it out of our hearts. The most relentless hatred is religious. However, the Lord Jesus is giving us a "way of love" that transforms.

I remember when God gave me the privilege of founding the church where I currently pastor. My salary at that time was no more than \$200, which I was given for being an associate pastor of a church, which was very little to support my family, so I lived practically by faith. During that time, I had a call from God to open a church in a sector where there was no Christian church. I had been doing spiritual reflection in companies and preaching in various places that allowed me to do so. This was a step of faith to a new stage of my ministerial life. I looked for a place to start the work. However, the place I had chosen, the rent was worth twice what I was earning. It was a miracle of God that the real estate company accepted that I would take it and use it for the new church.

When the legal documents were finally ready for renting and we were able to make the necessary adjustments to start; and before our first official meeting and the placement of the sign as "Iglesia Cuadrangular," what I did was put together some baskets with markets and distribute them in all the houses near the church. Therefore, the first thing our neighbors knew about the church was that we were people who had come to that area to bless them from God. There were no sermons, our only message was: God loves you. This made all the inhabitants of the sector to be pleasantly surprised.

In Latin America, there is a deep Roman Catholic tradition, which has brought about a rejection of the Christian churches by some people. On the doors of many houses in our country there is a sticker that says, "Here we are Catholics and we are not going to change religion, so do not insist." Some of the houses where we gave the baskets with markets had those signs. However, they received the gift with immense gratitude and joy. A month later we gave out school kits for the children, with a nice postcard where we wrote beautiful promises from God. This made many of those families, who previously looked down on the Christian church, now began to attend our meetings, and those who did not, at least treated us with respect and gratitude. Two months after we were there, the police commander visited us with the intention of getting to know us, since he had heard about what we were doing in the community and was available to us for anything we needed. The message we wanted to convey was not just words, but actions.

Two years later, right in front of the church, a new family arrived and rented a house. The head of the home was very opposed to the Christians, so he came with the mission to get us out of

the sector, so he wanted to collect signatures from the nearby inhabitants as support to expel us. What would be the surprise for him when he found out that there was no one who was not happy with us, on the contrary, they were very grateful and defended the fact that we were in that place. To that man's surprise, his children and wife began to attend church; consequently, he thought that instead of being convinced and transformed himself, he would prefer to leave that place with his family. We are still praying for him.

The love of God expressed in actions is the most powerful weapon for the transformation of a society. Many people feel tired of HEARING from God, on the radio, television, in the press, etc. People want to SEE God through us. To see his love, to see his mercy. Behind everything we do there is a worldview and our behavior obeys that worldview.<sup>7</sup> That is, if the eternal life of God that we desire does not make us better neighbors and have mercy, then we are not reading the Word of God correctly. We need then for Jesus to open our eyes and sensitize our hearts.

During the time of confinement, many families in our country were deeply affected economically. Many lost their jobs, others who had businesses had to close them down. The impact on the families was remarkable, not only economically, but also emotionally and socially. In our church we thought of ways to help and continue preaching the gospel of God. Now, our goal is to help our neighbors, even if they are not followers of Jesus. Therefore, we prepared some markets for the needy families of the church and other markets to share with the families that we wanted to reach for the Lord. The purpose was not just to reach out with a market, but to talk to them about God's love, and the market was just a tool to reach out to their homes so they could see a church closer to them. The testimonies of how these simple markets touched their hearts are shocking. Many were crying out in thanksgiving to God. Some families were already in great need for days, so it was a balm in those difficult times. In addition, they were very receptive to the message of God's Word and have begun the process of discipleship.

God designed a church around love for others and not the worship of some "anointed of God". The apostle Paul points out: "*And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

I had long considered the task of reaching the stature of Christ's fullness an individual or personal matter and it is, in a way; however, the apostle Paul tells us that it is not only an individual but a collective duty because we must reflect Christ's fullness in our unity, love and service. Therefore, each Christian has a gift/ministry and contributes to the task of building up each other.

In fact, the objective of the ministry that God has given us is not to elevate our ego or to reach positions of power for personal benefit; rather, it should be carried out for the service of our

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<sup>7</sup> A worldview is the set of opinions and beliefs that make up the general image or concept of the world that a person, period or culture has, from which it interprets its own nature and that of everything that exists. A worldview defines common notions, which apply to all fields of life.

brothers in Christ, so that they may be edified and prepared to carry out the will of God for their lives.

The responsibility of the Lord's ministers is to equip the whole church for the work of the ministry. Therefore, the work of the pastor, apostle, evangelist, prophet, and teacher must be oriented to equipping the church so that it can develop the ministry that God has given to each one. This means helping us to grow mutually; therefore, the apostle Paul tells us that: *"from whom the whole body, joined together and compacted by that which every joint **supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"***. (Eph. 4:16). God's plan for the life of each believer is not only that they enjoy the fellowship of other believers in a passive way, sitting in the pews every Sunday, but they are called to be servants of God and servants of their neighbors.

There are two fundamental questions in the Christian life and they are the first two questions that God asks mankind. The first is the one He asked man in the Garden of Eden: Where are you? And the second is the one He asks Cain: Where is your brother? I believe that God continues to ask us: "Where are you and where is your brother" because, contrary to what Cain said, we are our brother's keepers. Around us, there are people with wounds to be bandaged, with wounds to be healed, dead in life; there are people who need our help, and we ourselves need someone's help. We are each other's keepers.

The story of the good Samaritan is the story of someone who gets off his horse, expert in healing, in bandaging, what a precious image of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the beginning of his ministry on earth, Scripture tells us in Luke 4:17-21:

*and they gave him the book of the prophet Isaiah. When he unrolled it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Then he rolled up the book, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. All those in the synagogue looked at him carefully, and he began to speak to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your presence.'"*

This should also be our task, to fulfill the mission of the "Servant of the Lord." Caring for each other in order to grow until we all reach the stature of the fullness of Christ.

## Hasta que todos lleguemos...

*TH. Obed Sanabria Jaimés*

Una de las características del mundo de hoy es el individualismo<sup>1</sup> soportado en el egocentrismo, es decir, la búsqueda del bien personal por encima del bienestar común. En estos tiempos de pandemia, este aspecto se ha incrementado a tal punto de que se considera al “otro” como foco de contaminación, aunque no tenga síntomas;<sup>2</sup> así, poco a poco la sociedad y las circunstancias especiales que vivimos en la actualidad, nos llevan a una especie de ostracismo social.<sup>3</sup> En un mundo de avance en las comunicaciones, las personas están cada vez más lejos unas de otras en sus corazones.

Lo más triste es que hemos llevado a nuestro estilo de vida cristiana esta forma de pensamiento. En Colombia, por ejemplo, las “mega iglesias” hacían cultos masivos (hoy mismo no es posible por el confinamiento), con paredes oscurecidas, y grandes luces enfocadas solo en el altar. La iglesia se veía como “masa” y, aunque la experiencia mueve sensaciones, poco a poco se cambia lo individual del ministerio por las multitudes, que se vuelven atractivas para el pastor y su sueño de “iglecrecimiento”.

Esta manera de hacer iglesia creó una especie de adoración al culto, a la imagen del pastor, a la música, etc; sin embargo, esto no significa, necesariamente, adoración a Dios. En este sentido, empezamos a adorar las cosas que se hacen “para Dios”, dejando a un lado nuestro amor a Dios mismo y al prójimo, que son los mandamientos centrales.

Por mucho tiempo se ha creado una indiferencia “santa” con el mundo que nos rodea y una indiferencia “práctica” con nuestro hermano. Desde que el “yo” esté bien, me hace insensible a la necesidad de mi prójimo. Esta realidad de nuestra época, también se vio en los tiempos de Jesús; había una sociedad exclusiva y excluyente a la cual pertenecían un grupo de privilegiados. Jesús usa una hermosa parábola para llamar la atención a los líderes religiosos de aquel entonces: la conocemos como la parábola del buen samaritano. Esta maravillosa enseñanza de nuestro Señor sigue muy vigente y relevante para este tiempo, pues, ante el dolor y el sufrimiento de los que están a nuestro alrededor, preferimos “pasar de largo” y tenemos excusas como el sacerdote y el levita las tenían. La excusa de ellos era: “soy siervo de Dios y mi posición no me permite contaminarme con la sangre (recordemos que el hombre estaba herido), ni tampoco acercarme a un muerto (la escritura dice que estaba medio muerto, así que podría ya estar muerto, no se podía verificar sin el riesgo de contaminarse). Por ley, quien tocara sangre de otra persona o se acercara

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<sup>1</sup> Individualismo: se usa aquí para referirme a la tendencia de pensar y actuar en función no solo de los propios intereses, sino de los placeres personales y la autosatisfacción. Esta puede entenderse como la conjunción del egoísmo, narcisismo, hedonismo y consumismo.

<sup>2</sup> Una de las grandes dificultades que presenta la pandemia actual, es el hecho que existen los contagiadores sanos, a los cuales se les llama portadores asintomáticos, es decir, personas que portan y transmiten el virus sin saberlo, o sin presentar síntomas.

<sup>3</sup> El ostracismo social es el alejamiento, en este caso voluntario, de un individuo del medio social o de la participación en actividades que antes eran habituales.

a un muerto quedaba inmundo. Por esas razones, sus excusas era ser fieles a la ley y, muy posiblemente, no querer contaminarse.<sup>4</sup>

Es curioso que, quien hizo la pregunta para probar a Jesús en Lucas 10:25, era un “doctor en la ley.”<sup>5</sup> En su arrogancia se dirige a Él como un simple “maestro”. Este intérprete de la ley fue a Jesús con la intención de evaluarlo o, aún mayor, ridiculizarlo frente a sus seguidores. Sin embargo, el Señor le contesta con dos preguntas: “¿Qué está escrito en la ley? ¿Cómo lees?” (Lc. 10:26). La Palabra de Dios nos dice que el Doctor en la Ley responde de manera acertada: “*Aquél, respondiendo, dijo: Amarás al Señor tu Dios con todo tu corazón, y con toda tu alma, y con todas tus fuerzas, y con toda tu mente; y a tu prójimo como a ti mismo*”. (Lc. 10:27). Entonces, ¿por qué Jesús le responde con esas dos preguntas? Pienso que el Señor le está mostrando al Doctor en la Ley que él tenía dos privilegios sobre los demás: el primero, sabía leer, algo que solo podían hacer pocas personas, por lo que la gente del común tenía que conformarse con oír la ley. En segundo lugar, tenía acceso a la ley de Dios, directamente; tener un manuscrito era muy costoso, debía ser adinerado o, en muchos casos, comunidades enteras ahorraban para comprar un solo rollo.

Este personaje privilegiado, concededor de la ley, muy seguramente contesta con la elocuencia de su posición. Es interesante que Jesús mismo respalda esa respuesta. En el evangelio de Mateo, nos narra que es Jesús quien responde y Lucas nos dice que es el doctor en la ley. ¿Cómo podemos conciliar los dos relatos? Mateo nos dice que los dos dijeron estas mismas palabras. Así que, el evangelio de Lucas está enfatizando las palabras del doctor de la ley, las cuales fueron acertadas y reafirmadas por Jesús mismo.

Ahora, el tema es que quien venía a evaluar termina siendo evaluado, porque Jesús no le hizo una pregunta sino dos. El doctor en la ley respondió bien una, la que tenía que ver con el

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<sup>4</sup> Tanto el Sacerdote tenían presente que, si tocaban a un muerto, quedaba siete días en estado de impureza legal (Núm\_19:11). Eso le impediría cumplir sus deberes en el templo, y no podía arriesgarse. Las exigencias rituales estaban por encima del amor al prójimo.

<sup>5</sup> Nomikos (νομικός, G3544), adjetivo; significa: entendido en la ley (Tit\_3:9). Se usa como nombre, un «intérprete de la ley» (Mat\_22:35; Luc\_7:30; Luc\_10:25; Luc\_11:45-46, Luc\_11:52, Luc\_11:53 en algunos mss.; Luc\_14:13; Tit\_3:13, donde Zenas recibe este nombre). Como no hay evidencia de que fuera un experto en jurisprudencia romana, el término puede ser considerado en su sentido neotestamentario normal, aplicado a un experto en la ley de Moisés. El nombre usual para un escriba es grammateus, hombre letrado; para doctor de la ley, nomodidaskalos (DOCTOR). «Una comparación de Luc\_5:17 con Luc\_5:21 y Mar\_2:6 y Mat\_9:3 muestra que los tres términos se usaban de forma sinónima, no denotando tres clases. Los escribas eran originalmente simples hombres de letras, estudiosos de las Escrituras, y el nombre que se les dio primero no contenía en sí mismo ninguna referencia a la ley; sin embargo, con el paso del tiempo, se dedicaron principalmente, aunque no con exclusividad, al estudio de la ley. Vinieron a ser juristas más que teólogos, y recibieron nombres que ya llamaban la atención a este hecho. Indudablemente, unos se dedicarían más a una especialidad que a otra; pero un «experto en la ley» o «intérprete» podía también ser un «doctor», y el caso de Gamaliel muestra que un «doctor» podía asimismo ser un miembro del sanedrín (Hch\_5:34)» (Eaton, en Hastings' Bible Dictionary).



conocimiento, pero falló en la práctica de ese conocimiento. Por eso le responde “haz esto, y vivirás”. Los cristianos nos hemos enorgullecido de nuestro conocimiento bíblico y acertada teología; sin embargo, de nada sirve lo que sabemos, si no lo ponemos en práctica. Muchas de nuestras oraciones se han centrado en pedirle a Dios que nos dé cosas: trabajo, auto, salud, dinero, etc... como el hijo menor, en la parábola del padre y sus dos hijos: “dame la parte de los bienes que me corresponde”. No obstante, poco o nada pedimos que Dios nos ayude a “ser” o “hacer” conforme a Su voluntad. Creo que deberíamos orar un poco menos en torno al “dame” y más al “hazme” como Tú.

El doctor en la ley, quien inicialmente hizo la pregunta para probar a Jesús, termina expuesto en su falta de coherencia. Por esa razón, la escritura nos dice: *“El hombre quería justificar sus acciones, entonces le preguntó a Jesús: —¿Y quién es mi prójimo?”* (Luc 10:29 NTV). Imaginemos la escena: un hombre se acerca a Jesús con la arrogancia de su puesto y termina expuesto en su falta y reconociendo que no sabe. ¡Qué ironía! Un intérprete de la ley reconoce ante Jesús que no ha entendido bien quién es su prójimo.

Para entender el oficio que ejercía, pongamos en contexto su labor. Por regla general, toda nación tiene una “Constitución” que es la que le da soporte a todas las “instituciones”, sean estas públicas o privadas. La Constitución contiene artículos que describen los deberes y derechos del ciudadano y es su carta de navegación. Cualquier decisión judicial o jurisprudencial debe estar enmarcada por la Constitución Política del país. Sin embargo, es posible que existan distintas interpretaciones respecto a un artículo, de acuerdo a lo que se esté defendiendo. Así, cuando hay conflicto frente a la interpretación de un artículo, en Colombia, por ejemplo, lo dirime los magistrados de la Corte Constitucional; ellos son los que al final deciden como interpretar la norma. En el caso del pueblo de Israel, el soporte legal, religioso y espiritual es la Torah. Ella contiene los mandamientos sobre el cual todo israelita debería regirse. No obstante, muchos consideraban que se necesitaba dar luz en las interpretaciones de las leyes de Dios de manera puntual, específica y adaptándolos a las condiciones cambiantes en Israel. Esto llevó a que la ética hebrea distorsionara las intenciones de la ley de Dios, convirtiendo la relación con Dios en un legalismo excesivo. Así, pues, la ley de Dios, dada en los Diez mandamientos, se convirtió en 613 preceptos sistematizados y que muy pronto adquirieron prioridad sobre los que el Señor mismo había dado.

Este era el trabajo de los maestros de la ley o “doctores de la ley”. Eran los encargados de “interpretar” los mandamientos de Dios. Por eso es irónico que un “Doctor o intérprete de la ley” no supiera cómo interpretar en el mandamiento de Dios *“quién es mi prójimo”*. Es en el contexto de la humillación del Doctor en la ley que Jesús ahora sí le responde y ¡de qué manera! El Señor le narra una historia que, muy seguramente, retumbó en sus oídos, pues cualquiera consideraría que el héroe de este relato sería un sacerdote o un levita o un fariseo; contrario a esto, el Señor pone como referente de obediencia a Dios a un Samaritano. Esto tuvo que haber sido muy difícil de asimilar para el Doctor en la Ley, pues el Señor le estaba diciendo que quienes deberían ser los referentes morales y de ayuda al prójimo, no lo eran. Lo que Jesús le muestra en la historia, es que hay más sensibilidad de parte de quienes están fuera del “círculo ministerial” que de sus líderes.

Esta también es una palabra para nosotros como iglesia. ¿Qué tan sensibles estamos al mundo que sufre, que ha sido despojado, herido y está agonizando física, moral y espiritualmente? Es un llamado de atención a nuestra práctica del amor.

¿Qué hizo este samaritano que marcó la diferencia? En primer lugar, dice Jesús que “fue movido a misericordia”. La misericordia es una palabra que cantamos, oramos, pedimos a Dios, pero poco entendemos. Cuando hablamos de tener misericordia al prójimo la confundimos con “lástima” o “pesar” por el que sufre. Sin embargo, misericordia es ponerme en los zapatos del otro, es ponerme en su lugar;<sup>6</sup> es amarle como me amo a mí mismo. Esta idea está reflejada en lo que hace el samaritano, lo atiende más allá del deber; no solo lo cura, venda sus heridas y lo lleva en su cabalgadura, es decir le da el honor y la comodidad que el mismo tenía y cuida de él, pagando por todo.

Aquí podemos ver tres aspectos importantes: Primero el “Descargar”, es decir, asumir la realidad, entender que tenemos una responsabilidad como cristianos y tenemos para compartir con el necesitado. El Señor espera que seamos de bendición para quienes lo necesitan. En segundo lugar, “Cargar” esto es “Involucrarse con la realidad”; no es una ayuda asistencial solamente, sino que se involucra así mismo. Y, en tercer lugar, “Encargar” lo cual tiene que ver con proveer una estructura de sostenibilidad a quienes ayudamos.

Esta es la misericordia que Dios nos dio en la persona de su Hijo. Él tomó nuestro lugar en la cruz del calvario, pagando por nuestros pecados y nos dejó su Espíritu Santo quien es nuestro ayudador. Esta es la misericordia que debemos tener por quienes nos rodean, una misericordia que va más allá del sentimiento de tristeza o lástima, y se transforma en acciones de amor. No tenemos que tener un gran nombre o un afamado ministerio, como el Samaritano podemos ser unos “don nadie” pero conocidos por Dios. Lo importante no es cuan conocidos somos por multitudes, sino cuan conocidos somos por Dios.

Ahora bien, este Samaritano no solo curó su cuerpo, sino que también curó su alma cambiando el rumbo de su historia. Por muchos años, samaritanos y judíos ni si quiera se podía hablar, había entre ellos un odio histórico, pero este hombre sencillito cambió el odio por amor. Por lo menos este judío estaría agradecido de por vida y ya no odiaría más a los samaritanos... su corazón estaba sano.

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<sup>6</sup> BARCLAY, William en su libro: *Comentario al Nuevo Testamento Vol. 1: Mateo* (Editorial CLIE) comentando sobre mateo 5:7 “*Bienaventurados los misericordiosos, porque ellos alcanzarán misericordia*” dice: La palabra griega para misericordioso es *eleêmôn*. Pero, como ya hemos visto repetidas veces, el griego del Nuevo Testamento tal como lo tenemos se remonta a un original hebreo o arameo. La palabra hebrea para misericordia es *jésed*; y es una palabra intraducible. No quiere decir simplemente simpatizar con una persona en el sentido popular de esta palabra; no quiere decir solo darle a uno lástima de otro que lo pasa mal. *Jésed*, misericordia, quiere decir la capacidad de ponerse uno totalmente en el lugar de otro de manera que ve con sus ojos, piensa con su mente y siente con sus sentimientos. Está claro que esto es mucho más que una oleada emocional de lástima; exige un esfuerzo deliberado de la mente y de la voluntad. Denota una simpatía que no se da, por así decirlo, desde fuera, sino que viene de una deliberada identificación con la otra persona hasta el punto de ver y sentir como ella. Esto es lo que quiere decir literalmente la palabra simpatía. Simpatía se deriva de dos palabras griegas —*syn*, que quiere decir juntamente con, y *pasjein*, que quiere decir experimentar o sufrir—. Simpatía quiere decir etimológicamente experimentar las cosas juntamente con otra persona, pasar literalmente lo que está pasando.

Imaginemos por un momento la familia de este judío, su preocupación por su desaparición, seguramente sin noticias. Podrían haber pensado lo peor. La historia, entonces, podría terminar de dos maneras: una corta, en la cual este judío llega a casa y cuenta a su familia lo sucedido, o la más extensa y, a mi parecer, la más probable, un samaritano acompañando a este judío hasta su casa. Sea cual sea la forma en la que termina, creo que el efecto es el mismo, una transformación social.

Permítanme usar la imaginación para explicar el impacto en este judío, dando detalles de la segunda opción del final. Cuando la familia del judío lo ven llegar, luego de varios días de preocupación; de primera mano, pensarían que este infortunio sería causado por su “enemigo”, el samaritano que viene con él. Sin embargo, este judío les diría: “este samaritano lejos de ser mi enemigo es la razón por la que sigo con vida” y les relataría la historia. Podemos imaginar el impacto en la familia. A partir de ese momento la imagen de los samaritanos es totalmente diferente; este samaritano produce, a su vez, una transformación social maravillosa. Es con este tipo de amor que Dios espera que podamos cambiar al mundo. Esta parábola es una denuncia al odio, y como arrancarlo de nuestros corazones. El odio más implacable es el religioso. Sin embargo, el Señor Jesús nos está dando un “camino de amor” que transforma.

Recuerdo cuando Dios me dio el privilegio de fundar la iglesia donde pastoreo actualmente. Mi salario en ese entonces no superaba los 200 dólares, que me daban por ser pastor asociado de una iglesia, los cuales eran muy escasos para sostener a mi familia, así que vivía prácticamente por fe. Durante ese tiempo tuve un llamado de Dios a abrir una iglesia en un sector donde no había iglesia cristiana. Yo había estado haciendo reflexiones espirituales en empresas y predicando en varios lugares que me permitían hacerlo. Este era un paso de fe a una nueva etapa de mi vida ministerial. Busqué un lugar para empezar la obra, sin embargo, el lugar que había escogido, el alquiler valía el doble de lo que yo ganaba. Fue un milagro de Dios que la inmobiliaria aceptara que yo lo tomara y lo usara para la nueva iglesia.

Cuando por fin estuvieron listos los documentos legales para el alquiler y pudimos hacer las adecuaciones necesarias para empezar; y antes de nuestra primera reunión oficial y la colocación del letrero como “Iglesia Cuadrangular”, lo que hice fue armar unas canastas con mercados y repartirlas en todas las casas cercanas a la iglesia. Por lo tanto, lo primero que nuestros vecinos supieron de la iglesia es que éramos personas que habíamos llegado a ese sector para bendecirles de parte de Dios. No había sermones, nuestro único mensaje era: Dios les ama. Esto hizo que todos los habitantes del sector se sorprendieran gratamente.

En América Latina hay un profundo arraigo católico romano, el cual ha traído un rechazo en algunas personas a las iglesias cristianas. En las puertas de muchas casas de nuestro país hay un adhesivo que dice “Aquí somos católicos y no vamos a cambiar de religión, así que no insista”. Algunas de las casas donde dimos las canastas con mercados tenían esos letreros, no obstante, recibieron el obsequio con inmensa gratitud y alegría. Un mes después repartimos kits escolares para los niños, con una linda postal donde escribimos hermosas promesas de Dios. Esto hizo que muchas de esas familias, que antes miraban con rechazo a la iglesia cristiana, ahora empezaran a asistir a nuestras reuniones, y los que no, por lo menos nos trataban con respeto y gratitud. A los dos meses de estar ahí, el comandante de la policía nos visitó con el ánimo de conocernos, pues había oído de lo que hacíamos en la comunidad y se puso a nuestra disposición para todo lo que necesitáramos. El mensaje que queríamos transmitir no era solo palabras, sino actos.

Dos años después, justo en frente de donde quedaba la iglesia, llegó una familia nueva y alquiló una casa. El jefe del hogar era muy opositor a los cristianos, así que llegó con la misión de sacarnos del sector, por lo que quiso reunir firmas de los habitantes cercanos como apoyo para expulsarnos. Cuál sería la sorpresa para él cuando se enteró que no había ninguna persona inconforme con nosotros, al contrario, estaban muy agradecidos y defendían el hecho que estuviéramos en ese lugar. Para más sorpresa de aquel hombre, sus hijos y su esposa empezaron a asistir a la iglesia; en consecuencia, pensó que en vez de que él mismo fuera convencido y transformado, prefería irse con su familia de aquel lugar. Aún seguimos orando por él.

El amor de Dios expresado en acciones es el arma más poderosa de transformación de una sociedad. Muchas personas se sienten cansadas de OÍR de Dios, por la radio, la televisión, la prensa, etc. La gente quiere VER a Dios a través de nosotros. Ver su amor, ver su misericordia. Detrás de todo proceder hay una cosmovisión y nuestra conducta obedece a esa cosmovisión.<sup>7</sup> Es decir, si la vida eterna de Dios que deseamos no nos hace mejores prójimos y tener misericordia, entonces no estamos leyendo correctamente la Palabra de Dios. Necesitamos entonces que Jesús abra nuestros ojos y sensibilice nuestros corazones.

Durante el tiempo de confinamiento, muchas familias de nuestro país fueron afectadas profundamente en la parte económica. Muchos perdieron el empleo, otros que tenían negocios tuvieron que cerrarlos. El impacto en las familias fue notable, no solo a nivel económico, sino también emocional y social. En nuestra iglesia pensamos en maneras de ayudar y seguir predicando el evangelio de Dios. Ahora, nuestro objetivo es ayudar al prójimo, aunque este no sea seguidor de Jesús. Por lo tanto, preparamos unos mercados para las familias necesitadas de la iglesia y otros mercados para compartir con las familias que queríamos alcanzar para el Señor. El propósito no era solo llegar con un mercado, sino hablarles del amor de Dios, y el mercado era solo un instrumento para llegar a sus hogares para que vieran una iglesia más cercana. Los testimonios de cómo estos sencillos mercados les tocaron el corazón son impactantes. Muchos lloraban dando gracias a Dios. Algunas familias tenían ya días pasando mucha necesidad, así que era un bálsamo en esos momentos difíciles. Además, fueron muy receptivos al mensaje de la Palabra de Dios y han empezado el proceso de discipulado.

Dios diseñó una iglesia en torno al amor por otros y no a la adoración de unos “ungidos de Dios”. El apóstol Pablo nos señala: “*Y él mismo constituyó a unos, apóstoles; a otros, profetas; a otros, evangelistas; a otros, pastores y maestros, a fin de perfeccionar a los santos para la obra del ministerio, para la edificación del cuerpo de Cristo, hasta que todos lleguemos a la unidad de la fe y del conocimiento del Hijo de Dios, a un varón perfecto, a la medida de la estatura de la plenitud de Cristo*” (Efe 4:11-13).

Por mucho tiempo había considerado que la tarea de llegar a la estatura de la plenitud de Cristo era un asunto individual o personal y lo es, en cierta manera; sin embargo, el apóstol Pablo nos dice que no solo es un deber individual sino colectivo pues debemos reflejar la plenitud de

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<sup>7</sup> Una cosmovisión es el conjunto de opiniones y creencias que conforman la imagen o concepto general del mundo que tiene una persona, época o cultura, a partir de la cual la interpreta su propia naturaleza y la de todo lo existente. Una cosmovisión define nociones comunes, que se aplican a todos los campos de la vida.

Cristo en nuestra unidad, amor y servicio. Por consiguiente, cada cristiano tiene un don/ministerio y aporta en la tarea de ir edificándonos mutuamente.

En efecto, el objetivo del ministerio que Dios nos ha dado, no es el de encumbrar nuestro ego o alcanzar posiciones de poder en beneficio personal; sino que este debe desempeñarse en pro del servicio a nuestros hermanos en Cristo, para que sean edificados y preparados para que desempeñen la voluntad de Dios para sus vidas.

La responsabilidad de los ministros del Señor es equipar a toda la iglesia para la obra del ministerio. Por tanto, el trabajo del pastor, apóstol, evangelista, profeta y maestro debe estar orientado a equipar a la iglesia para que ella pueda desarrollar el ministerio que Dios le ha dado a cada uno. Lo anterior significa ayudarnos a crecer mutuamente; por eso, el apóstol Pablo nos dice que: *“de quien todo el cuerpo, bien concertado y unido entre sí por todas las coyunturas que se ayudan mutuamente, según la actividad propia de cada miembro, recibe su crecimiento para ir edificándose en amor”*. (Ef. 4:16). El plan de Dios para la vida de cada creyente no es solamente que disfrute de la comunión de los demás creyentes de manera pasiva, sentados en las bancas todos los domingos, sino que están llamados a ser siervos de Dios y siervos del prójimo.

Hay dos preguntas fundamentales en la vida cristiana y son las dos primeras preguntas que Dios le hace a la humanidad. La primera es la que le hizo al hombre en el Jardín del Edén: ¿Dónde estás? Y la segunda es la que le hace a Caín: ¿Dónde está tu hermano? Considero que Dios sigue preguntándonos: “Dónde estás y dónde está tu hermano” pues, al contrario de lo que dijo Caín, sí somos guardas de nuestro hermano. A nuestro alrededor, hay personas con heridas para vendar, con heridas para sanar, muertos en vida; hay personas que necesitan nuestra ayuda, y nosotros mismos necesitamos la ayuda de alguien. Somos guardas los unos de los otros.

La historia del buen Samaritano es la historia de alguien que se baja de su cabalgadura, experto en sanar, en vendar, que imagen más preciosa de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Al inicio de su ministerio en la tierra, nos dice la Escritura en Lucas 4:17-21:

*y le entregaron el libro del profeta Isaías. Al desenrollarlo, encontró el lugar donde está escrito:*

*«El Espíritu del Señor está sobre mí, por cuanto me ha ungido para anunciar buenas nuevas a los pobres. Me ha enviado a proclamar libertad a los cautivos y dar vista a los ciegos, a poner en libertad a los oprimidos, a pregonar el año del favor del Señor.»*

*Luego enrolló el libro, se lo devolvió al ayudante y se sentó. Todos los que estaban en la sinagoga lo miraban detenidamente, y él comenzó a hablarles: «Hoy se cumple esta Escritura en presencia de ustedes».*

Esta también debe ser nuestra tarea, cumplir la misión del “Siervo del Señor”. Cuidándonos mutuamente con el fin de crecer hasta que todos lleguemos a la estatura de la plenitud de Cristo.

Dios les bendiga.