Helping You Understand and Engage One of God’s Greatest Mission Fields
reaching HISPANICS in North America

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Acknowledgements

This book has not been the work or achievement of any one person. Rather, it has been the collective IQ, skills, gifts, and experiences of many. We salute and express a special appreciation for all of those who have contributed to the undertaking and achievement of this project.

A special thanks to Ken Weathersby, Vice President, as well as Tom Cheyney, John M. Bailey, Randy Ferguson and Van Kicklighter, Team Leaders in the Church Planting Group at the North American Mission Board, for their vision, encouragement, and support of this venture.

We are very grateful to Bobby Sena for serving as the project facilitator for this book. Our appreciation also goes out to Randy Ferguson for serving as the general editor for this resource.

Our main contributors in the development of this new resource are: Daniel Sanchez, Gus Suarez, Frank Moreno, Jorge Sedaca, Joshua Del Risco, Roberto Gama, Jorge Diaz, and Bobby Sena. All of these men are great leaders, and this project would never have been completed without their tireless efforts to bring to the page this exciting new tool for the local association and pastor.

We also want to express our gratitude to Mark Hugo Lopez, Associate Director of the Pew Hispanic Center, for his assistance with this book, particularly chapter one.

Thank you to Sherri Jachelski and Sandy Lenahan for keeping this project on track, as well as LawrenceInk for the creative design of this book.

Additionally, we would like to thank the following who served as frequent readers and early editors of the manuscript: Jim Arrant, John M. Bailey, Steve Canter, Les Dobbins, Jess Fairbanks, Leroy Fountain, Ronnie Fox, Joe Hernandez, Neal Hughes, Peter Kendrick, Chris McNairy, Greg Murphree, Van Sanders, Mark Snowden, and David Terry.
Above all, we thank our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will utilize the content of this book to inspire thousands of Southern Baptist lay leaders, pastors, missionaries, churches, directors of missions, and state convention leaders to share the gospel with and plant churches in the Hispanic community.

*Resource Development & Equipping Team*

*Church Planting Group*

*North American Mission Board*
This is an important book. It is important because **North America is a mission field.** Within the mission field of North America, Hispanics represent one of the fastest growing population segments. Therefore, the need to reach Hispanics in North America is an important task. And this book is an important treatment of this topic. What makes it important isn’t just its authors or publishers (although the fact that it comes from a missions agency committed to reaching Hispanics is noteworthy). It is important because it can assist Southern Baptists in reaching this continent with the gospel by becoming more effective in reaching Hispanics.

We invite you to read this book. This book will help you to gain a fresh insight into the Hispanic community because it is written by Hispanic ministry leaders from across North America. The contributors are men who have spent their entire lives living among Hispanics and working to evangelize and plant churches among them. In these pages, the veil obscuring our view of Hispanics has been drawn back providing us with a compelling and high definition portrait of the current realities facing the Hispanic community in North America.

This book holds the potential for change. It will change you and how you see Hispanics in North America. It is our prayer that after reading this book you will gain new insights into the size, diversity, and complexity of reaching the Hispanic community. I pray that God will use you in helping to reach Hispanics all across this great continent.

*Church Planting Group*

*North American Mission Board*

*Alpharetta, Georgia*
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The Hispanic population in North America is exploding. This is taking place in urban centers, in suburban communities, and in rural locations in almost every state and province. Hispanics are more receptive to the gospel than ever before. The circumstances could not be better to see a movement of God. God has deposited within His kingdom in North America all the people and resources necessary to join with Him in that movement.

This book will inspire and instruct you. It will help you understand and engage Hispanics with the gospel of Christ. Careful attention has been given to explaining cultural distinctions and exposing common principles that will aid you in effectively reaching a people who are on God’s heart. Regardless of your position or calling—denominational servant, pastor, or church planter—every Christian can benefit from this resource and become a person better equipped to reach Hispanics for the glory of God.

The opening chapter establishes a foundation for the entire book by presenting a Hispanic demographic profile. This profile utilizes highly recognized sources to document the Hispanic community’s explosive growth, spiritual receptivity, growth projections, rapid expansion throughout the country, religious composition, and diversity related to country of origin, language proficiency, and media utilization. The sense that is communicated through the presentation of these vital demographic items is that the Hispanic population is growing in size and influence in American society. The Hispanic population has the potential of becoming a powerful force for the spreading of the gospel in North America and throughout the world.

Chapter two follows the missiological principle of studying a people group’s history and worldview. Starting with the Spanish Americans, this chapter traces the historical and cultural pilgrimage of Mexican Americans,
reaching **HISPANICS** in North America

Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Central Americans, South Americans, and other Hispanic Americans. The analysis of the worldview of these groups sheds light on their social and religious beliefs and points out the bridges and barriers that must be considered in sharing the good news of salvation with them. It is indeed encouraging to know that there are many bridges that can contribute toward Hispanics’ understanding of the gospel.

The next chapter addresses one of the most frequently asked questions about the Hispanic North American population—how can we understand the extensive **diversity** among them? It explains this diversity from the standpoint of national origin, stages of assimilation, language utilization, religious affiliation, socio-economic levels, citizenship status, and generational lifestyles. Here, we find a foundation for the succeeding chapters and suggest guidelines regarding the cultural and linguistic factors that need to be taken into account in the implementation of these ministries.

Aware of the unprecedented receptivity of Hispanics to the gospel message, chapter four surveys some of the **evangelistic approaches** that are producing the best results. The authors of this chapter make practical suggestions, listing things that should and should not be done while communicating the message of salvation to Hispanics. This chapter focuses on relational evangelism, ministry-based evangelism, and one-to-one, gospel sowing events as some of the most effective strategies for reaching Hispanics with the gospel message.

Chapter five makes a strong biblical case for **starting churches** among Hispanics, emphasizing the utilization of indigenous principles throughout the church starting process. The practicality is evident in the fact that it presents a wide variety of church planting models that are being used effectively among Hispanics across North America. The observations made by the authors can be useful in making decisions regarding the type of church planting model that needs to be employed in a specific setting.

**Establishing partnerships** is the main focus of chapter six. Partnerships are a foundational tool for church planting. Biblical principles that guide
these proposed partnerships are discussed. The reader will then be focused on three natural networks evolving from effective partnerships—relational networks, developmental networks, and the networks that connect with denominational, community, and civic leaders. These networks represent people moving through different organizational systems. Integrated throughout the chapter are examples of how partnerships are “lived out” in the Hispanic context.

The crucial task of finding and training church planters is addressed in chapter seven. It explores the issues that make this task so challenging and provides recommended means of finding these church planters. For the task of training church planters, this chapter addresses topics including mentoring, coaching, establishing church planting networks, Basic Training I and II, on and off campus seminary training, and seminary extension.

Committed to helping Hispanic churches grow, the author of chapter eight provides insight into areas of church life that are common to many groups, but with emphasis on the particular characteristics of Hispanic churches. Understanding the characteristics of Hispanic culture and how those affect church life, readers will be better suited to reach Hispanics. Ultimately, the goal is to put tools in the hands of the readers that will help them do their part in assisting Hispanic churches to grow into healthy, reproducing New Testament churches. The chapter then provides practical suggestions to help churches grow through meaningful relationships, intentional evangelism, caring communities, dynamic worship, relentless discipleship making, a passionate outward focus, shared leadership, biblical stewardship, dependence on God’s Word, and prayer.

This book would not be complete without a chapter on resources. The concluding chapter highlights recommended resources that have been prayerfully and carefully selected. The resources are arranged according to the components of the church planting process (readiness, enlistment, equipping, and multiplication). This list of relevant Spanish resources provides an added bonus for our readers.
As you prayerfully read this book, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you into a clearer understanding of and commitment to reaching Hispanics with the gospel. This understanding and commitment will provide you with a better foundation from which to develop appropriate strategies resulting in thousands of Hispanics declaring their personal faith in Jesus Christ.
As God guides and leads you in reaching Hispanics, it is necessary to understand this people group by obtaining the most accurate and up-to-date information available. We are going to construct a brief demographic profile on Hispanic Americans that will provide a statistical foundation for developing effective strategies for reaching Hispanics. In light of the fact that there is a very large amount of information on Hispanic Americans, we are going to focus primarily on the demographic facts that relate more closely to the principal objectives addressed within these pages, such as evangelism, church planting, leadership training, church growth, and resource development. These facts focus on Hispanics as a receptive population, a growing population, a diverse population, a dispersed population, and a youthful population.

A Receptive Population

One factor that will greatly determine our success in reaching Hispanics in North America is an understanding of how receptive they might be to the message of Jesus Christ. Once we know more about how open they might be to Christ, we can shape conversations and activities that are most suited for the opportunity. The Pew Foundation Forum on Religion & Public Life conducted a survey of over 4,000 adults, constituting one of the largest data collection efforts to explore the nature of religion among Hispanics. In this survey, several things stand out:

When asked how important religion is in their lives, more than two-thirds (68%) of Hispanics say that religion is very important to them. This is in contrast to non-Hispanic whites, where only 57% say religion is important to them in their lives.¹
Nearly one-fifth (18%) of all Latinos* say they have either converted from one religion to another or to no religion at all. Half of Hispanic evangelicals (51%) are converts, and more than four-fifths of them (43% of Hispanic evangelicals overall) are former Catholics.

By an overwhelming majority (82%), Hispanics cite the desire for a more direct, personal experience with God as the main reason for adopting a new faith.

A majority of evangelical converts (61%) say the typical Catholic mass is not lively or exciting, although only about one-in-three (36%) cite that as a reason for their conversion.²

* The Pew Hispanic Center uses the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” interchangeably.
Because there is receptivity to the gospel message among Hispanics in North America, we must move with urgency to share with them that God loves them and has a plan for their lives. Chapter four will focus on the evangelistic strategies that need to be designed to reach as many Hispanics as possible with the gospel message.

**A Growing Population**

As of 2007, there were 45.5 million Hispanics in the U.S., an increase of 374% since 1970. This rapid growth in the Hispanic population has been, until recently, driven by immigration. In this decade, however, the majority of the growth in the Hispanic population has come from births. By 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that the Hispanic population will triple to over 132 million.

One person who does not know Christ is a worthy mission field. Millions and millions of people without a personal relationship with Jesus is an opportunity we must not miss. Whenever there is substantial growth in a group of people, this growth is often accompanied by increased focus and research. These elements can serve as valuable assets in the approaches that can be made in evangelizing and congregationalizing Hispanics for the glory of God.

**A Diverse Population**

**Diversity Between Generations**

As it continues to grow, the composition of the Hispanic population is undergoing a fundamental change: births in the United States are outpacing immigration as the key source of growth. Over the next 20 years, this will produce an important shift in the make-up of the Hispanic population with second-generation Latinos—the U.S.-born children of immigrants—emerging
as the largest component of that population. Given the very substantial differences in earnings, education, fluency in English, and attitudes between foreign-born and native-born Latinos, this shift has profound implications for many realms of public policy, and indeed for anyone seeking to understand the nature of demographic change in the United States.⁵

The rise of the second generation will have immediate consequences for the nation’s schools. The number of second-generation Latinos ages 5 to 19 is projected to more than double from the years 2000 to 2020, growing from 4.4 million to 9 million people. About one-in-seven of the new students enrolling in U.S. schools over these 20 years will be a second-generation Latino.⁶

The second generation is, and will remain, overwhelmingly young, with a median age that increases from 12.8-years-old to 17.2-years-old from the years 2000 to 2020. Nonetheless, it will be a major contributor to the growth of the Hispanic labor force, representing 43% of Latino growth. It will also be a major contributor to the growth of the labor force overall, making up 23% of the increase in the nation’s labor force.⁷

Change in the generational composition of the Latino population will have broad consequences because of important differences among the generations in a number of characteristics:

• **Language:** According to the 2002 National Survey of Latinos conducted jointly by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation, Spanish-speakers make up most of the first generation. The second generation is substantially bilingual, and the third-plus generations are primarily English speaking.

• **Education:** Native-born Latinos have distinctly higher levels of education than their immigrant counterparts.

• **Income:** Not surprisingly, given the differences in language and education, native-born Latinos earn more than the first generation.
• **Interruption:** First generation Latinos, like immigrants in general, tend to marry within their ethnic/racial group. That is not true of second and third-plus generation Latinos. According to recent estimates, only 8% of foreign-born Hispanics intermarry, compared to 32% of the second-generation and 57% of the third-plus generations.\(^8\)

Regardless of whether immigration flows from Latin America increase, decrease, or stays the same, a great change in the composition of the Hispanic population is underway. The rise of the second generation is the result of births and immigration that have already taken place, and it is now an inexorable, undeniable demographic fact.\(^9\) What we do with that fact when it comes to reaching the various Hispanic generations is of monumental consequence. God is providing us with unusual opportunities to use the diversity inherent in this people as instruments for pointing them to Him. It will require discernment that comes from God’s Holy Spirit to translate the multiplicity of needs into appropriate plans in sharing Christ.

**Diversity in Country of Origin**

Country of origin, and all that implies, must play an important part of a cohesive and contextual approach to reaching Hispanics. It is a serious mistake to ignore the essential differences that occur in individuals because of the different places they were born.

The Latino population in 2005 was 40% foreign-born.\(^{10}\) However, Latinos of some ethnic heritages are more likely to be foreign-born than all Hispanics overall. Hispanics of Uruguayan heritage have the highest share foreign-born at 79.6%, while Spaniards have the lowest share foreign-born at 16.1%.

Among some larger Hispanic ethnic groups, large shares are foreign-born.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic ethnic groups</th>
<th>Large shares are foreign-born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latinas</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaniards</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uruguayan</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puerto Ricans</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
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Among some larger Hispanic ethnic groups, large shares are foreign-born.

Over 40% of Hispanics of Mexican origin are foreign-born, while 61.1%
of Cuban, 67.1% of Salvadoran, 60.1% of Dominicans, and 71.3% of Guatemalans are foreign-born.¹¹

Today, the U.S. Hispanic population reflects the diversity of Latin America in culture and food. Hispanics of Mexican origin represent almost two-thirds of all Latinos (64%), with Puerto Ricans (9%) and Cubans (3.4%) following as the second and third largest ethnic Latino groups.¹²

Figure 2: Detailed Hispanic Origin, 2006
Universe: 2006 Hispanic Resident Population

Diversity in Language Proficiency
A large share of the U.S. Hispanic population is bilingual. While many Latino adults speak only English at home (18.3%), or speak English very well even if a language other than English is spoken at home (35.6%), a
significant share are more comfortable speaking Spanish than English (46.1%). Among Latinos younger than 18, 31.3% speak only English at home; 50.3% speak English very well even though a language other than English is spoken in the home.\textsuperscript{13}

As might be expected, foreign-born Hispanics are less likely to say they speak English very well. Among foreign-born Hispanic adults, only 23.4% say they speak English very well if a language other than English is spoken in the home, and only 3.6% speak only English at home. Among native-born Hispanics, in contrast, 50.4% speak English very well if a language other than English is spoken in the home, and 36.3% speak only English at home.\textsuperscript{14}

Language proficiency is a major factor that affects how Hispanics relate to one another, group and gather, and, therefore, make themselves available to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any approach at reaching large numbers for Christ must include an intentional strategy that understands language preference and proficiency.

**Figure 3: Language Spoken at Home and English-Speaking Ability, 2006**
**Diversity in Media Utilization**

Latinos get their news and information from many sources, and often obtain information from sources in both English and Spanish. Understanding how the different segments of the Hispanic population interact with and use media and technology can be an important aspect of effectively engaging them for God. According to a survey in 2004 of Hispanics nationwide, when asked from which language they obtained their news, 44% said both English and Spanish, 31% said English, and 24% said Spanish.\(^{15}\)

Media use reflects the nativity of Hispanics. Among those Hispanics who obtain all their news from English sources, 78% are native-born. In contrast, among those Hispanics who obtain their news from Spanish sources only, 96% are foreign-born, and among those who obtain their news from both English and Spanish sources, 69% are foreign-born.\(^{16}\)

In 2004, 88% of Latinos said they received news on an average weekday from network television, 82% said local television, 52% newspapers, 58% radio, and 29% the Internet. In contrast, according to the Pew Research Center, among all U.S. adults 80% obtain their news from television, half from newspapers, 19% from radio, and 20% from the Internet.\(^{17}\)

For Latinos, radio is a very important medium for information. According to Suro, 43% of Latinos who get their news from radio do so in English, with 34% in Spanish, and 23% from both languages.\(^{18}\)

Little information is available regarding how many Hispanics utilize the Internet. However, evidence suggests that Latinos are less likely to utilize the Internet than their non-Hispanic counterparts. According to Fox and Livingston (2007), 56% of Hispanics go online, while 71% of non-Hispanic whites and 60% of non-Hispanic blacks do the same.\(^{19}\)

Hispanics also lag behind their non-Hispanic counterparts with regard to home Internet connection penetration. Nearly eight-in-ten Hispanics have a home Internet connection, while 92% of non-Hispanics whites have a connection at home. Equal shares of Hispanic and non-Hispanics who have an Internet connection at home have a broadband connection: 66% versus 68%.
To a large extent, the low number of Latinos who go online is driven by language, nativity, and educational attainment. Over three quarters (78%) of Hispanics who are English-dominant and 76% of bilingual Hispanics go online, while just 32% of those who are Spanish-dominant do the same. Among Latinos born in the U.S., 76% go online, while just 43% of those who are foreign-born do the same. Eight-in-ten Latinos who are born to immigrant parents go online, while 71% of those who are born to native-born parents go online. Finally, less than one-third (31%) of Hispanics who do
not have a high school diploma go online compared to almost nine-in-ten (89%) Hispanics who have a college degree.²⁰

Compared to non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanics blacks, Latinos are more likely to utilize a cell phone only. According to the National Center for Health Statistics National Health Interview Survey, Hispanics (19%) are more likely than non-Hispanic whites (13%) and blacks (18%) to reside in cell phone or wireless-only households.²¹

**Diversity in Religious Traditions**

According to a recent survey from the Pew Hispanic Center, three-fourths of Hispanics identify themselves as Catholics. However, many Hispanics identify themselves with other religious traditions. Twenty percent of Hispanics say they are Protestant, and 8% identify themselves as secular.

![Graphs showing religious traditions among Hispanics and non-Hispanics](source:Suro and Lugo 2007)
Among those Hispanics who identify with a Christian tradition, 39% say they are born-again or evangelical Christians. Among Hispanic Catholics, 54% identify themselves as Charismatic Catholics.

In 2007, there were 3,121 Southern Baptist Hispanic congregations in the United States. That is one congregation for every 14,580 Hispanics. Compared with the total U.S. population, there were 49,950 total Southern Baptist congregations in 2007, which is one congregation for every 6,032 people.22

Hispanics of different religious traditions do not share the same demographic characteristics. More than two-thirds (68%) of Hispanic Catholics are foreign-born, over half (55%) say that Spanish is their primary language, 42% have less than a high school diploma, and 46% report household incomes of less than $30,000 a year. In contrast, among Hispanics who identify themselves as evangelicals (15%), more than half are foreign-born (55%), 63% say that English is their primary language or are bilingual, 64% have a high school diploma, and 39% have household incomes less than $30,000 a year.23

The various forms of diversity among Hispanics present enormous challenges as we seek to reach them with the message of salvation. These challenges, however, should motivate us to learn as much as we can about their countries of origin, language proficiency, media utilization, and religious traditions. This knowledge will help us to be as effective as we can in presenting the gospel message in a way that they can understand, come to an experience of salvation in Christ, and grow in the context of biblically-based churches. Chapters two and three will help you have a clearer understanding of the historical background and cultural characteristics of the Hispanic American population in our midst.

**A Dispersed Population**

It used to be that reaching larger groups of Hispanics in North America fell to just a few urban areas or rural concentrations. Not anymore. Hispanics
are everywhere. It is now wholly appropriate for just about every church and association to ask appropriate questions in fulfilling their obligation to reach all nations—“Are there Hispanics here? How can we be sure they are being reached for Christ?”

**Figure 6: Counties with Fastest Growing Hispanic Populations, 2000-2007.**

Over 75% of the Hispanic population resides in a few key states: California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, and Colorado. However, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, Latinos have migrated to many states and places that have traditionally not been destinations for Hispanic immigrants. According to Richard Fry, in 1990, almost three-quarters of Hispanics were concentrated in 65 of the nation’s 3,141 counties. In 2007, 100 of the largest Hispanic
counties contained 73% of the U.S. Latino population. In 3,000 of the nation’s 3,141 counties, the Hispanic population increased between 2000 and 2007. Many of the counties with fast growing Hispanic populations are in North Carolina and Georgia.24

![Figure 7: Top 25 Counties with the Largest Hispanic Population Growth, 2000 to 2007](image)

Note: Based on the 1,362 counties with at least 1,000 Hispanics in 2007. Source: Pew Hispanic Center 2008.

The explosive growth and rapid dispersion of the Hispanic population throughout the country present us with the challenge of reaching Hispanics
in the hundreds of communities that do not have Hispanic churches. This should motivate us to develop exponential church planting strategies. Chapter five reviews church planting approaches that are being used effectively in several parts of the country and shares helpful advice on how to initiate church planting movements in the various Hispanic communities across America.

A Youthful Population

The Hispanic population is also very different from its non-Hispanic counterparts because of its relative youth. In 2006, the median age of the Hispanic population was 27, while for white non-Hispanics it was 40, and for black non-Hispanics it was 31. This relative youth, however, is true of native-born Hispanics more so than for foreign-born Hispanics. The native-born Hispanic population is young, with a median age of 17 in 2006. The foreign-born Hispanic population has a median age of 36.25

The native-born Hispanic population is young, with a median age of 17 in 2006. The fact that Hispanics have, proportionately, the largest number of children and young people than any other cultural group in America represents a blessing and a challenge. The blessing is that children and youth are the most
receptive to the gospel message in the Hispanic communities. If won to the Lord at an early age, they have an entire future to serve Him and to impact their communities with their gospel witness. One of the challenges stems from the fact that a large number of the Hispanic churches are more focused on reaching adults than children and young people. Chapter four in this book deals with this challenge and offers practical ways in which to reach them with the message of salvation.

**Conclusion**

Over the past 30 years, as the U.S. population has grown more diverse and more foreign-born, Hispanics have become the nation’s largest minority. Today’s diversity, though, is only a stepping stone to a nation that will be even more diverse. Perhaps most striking is the growing importance and contribution of the Latino population as the nation moves into the future. In essence, the demographic future of the U.S. is one in which Hispanics will play a larger role in everything from culture, to religion, to politics, to demography. The size of the Hispanic population shows us that the opportunities and needs for reaching Latinos will continue to grow into the foreseeable future.

New churches will be needed to meet the spiritual needs of this population segment. The diversity of the population speaks to the reality that one style of church does not fit all Hispanics. Not only do native-born Hispanics (those born in the United States) differ in their worldview from foreign-born Hispanics, but foreign-born Hispanics are coming from numerous Latin American countries. Even within countries such as Mexico, different people groups with different cultures and/or dialects are coming to the United States. Mission strategists, evangelists, church planters, and ministry providers must spend time learning about the needs of the subset of the Hispanic population they intend to reach.
The dispersal of Latinos declares the need for leading Hispanics to a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ and enabling them to start biblically-sound and culturally-relevant churches among them. This calls for the development of effective strategies in evangelism, church planting, church growth, leadership training, and productive partnerships throughout the country. The demographic profile presented above can be instructive in the development of these strategies.

**Chapter Highlights**

- With over two-thirds of Hispanics acknowledging that religion is very important to them, Hispanics are a population receptive to the gospel.
- By 2050, the Hispanic population in the U.S. will have tripled.
- Hispanics are a very diverse population. This is seen in countries of origin, language use, media, and religious traditions.
- While the majority of the Hispanic population resides in a few key states, Hispanics are migrating across the country to places that have not traditionally been destinations for Hispanics.
- In 2006, the median age of the Hispanic population was 27.

Most information presented in this chapter comes from reports published by the Pew Hispanic Center. Reprinted with permission. For more information, see [www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org).

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Bobby Sena serves as the point person for Hispanic Church Planting resources. He is also responsible for the development of English language resources that give special attention to the Hispanic cultural distinctions, demographics and effective strategies that will aid denominational servants, pastors, church planters, and lay leaders to develop effective evangelism and church planting strategies in the Hispanic context.

For more than 43 years, Bobby has served in a variety of ministry roles in the Southern Baptist Convention. He has served as pastor of small and larger churches in Texas and Georgia, Church Planting Missionary in New Mexico, and National Multi-Ethnic Evangelism Consultant for the Home Mission Board, Hispanic Evangelism Associate in the Baptist General Convention of Texas and National Missionary North American Mission Board.

Bob received his bachelor’s degree from Wayland Baptist University, Plainview, Texas, and Masters of Religious Education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas and Doctor of Ministry degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California.
CHAPTER TWO

Hispanic History and Worldview

As was clearly pointed out in chapter one, the Hispanic American population is rapidly growing and by 2050 will make up 30% of the U.S. population.\textsuperscript{26} In light of this, it is important for those involved in developing and implementing evangelism, church planting, and leadership training strategies to have as clear a picture as possible of the Hispanic American history and worldview. In what follows, we are going to provide a workable definition of this people group, share a brief historical overview of the various Hispanic American groups, and present a summary of the Hispanic American worldview.

**Definition**

Who is this group? The terms used most often to refer to this group of people are “Hispanic” and “Latino.” While some prefer one term over the other, both terms are used extensively and convey the encompassing of all national origin groups among Hispanics.\textsuperscript{27} As we will explain in greater detail later, the Hispanic population is actually made up of many groups that come from a variety of countries (e.g., Spain, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and other areas). Some groups refer to themselves in terms of their national origin (e.g., Salvadorian, Argentinean, etc.), while others (especially second and third generation) may refer to themselves in terms of their dual heritage (e.g., Mexican American, Cuban American, and so forth). The overall term “Hispanic” refers to people who have a common cultural heritage and a common language originating in Spain.\textsuperscript{28} It is generally acceptable to use the term “Hispanic” or “Latino” (preferably in the west coast) to refer to the overall group. It is also helpful to ask individuals how they prefer to be referred to.
Historical Overview

Knowing the history of the Hispanic presence in America is essential for the development of culturally-relevant evangelistic and church planting strategies. We will present a brief historical sketch of different segments of the Hispanic population (Spanish Americans, Hispanic Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Central Americans, and South Americans) and how they became a part of the American mosaic.29

Spanish Americans

Hispanics have been in the Southwest since the early 1600s. In 1528, explorations of what is now the Southwestern United States (Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas) began.30 In 1598 Spanish Explorer, Juan de Oñate established the first colony in what is now New Mexico.31 Subsequently, villas (provincial towns) were established in Santa Fe, Santa Cruz (Española Valley), and San Felipe de Neri which is now Albuquerque. In California, the famous Franciscan missionary, Fray Junípero Serra, founded 21 missions along the California coast (the mission of San Diego was founded in 1769; Monterey in 1770). By 1821, four principal areas of settlement had developed in the Southwest. The first and most heavily populated area was New Mexico, consisting of towns, ranches, and farms. Next in size was California, consisting of missions, military fortress communities, towns, and ranches. Third was the northeastern settlement of Texas with its center in San Antonio. The smallest was the Arizona colony, which was established in Tucson.

Descendants of the colonial Spanish Americans still live in California, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Many of these are now found in urban centers such as Los Angeles, San Diego, Salt Lake City, Denver, and San Antonio. The Spanish Americans who live in the smaller towns (former
land grant villages) “are generally more conservative of their traditional values of the extended family, the Catholic faith, and the Spanish language than the other Spanish-speaking groups.”\textsuperscript{32} It appears as though Spanish Americans will retain their distinctiveness within the Hispanic population in the U.S. while continuing to join other Hispanic groups in their quest for an improved quality of life and the acknowledgement of their shared values.\textsuperscript{33}

**Mexican Americans**

The second group, which at times is difficult to isolate from Spanish Americans, is the Mexican American group. This is due to the fact that a variety of backgrounds were represented in the early colonies. These included the *peninsular* (a person born in Spain); the *criollo* (a person born in the New Spain of pure Spanish ancestry); and the *mestizo* (a person of Spanish and Indian ancestry).\textsuperscript{34}

After Mexico won its independence from Spain, it invited Anglo-Americans to settle in its northern provinces (now the Southwest). The large influx of settlers and their subsequent disagreement with the restrictions set by Mexico led to the Texas Revolution, which resulted in the formation of the Republic of Texas in 1845. Fighting between the two nations continued until 1848 when the Guadalupe-Hidalgo treaty was signed and the Southwest was annexed to the U.S. It was at this time that the Hispanic inhabitants of this territory technically became “Mexican-Americans.” Currently they comprise 64.1\% of the Hispanic population in America.\textsuperscript{35}

**Puerto Ricans**

The third group, in terms of its length of affiliation with the U.S., is the Puerto Rican community. Puerto Rico was discovered and claimed for Spain by Christopher Columbus in 1493. It remained a Spanish colony and was used primarily as an outpost until 1889.

Puerto Ricans have held legal status as immigrants to the continental United States since 1889 when Puerto Rico became a U.S. possession. They
have been U.S. citizens since 1917, and are able to travel freely between the island and the mainland. While there had been some political exiles who sought refuge in New York, the first large wave of migration took place in the 1920s and 1930s. Those who came were motivated by the high rates of unemployment on the island, caused in part by two hurricanes in 1928 and 1932 which devastated the coffee plantations (the main source of income). Following World War II, large numbers of Puerto Ricans came to the mainland as contract farm workers. Some of them stayed and became permanent residents in the cities that were closest to them. With the advent of cheaper airfares, the number of those traveling to and from the island increased dramatically. “The movement can best be understood in terms of a continuous internal migration within the United States.”

The largest Puerto Rican community is found in New York City. This continues to be the most important settlement for Puerto Ricans in the mainland. Other concentrations of Puerto Ricans are found in New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Florida, Ohio, and California. While Puerto Ricans are not considered “immigrants” when they come to the mainland, their cultural characteristics and language often make their experience similar to that of other Hispanic immigrants. In addition to linguistic and cultural factors, the adjustment of Puerto Ricans to life in the mainland is compounded by differences in climate, social organization, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status. Migration from a tropical island to the cold states of the Northeast by itself requires a significant amount of adjustment. This migration is often from a rural (often agricultural) setting to industrial urban centers. Despite the fact that Puerto Ricans have had legal status in the United States since 1898, many of them continue to struggle like other immigrant groups to improve their quality of life. Their positive disposition toward evangelical Christianity makes their communities fertile grounds for evangelism and church planting. Puerto Ricans constitute 9% of the Hispanic American population.
Cuban Americans

The second place Christopher Columbus visited during his first voyage was the island of Cuba, which he claimed for Spain. Spaniards began to settle the island in 1511. For nearly 400 years, Spain ruled Cuba. In 1898, Cuba obtained its independence from Spain with the help of the United States. As early as 1830, there were Cubans living in Key West, Florida. Later, in the waning years of Spanish colonial rule, other Cuban political refugees settled in the Tampa area. Others came during the 1930s when Cuba came under the control of dictator Fulgencio Batista. In 1959, Fidel Castro overthrew Batista. When it became evident that Castro intended to establish a communist government, large numbers of people sought asylum in the United States. Between 1959 and 1962, more than 155,000 Cubans immigrated to the U.S. As a result of the missile crisis, direct flights between Cuba and the U.S. were suspended. In 1965, following the signing of a “memorandum of understanding,” the airlift was resumed, bringing more than 257,000 Cubans to U.S. shores. In 1980, an additional 200,000 Cubans arrived in the U.S. as a result of the Mariel boat-lift.

Due to the antipathy of Americans to communism and the fact that diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed, Cubans were accorded the status of refugees and were received with open arms. Several evangelical denominations (including Southern Baptists) participated actively in sponsorship programs which led to the conversion of many Cubans and the establishment of numerous evangelical churches along the east coast. Today, 3.4% of the Hispanic American population is made up of Cuban Americans. While the greatest concentration of Cuban Americans is found in Miami, there are significant clusters in New York, New Jersey, and California.
Central and South Americans

It was not until his third and fourth journeys that Columbus reached the lands in which Central and South Americans live. The colonies which were established and the countries which developed subsequently differed greatly in terms of geography, size, history, language, and sociopolitical factors. Central and South Americans, therefore, represent differing social strata, regional attachments, and ethno-cultural backgrounds. Despite this diversity, these groups have been deeply affected by the Spanish traditions, which transcend national boundaries and ethnic origins.

Today, Central and South Americans comprise 14.3% of the Hispanic population in the U.S. They constitute a variety of national and ethnic groups representing 18 different countries. Immigration from Central America began in the 1830s and continued at a slow rate. Following World War II, the number of immigrants from Central America increased rapidly. In the 1980s, this number increased at an even faster rate due to the political turmoil in such countries as Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. At present, there are concentrations of Central Americans in New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, and Chicago. It is of interest to note that Guatemalans favor Los Angeles as a place of residence, Hondurans are concentrated in the Gulf Coast, and Panamanians tend to congregate in New York City.

In the early 1900s, the number of South Americans in this country far outnumbered that of Central Americans. Many South Americans who are here are third and fourth generation Americans. South Americans have tended to concentrate in such cities as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The largest numbers of South Americans in this country are from Colombia, Ecuador, and Argentina.

While there are numerous differences between Central and South Americans, they share some common patterns of migration, settlement, and social characteristics. As is true of other Hispanics, many of these work long hours as family units (husband and wife), living in a frugal manner in order
to make it possible for their relatives to join them from abroad and to achieve a greater social mobility than their parents were able to achieve.  

Other Hispanics

The category entitled “other Hispanics” is used by the Census Bureau to include Hispanics of other national and regional origins who are not represented in such large numbers that they require a separate designation. These, therefore, may come from a wide variety of places where the Spanish language and culture are predominant. This does not mean that they are not significant, for together they constitute 6.9% of the Hispanic population in this country. As is true of the other groups discussed above, effective ministry among these groups requires an understanding of their history, culture, and religious orientation. The fact that they come from a Spanish-speaking area means that they have some things in common with other Hispanic Americans. Their differences, however, need to be studied and taken into account when doing ministry among them.

Worldview Profile

It is always a difficult task to attempt to construct a worldview of a particular cultural group. This is perhaps more difficult with regard to Hispanic Americans due to the diversity documented in chapter one and addressed more fully in chapter three. However, there are sufficient essential similarities and shared values that enable us to build a “worldview profile” of Hispanic Americans. While it is understood that there will be individual, as well as sub-cultural group (e.g., different countries of origin) variations, such factors as family structure, social relationships, personal relationships, emotional traits, and religious backgrounds can be included in this profile.

Family Structure

In the Hispanic culture, the extended family plays a very important role. As is true of many cultures throughout the world, the nuclear family—
consisting of the father, the mother, and the children—is at the center of the Hispanic culture. For Hispanics, however, the extended family—consisting of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins—is very important in daily life. But it does not stop there. Second and third cousins, as well as in-laws and godparents ("comadre"—godmother and "compadre"—godfather), are viewed as important members of the family.

In the Hispanic culture, the extended family plays a very important role.

The Hispanic family structure has significant implications for evangelism and church planting. Many Hispanics make their important decisions in consultation with their families. To a large extent, theirs is more of a "family decision" than an "individual decision." Often, encouraging an individual Hispanic to make a decision for Christ and take a stand against his family may result in losing the opportunity to win the entire family. While we want to make sure that people make a personal decision to receive Christ, it is also prudent to help the individual share the gospel message with his family and be patient as he or she gives them an opportunity to understand and respond to the message of salvation.

The fact that family ties are important in the Hispanic culture makes it possible for these to become channels through which the gospel is communicated. A number of decades ago, Dr. Donald McGavran, the father of the modern church growth movement, recommended that missionaries take time to understand the webs of extended families and to utilize those to win entire families to the Lord. He explained: “One-by-one-against-the-tide is a mode of conversion that pries a single person out of this social matrix and leads him or her to become a Christian. It encourages that individual to renounce his or her people ... Frequently the very people who will not hear their testimony are those of their own household.”

Instead of utilizing this extraction method, Dr. McGavran recommended that people wishing to spread the gospel should make a personal commitment to work through family and social networks.
Alex D. Montoya affirms the idea of reaching the entire family when he states:

The family is the main unit in the Hispanic community, superseding the church, political parties, or any other group. Hispanics think and act as a family unit ... In evangelizing them, this structure can either be a hindrance or a help. If we try to convert a member of the family, the family ties and pressure make it very difficult for that person to make a decision for Christ independent of the entire family. But a whole family may come to Christ when the elder member of the family is won first.50

In light of the role that the family plays in the Hispanic community, decision-making styles need to be taken into account in evangelism and church planting strategies. If children or young people make a decision for Christ, it may take a while for their parents to be reached. If a wife makes a decision for Christ, it may take some time before her husband becomes a believer. During this time, the church family needs to surround the new believers with genuine love and fellowship. New converts will need to be trained to reach their loved ones without alienating them. 51

Social Relationships

Social relationships are very strong in Hispanic cultures. Next to kinship ties, friendship ties occupy an important place in social relationships. It is with these two groups (family and friends) that Hispanics form primary relationships. These are the people with whom Hispanics establish personal, intimate, emotional, and affective relationships and with whom they celebrate the very special times in their lives (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and so forth).52 These primary relationships provide the emotional support and fellowship that enrich the lives of Hispanics. The positive side of these relationships is that they can become bridges (or webs) through which the gospel message can be communicated.
The negative side of these relationships is that often it is these friends and close associates that seek to apply the type of social control that would prevent a Hispanic person from responding to the evangelical message and joining an evangelical church. In numerous instances, the greatest fear that a person has upon contemplating the possibility of making a public profession of faith in an evangelical church is that his family and friends might disapprove and ostracize him. This is one of the reasons why some Hispanics may decide to receive Jesus in their hearts but take a long time to be baptized in an evangelical church. While on the one hand, social relationships among Hispanics can play a positive role in the communication of the gospel message, on the other hand, they can become obstacles if the person’s friends or relatives are not receptive to the evangelical message.

**Personal Relationships**

A related value to the one discussed above is that of personal relationships. It is interesting to note that recent marketing books that focus on the Hispanic community are emphasizing the importance of personal relationships. One such book is entitled *Hispanic Marketing and Public Relations: Understanding and Targeting America’s Largest Minority*. In it, the authors state:

> Understanding Hispanic culture is essential to understanding Hispanics. High on the list of cultural influences are food, music, language, and family ties. Communal events among friends and family are central to their way of life. Birthdays, anniversaries, *quinceañeras*, (a party for a 15 year old girl), and family reunions are big productions. Unlike some other immigrant groups, Hispanics tend to hold to their traditions and language in usually high esteem and have a great desire to preserve them, even as they assimilate into the U.S. culture.
“Understanding Hispanic culture is essential to understanding Hispanics.”

Because many Hispanics do not have an evangelical background, they often experience apprehension and pressure when they are invited to a “Protestant church.” This obstacle can best be overcome through the establishment of genuine friendships and the utilization of relational evangelistic activities. On an individual basis, there are many things that can be done to establish bridges of communication. These include: having them as guests in our home for a meal, inviting them to join us in a sports or artistic event, and befriending them when they are in need.

Personal relationships are essential for communicating the evangelical message with Roman Catholics. The authors of a Pew Hispanic Center study state:

Family members and acquaintances emerge as important factors in the process of conversion; they are the ones who frequently introduce the new religion. That personal relationship is far more important in conversion than the influence of the media or personal contacts with other church members.55

**Emotional Expression**

Another Hispanic cultural characteristic is the important role emotions play in their everyday lives. Montoya describes this when he states:

Hispanics are people of the heart ... If something is not from the heart, el corazón, or for the heart, then it is hard to accept ... All culture is permeated with what strikes the heart not the head alone ... A truth wrapped in cold logic without warmth of life and emotions is not very well received.56

This characteristic has significant implications for evangelism and church planting activities. The outreach approaches that are utilized and the type of congregations that are established need to reflect the affective as well as
the cognitive dimensions of the Christian life. This was made very clear in a survey about the response of Hispanics to evangelical efforts. In describing what attracted Hispanics to evangelical congregations, Andrés Tapia made the following assertions:

- Relevant worship services
- Committed and understanding ministers
- A laity that is as equally concerned with worship as it is with spiritual growth and a concern for others
- Freedom to pray and preach in the style true to their cultural background
- Practical sermons, speaking to daily issues
- Prayers focused on specific needs, such as jobs or health
- Emphases on a personal relationship with God and on the fellowship of believers providing an invitation for intimacy at a divine and human level 57

In most instances, the extent to which the worship service reflects the culture of the target group has a direct bearing on the way in which they respond to the gospel in a church starting effort. The sermon and the music in a Hispanic church should be felt, as well as understood. People in Hispanic churches respond better if the sermons touch their emotions as well as their intellect. The minister, therefore, should not be afraid to show genuine emotion while he is preaching. Conveying joy, sorrow, compassion, and other emotions through the words that are utilized, facial expressions, and tone of voice can help the listener feel and understand the thoughts that are being expressed. The use of carefully selected illustrations can also help the listeners to comprehend and internalize the gospel message. Sermons on key parables (e.g., the Prodigal Son), on those whose lives were changed by Christ (e.g., the Samaritan woman), and on key events in the life of Christ (e.g., birth, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension) can establish bridges
between the religious experience of Hispanics and what they need to know about a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ.  

**Personal Dignity**

Personal dignity is another one of the values that characterizes Hispanic cultures. The basic premise of this value is that the individual should be recognized and treated with respect, even if he or she is poor. This value stresses the importance of the person over material possessions, fame, or social class. Generally, when Hispanics are treated with respect, they respond in like manner. Today, the American missionaries to Latin America who are the best remembered and most missed are the ones who took time to establish personal relationships with the local pastors and leaders and who treated them as colleagues. In dealing with Hispanic pastors and church members, the more we can demonstrate genuine respect and appreciation for them as individuals, the better off we are going to be in establishing enriching relationships that will enable the furtherance of Hispanic work in our area of ministry.

**Religious Background**

The religious background of Hispanic Americans is the product of three major historical factors: (1) the presence of the folk religions of the native inhabitants when the new world was discovered;  

59 (2) the impact of the Roman Catholic faith brought by the European (mainly Spanish) explorers “who saw colonization and conversion as a unified effort;”  

60 and (3) the impact of the modern renewalist movement.

Roman Catholicism brought by the explorers initially represented the basic teaching of this Church, but with time adapted itself to the folk religions in such a way that many of the native deities were given the names of Catholic saints and many of the native celebrations took the form of
Roman Catholic celebrations. Time and space do not permit a full-length discussion of this accommodation on the part of the Roman Catholicism in Latin America, but a brief discussion of the basic teachings and practices of this Church will be instructive for the purpose of this chapter.

There are several teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that are based on the Bible. As a result, most Roman Catholics believe that God is the Creator of the world; that Jesus Christ is His Son; that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, died on the cross for the salvation of the world, arose on the third day, and ascended into heaven; that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity; that the Bible is the Word of God; and that the Church is the body of Christ. At first sight, it would appear that these are the exact doctrines of evangelical churches. A closer study of Hispanic Roman Catholics reveals that numerous beliefs and practices have been added to these basic doctrines. Among these are the teachings of the Catholic Church that salvation is attained through the sacraments; that Mary is co-mediator with Christ; that the saints intercede for those who seek their help; that the authority of the Church is found in both tradition as well as the Bible; that there is no assurance of salvation; and that most of the believers will have to go through purgatory before being admitted into heaven.

The result of this is that many Hispanic Roman Catholics pray to the Virgin Mary to intercede for them; observe the sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, and Extreme Unction) with the belief that salvation is attained through them; have devotions to certain saints; observe religious rituals (pilgrimages to shrines, lighting candles, giving up something for lent, and so forth); and seek to follow the teaching of the Church, yet when they face death they hope that through the prayers of the faithful they will be able to get out of purgatory and go to heaven.

Coupled with these doctrinal deviations from the Word of God are the animistic practices in which a number of Hispanic Catholics are involved. These include consulting with witch doctors (curanderos), believing in “evil spells,” participating in rituals to ward off evil spirits, and praying to patron saints that they believe have power in the spirit world. The religious
practice of many Hispanic Catholics, therefore, represent a blending (or syncretism) of Roman Catholic teachings and practices, as well as those of the folk religions represented in the native populations or in some instances, the folk religious practices of the African slaves that were brought to Latin America.

A modern study of the worldview of Hispanics needs to include the influence of the charismatic movement. In the Pew Hispanic Studies Report entitled, “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion,” the authors state:

Indeed, the influence of renewalist Christianity in the U.S. appears to be more profound among Latinos than among non-Latino Christians ... Most significantly given their numbers, more than half of Hispanic Catholics identify themselves as charismatics ... While remaining committed to the church and its traditional teachings, many of these Latino Catholics say they have witnessed or experienced occasions typical of spirit-filled or renewalist movements including divine healings and direct revelations from God.69

The fact that some Latinos identify themselves as charismatics does not necessarily mean that they understand or accept the biblical doctrines related to a salvation in Christ by grace through faith alone. The authors of the above-mentioned study explain:

Large percentages of all Latino Catholics—charismatics and non-charismatics—embrace their church’s traditional beliefs and practices. “Nearly nine-in-ten Latino Catholics, for instance, believe that in the Mass the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Christ—a core Catholic belief. More than eight-in-ten say that they pray to the Virgin Mary. A sizeable number of Latino Catholics (43%) say they pray the rosary once or twice a month and 43% go to confession at least once or twice a year.”70
What one finds in studying the beliefs and practices of Catholic charismatics from an evangelical perspective is that there are many Latino Catholics who are sincerely seeking a more personal and direct experience with God. Perhaps many of them are like Cornelius and need someone to share with them how they can have a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ that leads to genuine biblical discipleship.

**Bridges and Barriers**

This very brief review of the religious worldview of many Hispanic Catholics reveals that there are numerous bridges that can be utilized to communicate the message of a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ and biblical discipleship. At the same time, in this religious worldview (as well as in the cultural customs) of Hispanic Americans, there are some barriers that need to be bridged if the gospel message is going to reach and transform them.

**Bridges**

Among the religious bridges we find are the basic doctrines taught by the Roman Catholic Church. Hispanic Catholics do not have to be convinced that there is a God who is Creator of heaven and earth. They know that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for the salvation of humanity. They believe in the Holy Spirit. They have a genuine respect and reverence for the Word of God. These and other religious beliefs can serve as vital bridges for the communication of the message of a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ. The *Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion* report states:

For the majority of Latinos regardless of their religious tradition, God is an active force in everyday life. Most Latinos pray every day, most have a religious object in their homes, and most attend a religious service at least once a month. By significant majori-
ties, Latinos who identify with a religion believe that miracles are performed today just as in ancient times.\textsuperscript{71}

In addition to the religious bridges, there are cultural bridges. There are certain cultural values that are very dear to the hearts of Hispanic Americans. These include personal dignity, personal relationships, kinship ties, and emotional traits. An understanding of these and other cultural values can help in building solid relationships with Hispanic Americans, in designing culturally-relevant strategies for evangelism and church planting, and assisting in the development of effective leaders among them.

\textbf{Barriers}

The stronger barriers in the Hispanic worldview to the gospel message are social rather than doctrinal. While it is true that Hispanics become increasingly aware of doctrinal differences between Roman Catholics and evangelicals as they begin to dialogue about religious matters, it is also true that often what keeps them from even establishing a friendship with evangelicals or attending an evangelical church are the social pressures they feel from their family members and close friends. Even though a large percentage of Hispanics are not actively involved in the Roman Catholic Church, they often experience pressures from their families and friends when they begin to participate in evangelical outreach activities. They may also go through periods of doubt and confusion when they begin to compare what they are learning from the Bible against some of their religious traditions.

Evangelical efforts to lead Hispanics to a personal faith in Jesus Christ need to be accompanied by much prayer, study, love, and patience.\textsuperscript{72} An understanding of the Roman Catholic concept of salvation (through the church and the sacraments) and an attitude that establishes bridges of communication (avoiding criticism, ridicule, and pressure) are absolutely essential.\textsuperscript{73} Often, even after a person has indicated interest in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, it may take months—or even years—for him or her to make the decision to be baptized and become a member of an
reaching Hispanics in North America

 Evangelical church. Many Hispanics go through a pilgrimage that involves discovery, deliberation, decision, dissonance, and discipleship.\textsuperscript{74} This pilgrimage needs to be taken into account in designing evangelistic strategies and establishing timelines for church planting efforts among Hispanics. Additional details are provided in chapter four.

Conclusion

Several historical and cultural factors are important to understand and take into consideration when attempting to reach Hispanics in North America for Christ. To ignore these considerations is to substantially weaken the approaches with the gospel. The incredible growth of the Hispanic population requires a heightened attention to this group.

One crucial factor in reaching Hispanics is understanding the terms and designations available in speaking about and speaking to people of this demographic. While the terms “Hispanic American” and “Latino” are the ones that are used most often in academic, religious, and social circles in America today, some people may prefer to be referred to in terms of their country of origin. Getting to know individuals and showing sensitivity will go a long way in building bridges for the gospel.

It helps for us to be aware that the various Hispanic groups (Spanish Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Central Americans, South Americans, and “Other Americans”) have become a part of the American scene at different times in history and under different circumstances. Each of these pilgrimages has its own historical memory that influences the attitudes and actions of each group. These factors have had a real part in shaping what North America is today. Some Hispanic groups have been in this country for a number of generations, while others have arrived in recent times. The more we understand each pilgrimage, the better position we are going to be in to reach each group with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

40
Understanding the social and religious worldview of Hispanic Americans is absolutely essential in seeking to develop effective evangelistic and church planting strategies among them. Such a study enables us to discover the bridges through which the gospel can be communicated, as well as the barriers that must be overcome through prayer, creativity, patience, and fellowship. More and more Hispanics are coming to Christ and identifying themselves as “evangelical” Christians. We can join with God in concentrating on what He is doing among North American Hispanics and see an even greater harvest of souls for His glory.

**Chapter Highlights**

- Both the term “Hispanic” and “Latino” refer to people who have a common cultural heritage and a common language originating in Spain.
- Spanish Americans have been in the U.S. the longest of any group of Hispanics, and many can now be found in urban centers such as Los Angeles, San Diego, Salt Lake City, Denver, and San Antonio.
- Mexican Americans were the second group to arrive, and they make up the largest percentage of Hispanics in the U.S.
- While the third group, Puerto Ricans, are not considered “immigrants,” often their experience is similar to that of other Hispanic immigrants.
- Several evangelical denominations have actively participated in sponsorship programs for Cubans that have led to many being converted and the establishment of numerous evangelical churches along the East Coast.
- Central and South Americans represent 18 different countries. Many South Americans who are here are third and fourth
generation Americans.

- In the Hispanic culture, family and friends play very important roles. This can have both positive and negative ramifications when presenting the gospel message.
- Personal relationships, emotional expression, personal dignity, and religious background are all important areas to be considered in reaching Hispanics.

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Dr. Sanchez started two churches during his student days in Texas. His missionary service in the Republic of Panama as well as with the Home Mission Board has enabled him to gain valuable experience in the area of church planting.

The author of ten books, he continues to write prolifically and to train on how to start churches employing a wide variety of approaches.
One of the greatest challenges in reaching Hispanics is their diversity. On the one hand, the term “Hispanic American” encompasses all of the people in this country who have a common cultural basin (from Spain) and a common language (Spanish with wide variations). On the other hand, there are significant differences related to their country of origin, assimilation stage, language utilization, socio-economic level, and religious affiliation. These differences, however, do not mean that strategies cannot be designed to reach all Hispanics. It does mean that these differences need to be taken into account in the development of the approaches to reach the various segments of the Hispanic population. In this chapter, we are going to focus on the factors that contribute to the diversity of this group. We will discuss the implications for leading Hispanics to a personal faith in Jesus Christ and enabling them to start churches in their communities.

Diversity in Country of Origin

As was noted in chapters one and two, Hispanic Americans come from many different countries. The largest numbers are from Mexico (64% of the Hispanic population), Puerto Rico (9%), Cuba (3.4%), El Salvador (3.1%), The Dominican Republic (2.8), Guatemala (2%), Colombia (1.8%), Honduras (1.1%), Ecuador (1.1%), and Peru (1%). Those under 1% include people from Spain, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Argentina, Panama, Costa Rica, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Even those who are a small percentage of the Hispanic population can represent a sizeable number in a given community due to the fact that these groups tend to cluster in the communities where their countrymen first settled. For example, 50% of this nation’s Dominicans reside in New York City and half of this nation’s Cubans live in Miami Dade County.
As we will note further, the percentage of evangelicals varies between these groups. It is advisable to learn the origins of the Hispanic people in your community and to obtain additional information through books, interviews, Web sites, and other sources. For groups that are here in large numbers, it is helpful even to know from what region of their country they came. Some groups from Mexico, for instance, identify themselves in terms of the state from which they came. It is also helpful to be aware of the fact that some of the groups that come from Latin America are actually Native Americans who may use some Spanish as their trade language, but function basically in terms of their native language.

**Diversity in Assimilation Stages**

An important factor contributing to diversity among the Hispanic population is the varying stages of assimilation within the North American culture. “Acculturation is the process of assimilation by which new immigrants adopt and assume behavioral or attitudinal characteristics from their immigrating country. This process helps them evolve and embrace new customs and traditions that dominate and define the culture of the population.”78 While new immigrants may function for a time primarily within their native culture and language, their children immediately upon arrival embark on a rapid assimilation process fostered by public education, media (radio, television, movies, and so forth), and group peer pressure. “Several factors (environmental or self-contained) will help along the process: length of residency in the new country, language(s) spoken, social network, place of birth, and where they lived their formative years.”79 The diversity created by the various stages of assimilation presents an awesome challenge for evangelism and church planting efforts among Hispanics.
Table 1 shows the degree of assimilation experienced by each generation. First generation Hispanics (the immigrants) typically have very few social contacts outside their own cultural group, and the majority of them are Spanish speakers. Second generation Hispanics (the children of immigrants) have some social contacts outside their own group, and are bilingual with perhaps more mastery of the Spanish than the English language. Third generation Hispanics (the grandchildren of immigrants) have many social contacts outside their own group, and may be bilingual with more fluency in English or are English speakers altogether. Fourth generation Hispanics (the great grandchildren of immigrants) have most of their contacts outside their group, and are generally English speakers.

**Table 1: Hispanic Assimilation by Generations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Outside Social Contacts</th>
<th>Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Bilingual Spanish Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Bilingual English Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Most</td>
<td>English Only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A study of the assimilation patterns of Hispanics shows we need to keep in mind that while some move along the assimilation process faster than others, generally the above pattern holds true. We should also note that some who immigrated to this country as children or young people could be referred to as “the 1.5 generation.” They were in a position (perhaps through schooling) to learn the language and the customs of the predominant society quite rapidly. Knowing the pilgrimage of each group is helpful in determining how best to reach them with the gospel message. In addition to the diversity related to the country of origin, there is diversity with regard to the language that the different Hispanic groups speak.
Diversity in Language Utilization

To give you a better idea of the use of language by generations, we have included Table 2. As you will notice, the first and the third generation are almost the exact opposite with regard to the use of the Spanish language. While the second generation represents somewhat of a middle ground, still the majority of them are in the “bilingual” and “English dominant” categories. Having this information is vital in determining what language or languages to use in the ministries that are geared toward reaching Hispanics for Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Spanish-Dominant</th>
<th>Bilingual</th>
<th>English-Dominant</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marketing strategists targeting the Hispanic community recognize the value of utilizing the appropriate language to communicate. Derene Allen and Madalyn Friedman state:

Language is central to any marketing strategy; hence the critical importance of clearly identifying your target market segments in the Hispanic market. Understanding which language your core segment(s) speak or prefer to speak can eliminate a lot of discussion related to “do we also need English language media and communications or will Spanish suffice.”

The more you know about the culture of the Hispanic population in your area, the better position you will be in to determine the language or languages that need to be employed. If this is important in the business world
to sell products, it is infinitely more important to us whose mission it is to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another factor to take into account is that 7 of 10 first generation Hispanic children that grow up in the U.S. speak the Spanish spoken by their parents at home.\textsuperscript{82} Please note that we said the “Spanish spoken by their parents.” The reason we say this is because there is a vast variety of words, expressions, and idioms that have very different meanings, depending on the country of origin. Even the names of fruits, vegetables, and objects differ from country to country. We have words in the same language, but with different semantics. This phenomenon presents some difficulty for children over the age of 12 who come to the U.S. and are learning English. For them, Spanish will probably always be their heart language, even though they may learn to speak English fluently and assertively.

As we focus on the diversity in the utilization of language among Hispanics, there are several important implications that we need to take into account. The use of the Spanish language is absolutely necessary to reach first generation Hispanics. For them, Spanish is still their “language of the heart,” in which spiritual truths can best be communicated.

Also, the bulk of second generation Hispanics are either bilingual or “English dominant,” which means that almost half of them can be reached in either language, but the other half need to be reached in English.

Additionally, almost all third generation Hispanics communicate mainly in English. Finally, we need to be aware of the fact that many Hispanics practice “selective assimilation.” They may adopt specific features of the predominant society (e.g., language, mode of dress, communication patterns), but retain some cultural customs and values of their group of origin.\textsuperscript{83} The fact that some Hispanics speak only English does not necessarily mean that they identify totally with predominant society. To be sure, some second and third generation Hispanics may be reached more effectively by an English-
speaking church. Others, however, may speak English fluently but still prefer a church that has a “Hispanic flavor” in its worship services, leadership style, and fellowship patterns. This is borne out by a study conducted by the Pew Hispanic Studies Center which states:

While the prevalence of Hispanic-oriented worship is higher among the foreign born, with 77% saying they attend churches with these characteristics, the phenomenon is also widespread among the native born with 48% saying they attend ethnic churches.84

Therefore, knowing what language (or languages) to use in reaching the various generations of Hispanics for Christ is absolutely essential for evangelism and church planting.

The following case study is an example of the transition families make as they begin to function in the context of two generations—first and second:

Juan and Maria arrived in the U.S. with the desire to offer their children the opportunity to have a better life. They were willing to do whatever was necessary to provide for their children. What encouraged them the most was that they could provide an education for their three children. At first, none of the members of the family spoke English, so the daughter of a friend served as interpreter whenever necessary. The children attended the neighborhood school. In a few short months, they learned the basics and were able to communicate with other children their age. The oldest girl became the interpreter for the family.

Juan and Maria did their part by attending English classes at night, which were offered by a Christian church in their community. That put them in contact with other Christian families and with the gospel. All in the family are now members of the church and give thanks to the Lord for the friendly environment they
found. An environment which is full of love, understanding, and compassion makes it easier to communicate the gospel with these families.  

**Religious Affiliation Diversity**

The religious diversity among Hispanics represents another challenge for reaching them with the gospel message. The study conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center reveals that 67.6% of Hispanics identify themselves as “Catholics” while 19.6% said they were “Protestants.” From those in the “Protestant” category, 6.9% said they were “Pentecostal”; 3.1% said they were “Baptist”; and 3% identified themselves as “Independent/Non-Denominational.” Of those in the Protestant category with less than 1% of the Hispanic population were: Congregational/Church of Christ (0.7%), Presbyterian (0.3%), Methodist (0.3%), Lutheran (0.2%), and Episcopalian (0.2%). Among “other Christians” were the Jehovah’s Witness (1.9%), Mormon (0.7%), and “Other faiths” (0.9%). Those who consider themselves “Secular” totaled 7.8%.  

Among Hispanics, the “Catholic” category encompasses the largest number. The second largest category is the “Protestant” category which has been increasing steadily in recent years. This indicates that there is greater receptivity among Hispanics to the gospel message than ever before in the history of this country. Some of the factors that contribute to this receptivity are the growing number of evangelicals in Latin America, the greater exposure to evangelical Christianity in this country, and the relevant, compassionate ministries of evangelical churches. The following case study gives an indication of the religious pilgrimage of a Hispanic family:
Roberto and Rebecca are members of a family that is contributing to the religious change in the U.S. They are no longer members of the Catholic Church to which they belonged in their country of origin. They indicated they are now practicing their faith and beliefs differently. While speaking to them, it is discovered they have now associated with a Pentecostal movement, which has strong charismatic characteristics. They explained that while they worship God, they experience elements of joy and excitement, as well as a less formal expression of their new faith in Jesus Christ.

Roberto and Rebecca, as many first generation Hispanics in the U.S., always speak respectfully of the Catholic Church and do not share the aggressive and polemical spirit that one used to find among first generation Hispanic evangelicals that arrived in the U.S. 30 years ago. On the other hand, even though they enjoy the festive expression of the Pentecostal meetings, they realize that in the evangelical churches there is an interest, appreciation, and permanence in the study of the Holy Scriptures. They want to have the best of both worlds: the excitement of the meetings and the solid knowledge of the Bible.

Roberto and Rebecca are very happy with the fact that the pastor of their church is a Hispanic who speaks both Spanish and English well, and that the majority of the members are first and second generation Hispanics. The pastor ministers to the adults in Spanish and to their children in English. Even though most are completely bilingual, they prefer to use Spanish as the language of their heart when worshiping God and practicing their faith. Without a doubt, we find here two interesting characteristics: the festive expression of their faith and being able to worship with the people of their same ethnic-linguistic background. These two fac-
tors give power and coherence to the religious faith of Hispanics all across the United States. Roberto and Rebecca are convinced that their church helps them structure their ethical values that will later reflect in their style of life, and will help them shape their social and political perspective and their participation in the civic activities of their community, their city, their state, and nation.

**Socioeconomic Diversity**

Socioeconomic diversity among Hispanics is a reality in our day. Table 3, based on the Pew Hispanic Center National Survey of Latinos, reveals that there are sharp differences in income between the foreign-born and the native-born segments of the Hispanic population.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Foreign-Born</th>
<th>Native-Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30,000</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000-49,999</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000+</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two factors that enable native-born Hispanics to enjoy a higher socioeconomic status relate to the fact that generally they have attained a higher degree of formal education and are more fluent in the English language. This has significant implications for the ministries churches might provide as they reach and disciple Hispanics. Helping foreign-born Hispanics learn English and attain more formal education will contribute to their economic progress in addition to their spiritual growth.

Another implication of the socioeconomic diversity among Hispanics has to do with the fact that Hispanic evangelicals may experience what Donald McGavran calls “redemption and lift.” When people come to have a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ, their values are transformed.
They abandon destructive behaviors (e.g., drunkenness), become better stewards of their resources, and seek to attain a higher degree of education for themselves and their children. This often leads to a higher socioeconomic level for Hispanic families.

While there is great cause for rejoicing when families experience this “redemption and lift,” we should be concerned that when congregations experience this, they make sure they do not abandon those who are at the lower socioeconomic levels. When this happens, existing churches with a middle class status become incapable or unwilling to reach out to those who are in the lower socioeconomic levels. Socioeconomic diversity, therefore, must be taken into account to ensure that all Hispanics have an opportunity to hear the gospel and to be discipled in congregations that are relevant to them.

**Diversity in Citizenship Status**

In addition to the previously mentioned forms of diversity among Hispanics, there is the diversity related to citizenship status. As we were able to see in chapter two, the length of residence of Hispanics in this country ranges from the first Spanish settlers to the people who arrived yesterday. This diversity, therefore, encompasses those who are native-born, those who are naturalized citizens, and those who are here without legal documents.

**Native-Born**

The Census Bureau asserts that 60% of the Hispanic population is native-born (i.e., born in the United States). This amounts to 26.6 million Hispanics. Among the native-born are found those who trace their heritage to the time of the first Spanish settlements. Their ancestors were here when what are now the southwestern states became a part of the United States. Since then, there has been a part of the Hispanic population which is native-born. The percentage of native-born Hispanics has continued to grow to the
extent that since the year 2000, the Hispanic population has grown more by birth than by immigration.

**Documented Inhabitants**

The Census Bureau states that 40% of the Hispanic population is foreign-born. The “foreign-born” category can be divided into two segments: the documented inhabitants and the undocumented inhabitants. Among the documented inhabitants are those who entered the country through the established channels of immigration. A significant number of these were claimed by a relative who was already a citizen of this country. Others came under the immigration quota that has been established by this country. A good number of these residents have already attained U.S. citizenship, while others are in the process of doing so.

**Undocumented Inhabitants**

One of the most emotional and complicated issues in the United States today has to do with the presence of undocumented inhabitants in this country. Mark Lopez from the Pew Hispanic Center states the following about undocumented Hispanics:

There is much controversy regarding estimates of the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Many research centers and organizations have generated estimates that range from as few as 5 million to as much as 20 million. Perhaps the most reliable estimate comes from the Pew Hispanic Center. Utilizing data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that there are approximately 11.9 million undocumented Hispanics in the U.S. (Passel and Cohn 2008b). This is down slightly from 2005, when 12.4 million undocumented immigrants were estimated to be in the U.S., though this fall cannot be statistically distinguished from 2005.
The fact that this is an emotional issue is evidenced by the fact that there have been numerous demonstrations and counter-demonstrations in this country in recent years. The debates in the Congress and the Senate of this country have been heated and have resulted in stalemates. The attitudes of many of the citizens of this country have been registered in a study conducted by the National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Kennedy School of Government. This study shows that there are significant differences of opinion among the citizens of this country regarding the presence of undocumented people here.

There are several factors that make this a complicated issue. One of the factors is that the status of a number of people from such countries as Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala has not been sufficiently clarified. During periods of civil strife, large numbers of refugees from these countries were permitted to enter the United States, yet were not given the official status as refugees. Coupled with this was the practice of the immigration officers to apprehend and release people from Central America entering without legal documents. An additional complicating factor has been the fact that a number of those who have entered this country from Mexico and other Latin American nations now have children who were born in this country. While some see the presence of these immigrants as a drain on the economy of this country, others (including a number of industries in the U.S.) see a positive value in allowing these groups who mainly constitute a young workforce to enter and contribute by providing inexpensive labor.

We must pray for our government leaders as they seek to find effective solutions. We should focus on the task of leading as many of these individuals as possible to a personal faith in Christ. That is what the apostle Paul did when he came in touch with Onesimus in Rome. It is very clear that Paul led him to a personal experience of salvation in Christ. He wrote Philemon: “I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds” (Philemon 10, KJV). While this analogy does not fit perfectly, we can say that from a spiritual standpoint, leading undocumented Hispanics to Christ can
Hispanic Diversity

be a “win-win” situation. If a number of those whom we have led to faith in Christ are permitted to stay and earn their citizenship, they will be the better for it—and so will our country. If, on the other hand, they are required to return, they can be evangelists and missionaries in their own countries.95 There are already reports of some who have come to a personal faith in Christ while here and have returned and been instrumental in reaching their loved ones and friends for Christ and starting churches among them.

There is significant diversity among Hispanics with regard to their citizenship status. The largest percentage of Hispanics is native-born, and their numbers are increasing on a daily basis. Those who are foreign-born and have become citizens also represent a number that is increasing. The undocumented Hispanics are among the most receptive to the gospel message. Having left situations in their own countries where there were social pressures seeking to keep them from attending evangelical meetings, they now find themselves in this country with the freedom to attend meetings and establish friendships with evangelical Christians. Due to the multiple needs they have when they arrive in this country, key ministries offered by evangelical churches often provide the friendship bridge through which the gospel is communicated. When the immigration issue is clarified by the U.S. government, the churches that have English classes and citizenship classes will be in a position to reach large numbers of them with the gospel message. Chapter nine has information on resources that can be utilized for this purpose.

Diversity in Lifestyles

First Generation Hispanic Lifestyles

First generation Hispanics often have the tendency to fellowship exclusively with members of their own group. For example, in a place of business, a factory, a hotel or a restaurant, non-Hispanics and Hispanics work together all day long, but when the day ends, Hispanics seek the
company of other Hispanics. First generation Hispanics prefer to live in neighborhoods where other Hispanics live. They generally prefer those who are from their same country or at least from the same region (Mexico, Central America, North or South America, Brazil, or Spain). In almost all of the states, in large cities, you will find groups of well-identified Hispanic families with their own businesses, schools, churches, theaters, sports fields, and entertainment centers. Socioeconomic groups are also naturally established within the same group of Hispanics. The poor look for and establish themselves among the poor; those of middle income groups look for and establish themselves among others of middle income. Fortunately, this is becoming less and less of an issue due to the numerical growth of Hispanics (who have become the largest minority in the U.S.) and to their constant assimilation and blending in with the customs and culture of their new community.

Another interesting aspect of the first generation Hispanic community is the celebration of certain important dates in their lives. These include the celebration of birthdays, the daughter’s 15th birthday, the wedding anniversary, and the remembrance of the day when parents or their spouse died (many will visit the cemetery frequently to take flowers in memory of their loved one). Normally, in any of these celebrations, Hispanics expect to receive a card, a gift, or a mention of the event.

Instead of celebrating Christmas on December 25th like most non-Hispanics, Hispanics usually get together with their family on Christmas Eve for supper, to exchange gifts, and express best wishes to each other.

While Easter is a very important event for non-Hispanics, and they will generally attend church on that day (one of the most attended Sundays of the year), for Hispanics, the Friday before Easter is the most important day. On “Good Friday” they commemorate the death of Jesus. It’s not until they have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that they come to appreciate the importance of Easter.
The other important celebration is Independence Day on July 4. Hispanics enjoy the day off, but it does not have the same meaning for them. They tend to commemorate the date of independence of their own country. Once again, it’s only with the passing of time and understanding the civic values of the adoptive country that they begin to understand its importance.

**Second Generation Hispanic Lifestyles**

The experience of second generation Hispanics is significantly different from that of their immigrant parents. There are numerous factors that contribute to the differences between these generations of Hispanics. These include the place of birth, the assimilation process, language utilization, and the worldview that characterizes these generations.

The place of birth contributes significantly to a person’s self-identity and sense of belonging. For example, a person born in Colombia will very naturally consider himself or herself “Colombian” even after immigrating into the United States. When asked, “Where are you from?” he or she will very likely answer, “Colombia.” First generation (immigrant) persons have an ingrained sense of identity with strong ties with their country of origin.

Second generation Hispanics have a sense of identity that is significantly different from that of their parents. The fact that they were born in this country and that they very likely have weak ties with the country of origin of their parents contributes to their having a dual sense of identity (Colombian-American or Hispanic-American). One might ask: Why don’t they have a sense of identity solely with the country of origin of their parents? One of the reasons for this is the assimilation that second generation Hispanics experience at school, through the media, and with their friends. At school they learn the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem, American history, and many other things that contribute toward their developing a sense of identity with this country. Through the media,
Hispanic children and young people absorb a significant amount of the American culture. This also occurs through their contact in school with students who are of other cultural groups.

We do need to point out that Hispanics often follow a process of selective assimilation. This means that they select the values that they want to keep from their parent’s culture, as well as the ones that they want to acquire from the predominant society. This selective assimilation often results in the tendency of second and third generation Hispanics to participate in many of the family-centered celebrations described above, while at the same time incorporating some of the values and practices of their American culture. Hispanic gospel singer/songwriter, author, and actress, Jaci Velasquez, expresses this dual identity when she states: “I am very proud of both my ethnic background and my American heritage as well. They both have a strong part of the woman I am today.”

This dual identity has very important implications for the starting of Hispanic churches. Even though the members may be bilingual or even English preference, they often are going to want to gather in congregations that retain the Hispanic flavor in their worship, decision-making styles, fellowship patterns, and celebrations.

**Conclusion**

There is diversity in the Hispanic community with regard to country of origin, state of assimilation, language utilization, religious affiliation, socioeconomic levels, citizenship status, and lifestyles. Our hope is that this information will not discourage you from reaching Hispanics and starting churches among them. The truth of the matter is that despite these differences, there are enough commonalities that strategies to reach them can be effective. In order to accomplish this, however, it is necessary to identify and then to focus on particular groups that are in your area and to design strategies that take into account their characteristics (language, social patterns, and so forth) discussed in chapter two, as well as in this chapter.
The chapters on evangelism and church planting in this book can also be instructive in selecting the types of evangelistic methodologies, as well as the church planting models, that are needed to be effective.

Our prayer to the Heavenly Father is that He will give you a passion for the souls of the Hispanic people of your community, city, county, and state, which will lead you to find creative ways to communicate the gospel of salvation and eternal life. We pray that you will work tirelessly so that finally “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:11, KJV).

**Chapter Highlights**

- To reach Hispanics, it is important to know the origins of Hispanics in your community because Hispanic Americans come from many different countries with varying cultural characteristics.
- The diversity of Hispanics is seen in their assimilation, which varies greatly by generation.
- Due to the varying uses of language (particularly from generation to generation), it is essential to understand this and use the appropriate language to communicate with the Hispanics we are trying to reach.
- With 67.6% of Hispanics identifying themselves as “Catholics,” the religious background of Hispanics must be taken into consideration.
- The socioeconomic diversity of Hispanics is evident when comparing foreign-born Hispanics with native-born Hispanics.
- While the largest percentage of Hispanics is native-born, the foreign-born (both documented inhabitants and undocumented inhabitants) must also be reached.
First-generation Hispanics and second-generation Hispanics often have unique lifestyles that must be understood if we are to effectively reach both generations.

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General Director, Baptist Publishing House

Jorge Enrique Diaz is the General Director of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House located in El Paso, Texas. This publishing house serves the churches by providing Spanish educational training resources and books.

He came to the United States thirty years ago, at the invitation of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House, also known as Hispanic World Publishers. He came to head the Bible Teaching Department that was responsible for the production of Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Christian Discipleship resources, and educational and didactical books.

In his native land of Guatemala, in Central America, he served as President of the Baptist Seminary and professor of educational technology at the National University. He has also served as founding pastor of churches in Guatemala, Colombia and in the United States.

Dr. Daniel Sanchez
Professor of Missions, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Daniel Sanchez is an Associate Dean and Director of the Scarborough Institute of Church Planting and Growth at Southwestern Seminary. Prior to this, he was the Director of Missions for the Baptist Convention of New York. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from England’s Oxford Centre for Missions Studies.

Dr. Sanchez started two churches during his student days in Texas. His missionary service in the Republic of Panama as well as with the Home Mission Board has enabled him to gain valuable experience in the area of church planting.

The author of ten books, he continues to write prolifically and to train on how to start churches employing a wide variety of approaches.
Hispanic Americans are receptive to the evangelical message now more than ever. Roland Lopez, a Hispanic church planting leader in the San Antonio Baptist Association, tells this story:

In my 35 plus years as pastor/evangelist, I continue to see in Hispanic evangelistic meetings throughout our country a positive response to the gospel message! The gospel message is greatly impacting the lives of our people. *The assurance of salvation, the assurance of forgiveness of sin, and the presence of Christ in their lives* give a person the sense of esteem, direction, and confidence to face the challenges of life!

As you well know, a high percentage of Hispanics are Catholic. We need not witness by attacking or arguing, but we need to establish bridges of communication so that we can share the biblical teaching about salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

In one of my meetings, I preached on the gospel in the Rosary. (I got this idea from Dr. Daniel Sanchez’s book, *Gospel in the Rosary.*) I took my Bible and a Rosary to the pulpit and preached. Extending an invitation, many of the participants made a public profession of faith. I am preaching in small and large crusades and our people are responding to the gospel message.

I challenge you … to compassionately, lovingly, and boldly share the truth of the gospel message! Our people (Hispanics) are hungry, thirsty, and desiring to hear this message of hope! 98
Recent surveys conducted by the Pew Hispanic Studies Center reveal the following important facts:

- 19.6% of Hispanics identify themselves as “Protestant.”
- 68% say that “religion is very important.”
- 69% “pray daily.”
- 83% of Hispanic Christian converts cite “the desire for a more direct, personal experience with God as the main reason for adopting the new faith.”

These surveys confirm the fact that large numbers of Hispanics are spiritually hungry and are searching for a more direct and personal experience with God. We can truly say that the Hispanic fields are “ripe and ready for the harvest” (John 4:35). In light of the fact that the Hispanic population is growing exponentially, we need to find ways to lead more Hispanics to Christ. In order to accomplish this, we need to take the Hispanic perceptions into account, become acquainted with their cultural characteristics, and utilize strategies that are biblically solid, yet culturally relevant.

**Evangelism Among Hispanics**

It is indeed encouraging that the percentage of Hispanics who identify themselves as “Evangelical/Protestant” has grown significantly in the last two decades, and their search for a more personal experience with God was the major motivating factor. Despite the unprecedented receptivity of Hispanics to the evangelical message, much needs to be done to overcome existing barriers. It is good to learn that 42% of Hispanic Catholics have a “favorable opinion” of evangelical Christians. The other side of the coin, however, is that 22% have an “unfavorable opinion” of evangelical Christians and 36% had “no opinion.” This has serious implications for the manner in which we relate to Hispanic Catholics and the methods that we use to lead them
to a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ. The greatest need is for everyone (whatever their religious persuasion) to be born again (John 3:3). Many Hispanic Catholics are wonderful, loving, sincere, and devout people, but if they have not had a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ, they need to hear the gospel message.

In light of the fact that 67.6% of Hispanics identify themselves as Roman Catholics, we should learn as much about this group as possible. It is important that we begin by understanding the attitude some evangelicals have toward Roman Catholics. The survey revealed that 36% of Hispanic evangelical Christians said they had an “unfavorable opinion of Catholics.” The point we need to make here is not that evangelical Christians should accept or gloss over serious doctrinal differences with Roman Catholics. What we must stress, however, is that evangelical Christians need to be prepared to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) and to “always be prepared to give an answer to those who ask about the hope that is within us,” but to do it “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Even those Catholics who have a favorable opinion of evangelical Christians can be turned off if we use methods that attack, criticize, or pressure.

**Practical Suggestions**

Since many Hispanics have a Roman Catholic background, there are some things that evangelical Christians should keep in mind as we interact with Hispanics. The goal is not to win arguments, but to win people for Christ. The focus is not going to be *religion*, but *relationship* with Jesus Christ.
Things That We Should Do

Here are some things that can be done to establish a bridge of respect, appreciation, and communication.

Love your Hispanic friends.

Find opportunities to show your love in practical ways. Remember, each person you meet is one for whom Jesus died on the cross. Pray that as you dialogue with them, they will feel the love of Christ in such a tangible way that they will turn to Him. Many former Roman Catholics will tell you that it was the love they sensed in their evangelical friends or relatives that attracted them to the message of salvation in Christ.

Pray with and for your Hispanic friends.

Many of them have never had the experience of someone praying for them by name. You can personalize your prayer even more by mentioning specific needs. Say: “Lord, I pray for (person’s name). You know that he or she has this need (name the need) and you have promised to hear our prayers. Bless (person’s name); help him or her.” You may want to begin with the Lord’s Prayer. This often provides a bridge because most Hispanic Catholics are familiar with this beautiful, biblical prayer.

Try to put yourself in their place.

Ask yourself, “How would I move from a traditional/religious position to a biblical position?” Many Hispanic Catholics have a very limited knowledge of the Bible. Some of the things you say to them about the Word of God may be entirely new. On other teachings they may have a limited understanding, but the understanding they do have can serve as a bridge to lead them to a clearer understanding of God’s Word.

Having a positive and loving attitude toward Hispanic Catholics is the first step toward leading them to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Developing meaningful, genuine relationships is the next step.
Things That We Should Not Do

There are things that we as evangelicals should avoid so that we do not offend Roman Catholics, put them on the defensive, or distract us from focusing on their personal relationship with Christ.

_Do not criticize the Catholic Church, its doctrines, practices, or people._

Even if you feel you have a valid point, it is counter-productive to criticize for two reasons: (1) It is not in the Spirit of Christ; and (2) It will only antagonize people. Many Hispanics will be open to conversing about the things that they know relating to God and Jesus. They will not, however, be responsive if they are criticized for their beliefs and practices. This will only cause them to become defensive or even to experience hurt feelings.

_Do not ridicule any of the practices of the Catholic Church._

Some evangelical Christians make fun of the sacramentals (images, statues, crucifixes) and practices of Roman Catholics. These things are very dear to Hispanic Catholics. If they are hurt, they will turn a deaf ear to what we are saying and perhaps avoid our company. There is absolutely no excuse for showing lack of respect to Hispanic Catholics, their beliefs, or their practices. If we treat them with respect, they will, in most cases, respond in like manner.

We do not need to agree with their beliefs to establish friendships and share with them what the Bible teaches about salvation in Jesus Christ.

_Do not be negative just because you differ with someone._

You can disagree without being disagreeable. Just think, if you had grown up in the same environment, you would probably have the same beliefs that they do. You can prayerfully point them to what the Word of God says instead of trying to win an argument. A negative attitude will evoke a negative response to the message of salvation.
Relational Evangelism

In the chapter on “Hispanic History and Worldview,” we discussed the fact that Hispanics highly value personal relationships. In fact, many Hispanics, even in their business dealings, seek to establish a personal relationship before making a purchase or selecting a person to provide needed services (medical, legal, real estate, and so forth). This is even more important when dealing with spiritual matters.

It is important for us to keep in mind in dealing with Hispanics who have a Roman Catholic background that we do not need to focus on religion, but on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus made it very clear that people need to be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3). We want to focus on those Hispanics who have not experienced the new birth. Some of these are dear friends and sincere people who do not have a clear understanding of the biblical teaching regarding salvation. They need to know about this personal experience with Jesus Christ which blesses people with forgiveness of sin, a sense of purpose in life, the abiding presence of the Lord, the power to live victorious lives, and a steadfast hope for this life and for eternity.

There are those who seek to witness to Hispanics by arguing, attacking, and exposing what they consider to be erroneous beliefs and practices. These approaches often offend and alienate people who otherwise might have been willing to listen to the good news of salvation. We need to tell the truth of the Word of God, but we must do it in a spirit of love and compassion. We need to seek to establish bridges of communication so that we can share the biblical teachings about salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ in such a way that people will be receptive to the message. Often ministering to the needs of Hispanics will help establish the friendship bridge that enables the communication of the gospel message. Friendship provides the atmosphere to share your personal salvation story with your new friend. A personal story or testimony will contain at least four areas: (1) your life
before you made a commitment to Jesus, (2) how you received Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, (3) what you understood about the gospel when you received Christ as your personal Savior, and (4) how your life has been changed since you received Christ. This can be followed up with the utilization of a gospel tract or a marked New Testament.\textsuperscript{105}

A couple of excellent resources offered by the North American Mission Board are: One Day/One Hour Evangelism Training (www.namb.net/onedaywitness —this resource utilizes a witnessing tract that is available in Spanish, as well as a bilingual English/Spanish tract) and Intentional Community Evangelism (www.namb.net/ice —this approach equips and mobilizes an entire church in reaching its community through intentional ministry and outreach). The focus is on prayer, evangelism (both personal and ministry), as well as discipleship.

**Ministry-Based Evangelism**

One of the best ways to reach people in any community is through ministry-based evangelism. Ministry-based evangelism involves discovering felt needs, addressing these needs, building bridges of friendship and understanding, and sharing the good news of salvation with an attitude of compassion and concern. By utilizing a holistic approach in ministry, the needs of many Hispanics can be met and their lives can be transformed as they become open to having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

A survey of Hispanic pastors conducted by the Research Department of the North American Mission Board revealed the following needs: (The percentages indicate the number of pastors who agreed that a certain need should be placed at a particular slot in the order of priorities.)

- Helping people to get jobs or better jobs—68.0%
- Helping new immigrants establish themselves—60.8%
- Helping people have better access to basic social services (health care, Social Security, Medicare)—60.8%
- Counseling programs—60.8%
- English or citizenship classes—58.3%
- Helping students stay in school—53.3%
- Church/community sports programs—51.7%
- Job training—50.0%
- After-school programs for teenagers—49.2%
- Drug/alcohol rehabilitation programs—45.0%
- Daycares or child care programs—45.0%
- Reduce violence among the families—40.8%
- Food distribution—37.5%
- Programs for the elderly—32.2%
- Providing shelter for the homeless—30.8%
- Reduce violence in the community (e.g., gangs)—29.2%
- Adequate housing—25.5%
- Voter registration—20.8%
- Other community needs—15.8%

The order of priority may vary from one community to another. On the other hand, the types of needs that are listed are found in every Hispanic community, especially those that are comprised of newer immigrants. It is important to note that many of the needs listed relate to how Hispanic immigrants adapt to life in this country. This is evident in the top five needs listed in the survey.

It is a given that as Christians, we must minister to the needs of people in the name of Christ. Compassionate ministries facilitate the communication of the message of salvation. A young woman who came from another country and was greatly helped in her transition by a Christian lady, said of the lady: “She built a bridge from her heart to mine and Jesus walked across.” That encapsulates ministry-based evangelism.
Relational Events

There are numerous relational events that can facilitate the development of personal relationships and provide opportunities to share the message of salvation. These activities can be planned specifically for children, youth, and adults.

Relational Events for Children and Youth

There are relational events for children and youth that can be instrumental in evangelizing them and their parents. These include Vacation Bible School, backyard Bible clubs, activities for recreational groups, voluntary tutors, special presentations, and arts and handcraft festivals.107

Activities with Recreational Groups

Some have been successful in utilizing recreational groups to get to know the parents, as well as their children. This involves the formation of teams such as soccer, baseball, basketball, ping pong, volleyball, and other sports. Social recreation (e.g., parties, fellowships, banquets, receptions, and picnics) and outdoor recreation (e.g., hiking, backpacking, day camping, and adventure recreation) can also be a part of these relational activities. It is important to include Bible studies, dialogues, and prayer with the children along with the other activities. Parents can be invited to meetings in which small trophies are given to the children. This is a good opportunity to invite the parents to participate in Bible studies.

Purchasing equipment and having special days when children and young people can come and participate in recreational activities away from the dangers and influences of exploiting adults, youth gangs, and other negative influences can provide a much needed ministry in the community, as well as an opportunity to develop friendships and share the gospel.
**Vacation Bible School**

The original purpose of Vacation Bible School was to provide additional instruction for the children of the church. Later, many churches realized that this could be a very effective method for the evangelization of children that do not form part of the family of the church. In recent years, this method has been utilized for the establishment of new congregations. Recently, a Hispanic church in San Antonio, Texas, had over 1,000 children in their Vacation Bible School.108

In order for this method to be utilized, it is necessary to make some adaptations. A group can have several Vacation Bible Schools—in their own community and in another community in which they are projecting the establishment of a new congregation. This means that the content of the lessons will have to be more basic and geared for unchurched children. In some areas where people are not acquainted with the term “Vacation Bible School,” a name that projects a clearer image can be selected. Perhaps such names as “Summer Character Enrichment Conference” or “Summer Bible Course to Strengthen the Family” could communicate a positive message to the parents in the community. The activities of the Vacation Bible School should include special presentations to invite the parents, grandparents, and other family members to attend. Some, for example, have musical programs, dramas, and graduation during the worship service on Sunday. After these presentations, the pastor can present a sermon explaining how the study of the Word of God can help the family attain true peace, harmony, and happiness. The pastor can invite the parents to participate in a series of Bible studies about the family. This can be the beginning of an adult Bible study fellowship.

**Bible Clubs**

One method that has often been effective is Bible clubs held in the backyards of homes, recreation areas, patios or other meeting places in the community where one is planning to establish a congregation. The format of
the sessions of the Bible club is similar to that of Vacation Bible School. The principal difference is that instead of having the activities during the course of a week, they have them one day a week (e.g., Saturdays mornings) for several weeks (sometimes throughout the entire summer).

_Tutors_
In some communities, tutors helping the children who are having problems with their studies have had good results. In general, these classes can be held in a home, library, or other place where one can provide individual instruction to children. This method can provide a way for tutors to get to know the parents of the children and to invite them to participate in Bible studies or other relational events in the community.

_Dramatic Arts_
A Hispanic church in California wanted to establish a new congregation in a community. They sent their music director and some assistants to invite the children to participate in a concert at the end of the summer at a park adjacent to the church. Going from house to house, the director and his assistants invited the children to participate. A good number of parents gave them permission. As the children spent time with their leaders during Saturday rehearsals leading up to the performance, they began to share their problems and challenges. This gave the leaders the opportunity to give advice and share their testimonies of conversion. When the night of the concert arrived, many parents attended and were very pleased with their children’s presentation. The director and his assistants were then able to invite the parents to participate in a series of conferences about the family. As a result of the friendships that were established, a Bible study began around which a new congregation formed.

This same idea can be used for dramas, puppet shows, and other presentations. These can provide an opportunity to cultivate friendships with
children and young people and to invite their parents and extended families to the performances.

**Arts and Handcraft Fiestas (Celebrations)**

A similar idea to the musical concert is that of an arts and handcraft fiesta. This involves enlisting the children and youth in a class every Saturday morning during the summer to learn to paint and make other handcrafts. At the end of the summer, a festival is held in a public place to exhibit the handcrafts prepared by the children. The friendship ties that are established with the children and their parents can be utilized to invite them to participate in other activities through which one can communicate the gospel.

**Sports Clinics and Camps**

Some church planters have invited well-known Christian athletes to spend time training children to improve their athletic skills. Some Hispanic churches have sponsored exhibitions by Hispanic boxers, baseball players, and soccer players to attract the people of the community. The parents of the children are also invited to attend. Athletes give a personal testimony and invite the people to participate in ongoing weekly activities. This often opens the door to start Bible studies and other activities that can lead to the starting of a new congregation.

**Relational Events for Adults**

In addition to relational events like the ones previously mentioned for children and young people, there are activities for adults that have the purpose of cultivating friendships and sowing the seed of the gospel.

**Film (Video) Celebration**

The Film Celebration approach involves obtaining a series of Christian movies that deal with topics that are related to the needs of the community. This can be, for example, a series of movies about the family. After showing
the movie, there can be a time of discussion in which one can give attention to questions and comments.

Some have printed a ticket that has information about the movie (e.g., title, time, and location) and a place where one can indicate if he or she desires to be visited, to receive literature about this topic, or to participate in a Bible study. This provides an opportunity to continue communicating with the person and encouraging him or her to participate in a Bible Study. At the end of this film series, an invitation to a Bible study that will begin the following week can be made.

**Marriage Enrichment Retreat**

Often a community survey will reveal that there are many couples having marital difficulties or that do not have a strong commitment to their marriage. A marriage enrichment retreat can strengthen these couples, as well as provide opportunities for church planters to develop meaningful relationships with unchurched people and lead them to become a part of the fellowship of the emerging group.

**Free Bible Drawing**

Some have utilized the method of a free Bible drawing to find people that are interested in participating in a Bible study. This drawing has been utilized in the following manner:

1) Buy a big and attractive Bible.
2) Obtain permission to set up a table with a sign in a place in the community where the people gather (e.g., in a market place, a shopping center, a mall, a recreation park, or an apartment complex).
3) Get people from the sponsoring church to encourage people to fill out a card with their name and address. This can provide the opportunity to converse with the people about a Bible study that will be held in the community.
4) At the appointed date, have the drawing and deliver the Bible to the winner.

5) Give a New Testament as a “consolation prize” to all the people who signed up for the drawing. While delivering these New Testaments, encourage them to participate in the Bible study. Through this method a good number of people have enrolled in Bible studies.

These are examples of activities for adults that can be utilized to build meaningful relationships with people for the purpose of involving them in Bible studies. In some cases, these methods will need to be adapted so that they are useful in different communities. The important thing is to get to know the community so that the methods used are effective.

**Prayer Survey**

Another method to connect with Hispanics in a community is a prayer survey. A prayer survey involves conversing with the people and explaining to them that there is a group of people that prays fervently for the needs of the people in their community. You can then ask the people if they have some need or concern that they want this prayer group to pray for.

In order for this method to be effective, there needs to be a group of people in the church that is devoted to fervent prayer. Also, there needs to be a group of people that is willing to visit the people of the community to find out what the needs are and to listen to, encourage, and pray for the people who have urgent needs.

**Tent Community Outreach**

A pastor rented a tent that accommodated around 500 people and erected it in a lot right in the middle of the community he was trying to reach. After extensive advertisement, the church planting team conducted morning
activities with children, such as Vacation Bible School. In the afternoon, they conducted activities for the youth. The evening activities targeted the adults primarily, and consisted of Bible studies, testimonies, music, and evangelistic sermons. They had activities every day and night during the summer. By the end of this period, a sufficiently large core group had developed to the point that an adjacent auditorium was leased and a congregation was established. In some instances, a tent may not be the best option. City parks and rented facilities, such as movie theaters and hotel conference rooms, can also be utilized for this type of activity.

Acts of Kindness

In his book *Conspiracy of Kindness*, Steve Sjogren lists a wide variety of relational activities that can put us in contact with literally thousands of prospects. The main purpose of these activities is to establish a positive initial contact with unchurched people by serving them through acts of kindness. When people ask why church members are doing these acts of kindness, their response is “to show you in a practical way that God loves you. His love is free and so is ours.” This approach is based on “Five Discoveries That Empower Evangelism:” (1) people listen when I treat them like friends; (2) when I serve, hearts are touched; (3) as I serve, I redefine the perception of a Christian; (4) doing the message precedes telling the message; and (5) focus on planting, not harvesting.

Some of these acts of kindness include: Mother’s Day carnation giveaway, Sunday morning paper and coffee giveaway, soft drink giveaway at sports events, mowing lawns, free coffee at bus stops, shoe shining service, blood pressure scanning, free light bulbs, free smoke alarm batteries, door-to-door food collection for the poor, free car washes, and free community dinners.

Flea Markets

Iglesia Bautista West Brownsville (West Brownsville Baptist Church) has a very effective ministry in the flea markets in their city. During the weekends
when these are held, church members take bottled water, coffee, and other treats to offer to the merchants who work long hours without leaving their stands. Church members also distribute bottled water and tracts to the customers. Often, they engage in conversation with the customers and share the message of salvation with them. A significant number of these have come to faith in Christ and have been invited to visit one of the church’s numerous Bible study groups in different parts of the city. The combination of having an initial contact and inviting them to a Bible study has given this church the opportunity to win many people to Christ.

**Hospital Visitation**

This same church in Brownsville has teams of people that visit the hospitals on a regular basis. Often the patients are lonely and in need of a friend due to the fact that their relatives may be far away (perhaps in Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America). The members of this church have found that most of the patients they visit are quite willing to be prayed for. At times, the church members are able to establish contact with family members. This ministry enables them to establish personal relationships which often result in people becoming more receptive to the gospel message.

**English as a Second Language**

English as a second language classes are in demand everywhere. Hispanic adult immigrants do not have the same opportunity as their children to go to a public school and learn English. While many of these are initially intimidated by the challenge of learning a new language, it does not take them long after arriving here to know that English is absolutely indispensable for them to obtain good jobs or to make progress in the jobs they currently have. There are specially designed materials which have both grammatical as well as biblical content. In many instances, people involved in English classes will become receptive to participating in a Bible study. This has led many Hispanics to a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ. For more information on ESL, visit www.namb.net/esl.
Citizenship Classes

Another pressing need and opportunity for ministry relates to citizenship classes. Many Hispanics need to take citizenship classes in order to fulfill the requirements stipulated by the law. The churches, associations, and other ministries that offer these ministries are in an excellent position to help many and to lead them to faith in Christ in the process. The U.S. government has prepared training materials, and a program is available for those who want to advise people about the process.

Door-To-Door Witnessing

Some people say that door-to-door witnessing is not effective anymore. Among Hispanics, this method can still be effective if several things are kept in mind. Some Hispanics will make a decision to receive Christ on the first visit. The majority of them, however, will not do so because they may have not fully understood the gospel presentation. Many of them have been taught that salvation is earned through their observance of the sacraments and religious observances in the Roman Catholic Church. In light of this background, it is difficult for some of them to understand that salvation comes by grace alone through personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. A second reason why many Hispanics do not respond to the gospel presentation on the first visit is because they are not in a position to trust the person who is witnessing to them. Relational and ministry approaches help to break down barriers of distrust and to establish meaningful relationships.

A Hispanic church, for instance, engages in door-to-door witnessing every Saturday morning. They have done this consistently for close to 20 years. The church experiences public professions of faith almost every Sunday. This church has often led the Hispanic churches in the state in baptisms. A group of people gets together in the church building every Saturday morning, spends time in prayer, and then goes out to a selected neighborhood to visit. The members of the team basically knock on doors, talk with the people,
share their testimonies, read a brief tract, invite people to receive Christ, and then pray with them. The team visits the same neighborhood for several Saturdays in a row. One week they talk with those who made a decision for Christ the previous Saturday. The next week they visit those who were receptive but did not make a profession of faith. The following week they visit people that they missed on the previous visits. On each visit, the people are invited to church and efforts are made to develop friendships with the people. According to the pastor, a large percentage of the professions of faith and baptisms come from the people that they visit on Saturdays.

**Crisis Evangelism**

Undergirding all of the evangelism of the churches that we studied is a commitment to practice ministry evangelism. This type of evangelism takes many forms. One church, for example, has a group of women on call to prepare meals for people who have lost loved ones. Upon hearing of the death of a person in their community, the women immediately call one another and decide who is going to take the food. This often has led the families of the deceased to request the use of the church for the funeral. As a result of this, many people have been converted to the Lord.

Other crisis evangelism ministries include a food pantry, a clothing closet, and referrals to helping agencies. One church has a well-developed food distribution program for people who live in the immediate neighborhood. Some churches have highly organized ministries such as an academy (elementary through high school). The significant thing about these ministries is that they not only target physical or educational needs, but also seek to lead people to Christ. Many professions of faith are reported in these churches annually as a result of these types of ministry evangelism.
Celebration Evangelism

Many Hispanic churches utilize celebrations as a means to get to know people. Many of these have dramas, musical presentations, and social gatherings. These churches also utilize the major Christian celebrations as evangelism events. Celebrations related to Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving are times in which they invite many of their friends and neighbors. Other churches also utilize special celebrations such as the “Quinceañera” (15th birthday of the young ladies). These are times in which family and friends are invited. One church does a banquet for all of the graduating Hispanic students in their city. These are seen as excellent outreach opportunities.

Revival Meetings

While some people have totally dismissed revival meetings, some Hispanic churches are using them with a significant degree of effectiveness. The majority of these churches hold revival meetings more as a time of harvest than a time for seed sowing. In other words, these churches utilize their relational events to establish friendships and sow the seed of the gospel. By the time friends and neighbors are invited to a revival meeting, they have already had an opportunity to hear a Christian testimony and perhaps a gospel presentation.
Chronological Bible Storying

A number of missionaries are finding that chronological Bible storying is opening many doors for them to share the gospel message in Latin America. This method focuses on sharing carefully selected Bible stories, simplifying them, and telling them in such a way that people can hear them, understand them, internalize them, and re-tell them. It is being used very effectively among oral learners, as well as among cultures that have longstanding traditions for telling stories.111

Other Approaches

In a recent meeting of Hispanic leaders sponsored by the North American Mission Board, the leaders were asked what evangelistic methods they were finding most helpful in their communities. Among the ones mentioned were: FAITH (POR FE), Sharing Jesus without Fear, Sharing the Good News with Roman Catholic Friends, Evangelism Explosion, and Home Bible Studies. These evangelistic approaches can be used in connection with other ministries to lead Hispanics to Christ. One of the strongest features of these methods is that they are reproductive. They facilitate ongoing training and equipping for soul winning.

God’s Plan for Sharing, the North American Mission Board’s evangelism emphasis, can serve as an effective strategy for reaching our Hispanic neighbors, too. This evangelistic emphasis has four key elements: praying (every church praying for lost people), engaging (every believer sharing as a trained witness), sowing (every lost person receiving a witness), and harvesting (every church harvesting and celebrating every salvation response).112
Conclusion

The fact that Hispanics are showing more receptivity to the evangelical message than ever before in the history of this country motivates us to utilize strategies that will reach the largest number of Hispanics for Christ. The activities we have discussed have proven to be effective in Hispanic communities. It is important to know the people locally, to experiment with a variety of methods, to make the necessary adaptations, and to be persistent with the methods that yield the greatest results. In this chapter, our focus has been leading Hispanics to Christ. The next chapter will focus on enabling Hispanics to start multiplying congregations.

Chapter Highlights

- Hispanic Americans are more receptive to the gospel than ever before.
- A Roman Catholic background in many Hispanics requires certain things we should and should not do when presenting Christ to them.
- Relationships are an important component in evangelizing Hispanics.
- Reaching Hispanics for Christ can best be accomplished by utilizing a holistic approach in ministry.
- Other approaches can be used in evangelizing Hispanics such as “crisis evangelism” or “celebration evangelism.”

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Dr. Sanchez started two churches during his student days in Texas. His missionary service in the Republic of Panama as well as with the Home Mission Board has enabled him to gain valuable experience in the area of church planting.

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Joshua’s assignment includes creating greater awareness among Southern Baptists of the many people groups present in North America; working with state conventions, associations, ethnic fellowships, and local churches in developing and implementing strategies and contextualized resources for the outreach of the various people groups; coordinates evangelism initiatives and special projects for assigned people groups; provides cross-cultural evangelism training with particular emphasis on understanding the various people group’s worldviews.
In February 1980, the U.S. Olympic hockey team slipped its foot into a glass slipper and walked away with a gold medal at Lake Placid, New York. Those collegians had shocked the world by upsetting a very powerful Soviet team, and then they grabbed the championship from Finland while the crowd chanted, “U.S.A.!” Before his team’s victory over the Soviet Union, the coach of the U.S. hockey team told his players, “You are born to be a player. You are meant to be here at this time. This is your moment.”

The moment to reach Hispanics is now. As was noted in chapter one, Hispanics are the nation’s largest minority group. The United States of America is the second largest mission field in the Spanish-speaking world. This should motivate us to lead Hispanics to Christ and to enable them to start unprecedented numbers of churches. In this chapter, we are going to focus on reasons for starting Hispanic churches, discuss an indigenous philosophy for Hispanic church planting, explore approaches to Hispanic church planting, and present some effective models of starting Hispanic congregations.

### Reasons for Starting Hispanic Churches

**The Great Commission**

Jesus’ command is clear and well-defined. He said: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the age” (Matthew 29:18-19, NKJV). It is clear that we are to go to all people groups (*panta ta ethne*). It is also clear that we are to be instruments so these people groups...
can become disciples (devoted followers) of Jesus. The task, therefore, goes beyond sharing the good news of salvation with people groups. It includes baptizing and teaching which, as was evident in the first century, took place in the context of a group of believers, the church. The second chapter of Acts provides an instructive and inspiring example. In this congregation in Jerusalem there was preaching (v. 40), baptizing (v. 41), discipleship (v. 42), fellowship (vv. 41, 46), observance of the Lord’s Supper (v. 42), prayer (v. 42), ministry (v. 43, 47), and praise (v. 47).

The Antioch Church also made disciples and became an exemplary congregation, a prototype or model of a missionary church.

The Antioch Church is an inspiring example of a congregation that took the Great Commissions seriously, reached out to its own group, expanded its vision to include other cultural groups within its own city ... This church became the first to send a missionary team (Barnabas and Saul) to plant churches in the Gentile world. This team had the freedom to start churches that were doctrinally sound, yet culturally and linguistically different from the sending church.115

The Hispanic mission field provides a great opportunity for us to obey the Great Commission.

The Antioch Christians were convinced that the Great Commission was to be taken seriously (Acts 13:1-3), and for that reason they commissioned the first church planting team: Barnabas and Saul. The apostle Paul started churches in the four Roman provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Those churches were different in their culture, customs, and language. The New Testament churches were congregations with different backgrounds, but bound by a sense of unity based on their common faith in Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, the early church was committed and determined to spread the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. The early Christians started churches not under pressure of hierarchal impositions, but as the most natural way of reaching people for Christ and discipling them. Wherever the Lord took them, they preached and started churches. It was part of their lifestyle, and it paid great dividends in the expansion of God’s kingdom.
It is truly inspiring to observe that the refugee group that was forced to leave Jerusalem because of the persecution (Acts 11:19) and initially focused on reaching its own group, got to the point where it expanded its vision (11:20) and began to evangelize cross-culturally. In obedience to Christ’s commission, we need to share the gospel across cultural lines and gather converts into vibrant and reproducing congregations. The Hispanic mission field provides a great opportunity for us to obey the Great Commission.

**A Pressing Need**

The first chapter in this book documented the explosive growth and the extensive expansion of the Hispanic population across America. The facts are clear: the Hispanic population is growing in virtually all of the counties of America today. The increase of Hispanic churches is much less than the Hispanic population increase. This means that new Hispanic churches are needed all across the country. This is especially true where immigrants make up the bulk of the population in new Hispanic settlements, such as the 25 counties mentioned in chapter one. For many years, missiologists have observed that new immigrants are more receptive to the gospel message than long-term residents. This leads us to conclude that there is a pressing need, as well as a marvelous opportunity to start unprecedented numbers of Hispanic churches throughout our great nation.

**Indigenous Philosophy for Hispanic Church Planting**

In the next segment of this chapter, we are going to focus on a variety of approaches that are being used effectively to start reproducing Hispanic churches. Prior to doing this, however, it is important for us to focus on the underlying philosophy that will lead to the planting of Hispanic churches that become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. In order for this to occur, several measures need to be in place from the very inception of the church planting process.
First, if a church was started using small groups meeting in homes or other meeting places, these small group meetings should not be discontinued when the group gets a larger meeting place. Continuing small group gatherings is vital to the continued growth of a church.

In some instances, the response of a people group and perceived ideas of what a church ought to be may lead inevitably to acquiring a building and adopting a traditional church structure. The questions, however, need to be asked: “How does this contribute to reproductive growth?” and “Will this enhance or inhibit reproduction?”

Reproduction needs to be embedded into the genetic code (DNA) of every new congregation. This can be accomplished by sharing the vision with the new converts from the very beginning of their pilgrimage with the Lord. The goal is for every believer to win others to Christ and for every new congregation to start other congregations. If the new church is utilizing a house church strategy, it is indispensable for the new group to have a leader and an apprentice. These two leaders know that at a predetermined point of time, the group is going to start another group (with the leader getting another apprentice and the current apprentice becoming the leader of the new group and getting an apprentice). If the leaders and the group members know that this is the strategy, they will work toward multiplication.

Second, the utilization of lay leaders is absolutely essential if there is going to be a church multiplication strategy. Lay leaders have the advantage of proximity to non-believers as they permeate every part of culture. Without lay leaders, we are limited by finances and formally-trained leadership. Utilizing lay leaders will require ongoing training so that new lay leaders receive the instruction, guidance, and encouragement they need to be effective leaders.

Third, a financial plan that enhances reproduction has to be adopted for every church planting model that is employed. In most state conventions and associations (in partnership with the North American Mission Board), a plan is already in place to fund some of the new church starts that are
needed. These should have a phase-down plan to lead the new churches to become self-supporting. It is very likely that this model needs to continue in some settings. \textit{The point that needs to be made here is that in order for multiplicative church growth to take place, a strategy needs to be developed that utilizes unpaid lay people as the leaders of the house churches.}\footnote{118}

Many church planting movements take into account (in varying degrees) the common essential elements listed in David Garrison’s book, \textit{Church Planting Movements}.\footnote{119} These are: (1) prayer; (2) abundant gospel sowing; (3) intentional church planting; (4) Scriptural authority; (5) local leadership; (6) lay leadership; (7) cell or house churches; (8) churches planting churches; (9) rapid reproduction; and (10) healthy churches. The utilization of unpaid local lay leaders of congregations that meet in houses or other places available to them (apartments, clubhouses, offices, and so forth) is absolutely essential for a church planting movement to occur. This does not mean that the local group cannot help its lay leader financially. It does mean that outside funding is not used, thus making it possible for church multiplication to take place unhindered by the limitations of funding which comes from outside sources. A question, therefore, that needs to be addressed is the following: \textit{In areas where traditional funding strategies have been employed, will it be necessary to start a parallel funding strategy that is totally self-supporting?}\footnote{120}

If we are going to impact the Hispanic community, we are going to have to utilize approaches that lead to the multiplication of biblically-sound and culturally-relevant churches. If we are going to impact the Hispanic community, we are going to have to utilize approaches that lead to the multiplication of biblically-sound and culturally-relevant churches. Earlier in this chapter, we laid a biblical foundation for church planting. This must be followed if the churches are to be biblically sound. The previous chapters in this book address some of the social and cultural issues that enable church planters to start churches that are relevant to the Hispanic culture. One of the factors that needs to
be taken into account is that of advisability of external funding. In many Hispanic communities, church planting strategies that do not require the purchase of buildings and the employment of full-time church staff will be more productive than those that do.

**Approaches to Starting Hispanic Churches**

**Anglo Churches Starting Hispanic Churches**

For many years, hundreds of biblically-sound, contextualized Hispanic congregations have been started by Anglo churches that have seen the need to reach Hispanics in their community with the gospel message. Numerous Anglo churches today continue to invest personnel, time, and financial resources in starting Hispanic churches. Some of them have sufficient resources and are generous when it comes to reaching Hispanics for Christ. Others do not have the same means, but give sacrificially and provide a place and/or resources to start Hispanic churches. Anglo churches have started Hispanic churches in a variety of ways.

Some Hispanic congregations have been started within the building of the Anglo church (in a chapel, educational building, or the sanctuary). Other churches meet in places outside their own church building. In either case, this model has been effective in that it has enabled the sponsoring church to assume responsibility for a new congregation and to watch over its financial development and doctrinal soundness. This has been the primary model that has produced a large number of current Hispanic churches.

This church planting model continues to be a vital one, especially in areas where Hispanics are new arrivals and the Anglo church is in the best position to reach them. There are several factors that need to be taken into account in order to make this model even more effective in contributing to exponential church planting.

The initial factor is to *embed church reproduction into the genetic code (DNA) of the emerging Hispanic congregation*. The new congregation needs
to capture the vision of starting other congregations as soon as possible. This can be done by discipling new converts in such a way that they will start reaching others for Christ early on in their own Christian walk. When they start gathering in groups, they will need to know that these groups are going to produce other groups. This same vision of reproduction will continue to be communicated as they form a congregation. This vision will keep the new congregation from developing a spirit of dependency on the sponsoring church and will ensure that it has a missional mindset from the very beginning.

A secondary factor is that of using a paradigm that does not require a congregation to own a building and have a full-time pastor or staff in order to be considered a church. While buildings and full-time staff are wonderful blessings in many settings, some emerging Hispanic congregations may not have the financial base to support these and may need to meet in rented facilities and have a bivocational pastor. By not having these requirements, the sponsoring church can assist the emerging congregation in ways that develop a spirit of self-sufficiency and a commitment to start other congregations. Utilizing a paradigm that does not require ownership of buildings and the employment of full-time staff may encourage other sponsoring churches to start Hispanic congregations. This can lead to the starting of many more churches.

In settings where culture has predisposed people to think that to be a church it is necessary to own a building and have full-time leaders, a new vision needs to be communicated. People need to know that a new paradigm is needed to address the challenge of the explosive Hispanic growth in many communities across the country.

**Hispanic Churches Starting Hispanic Churches**

In numerous areas, state conventions, associations, and sponsoring churches have provided the training and encouragement for Hispanic churches to become involved in sponsoring other Hispanic congregations.
The result has been that numerous Hispanic churches are now actively involved in starting Hispanic churches, as well as churches for other people groups. They have drastically changed their pattern from being recipients of resources to being generous givers. Some examples of this can be found in Florida. The vast majority of Hispanic churches started in Florida are not initiated by non-Hispanic churches, but by Hispanic ones.

One clear example of a missional, reproducing Hispanic church is Iglesia Bautista Dios te Ama in Miami. Its pastor is Rev. Ernesto Alfonso, a mission-minded leader who has successfully led this church into the New Testament pattern of spreading the gospel through the establishment of new Hispanic churches. Since this church (Iglesia Bautista Dios te Ama) was planted in 2002, by 2008 they started and/or sponsored 10 new Hispanic churches in Miami-Dade County.

Hispanic churches have the advantage of knowing the language and the culture of the Hispanic community and can instinctively develop approaches to reach Hispanics that can be very effective. It should be a part of their spiritual maturation process to have the vision and assume the responsibility of starting daughter congregations.

**Hispanic Churches Starting Other Culture Churches**

If a Hispanic church gives evidence of commitment to the Great Commission when it starts a daughter congregation among its own cultural group, it shows even greater commitment when it starts a church among a different people group. It could be that the cultural pilgrimage of the sponsoring church as an ethnic group in this country gives it insights to know instinctively how to reach out to people of another cultural background who have had a similar pilgrimage. A Hispanic church in Rochester, New York, sponsored a Vietnamese congregation. When the pastor was asked how it was that they were able to accomplish this, he answered: “I am a Cuban, and I have not forgotten what it was like to be a refugee. Even though my knowledge of the Vietnamese culture and language is very limited, these
precious persons understand the language of Christian love.” The cultural pilgrimage of many Hispanics can enable them to identify with people from many different cultures who are now permanent residents in America.

**Churches of Other Cultures Starting Hispanic Churches**

It is very encouraging to see an increasing number of ethnic churches catching the vision of reaching Hispanics in their communities and starting churches among them. Some of these sponsoring churches are African-American, others are Haitian, and still others are of Asian heritage.

As Hispanic people have moved into their communities, African-American churches have caught the vision of reaching them for Christ and starting churches among them. In 2008, African-American churches in Florida sponsored three new Hispanic congregations. Grace of God Baptist Church is sponsoring Misión Bautista Hispana La Gracia de Dios. Glendale Baptist Church of Brownsville sponsors Iglesia Bautista de Brownsville. New Life Baptist Church of Miami is sponsoring Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida de Carol City. These African-American churches have shared their buildings, provided leadership support, and participated in united efforts to reach their communities for Christ. These partnerships have been clear examples of the gospel’s power and the churches inherent ability as the body of Christ to unite in love and harmony.

Haitian churches are also catching the vision for starting Hispanic churches. A good example of this is Sinai Missionary Haitian Church located in Lake Worth, Florida. The church was started and sponsored by Iglesia Bautista Central, a Hispanic church located in Greenacres. In just a few years, the Haitian congregation was constituted as a church, outgrew their facilities, and moved to a school. Today, Sinai Missionary Haitian Church is housed in the sanctuary of a former Anglo church that disbanded and donated its facility to the Florida
Baptist Convention. The pastor of the Haitian church, Rev. Pierre Saint Louis, speaks Spanish fluently and has decided to start a Hispanic church. He is already in conversations with a Hispanic leader that has a small core group. They are discussing the possibility of starting a Hispanic church in the same facilities. A Haitian congregation that was started by a Hispanic church is meeting in a facility of a former Anglo church and is going to start a new Hispanic church. God must be praised for missionary minded people who take advantage of every opportunity to further His kingdom.

**Church Planting Partnerships**

There is a sense in which all of the approaches mentioned above are partnerships of one form or another. In many communities throughout North America, there could be great benefit in establishing partnerships between churches to start Hispanic churches. Some of these could be done in the following manner: (1) Two or more churches of other cultures can partner to sponsor a new Hispanic congregation. This can be especially helpful in situations where the existing churches are not large and could benefit from sharing financial resources and personnel in church planting efforts. (2) A church of another culture and a Hispanic church can partner to start a Hispanic congregation. This enables the congregations to combine financial and personnel resources. They will also benefit from the cultural expertise of the Hispanic church in designing and implementing appropriate evangelistic and church planting strategies. (3) A church of another culture and a Hispanic church can partner to start a church among yet another people group that lives in the community where a Hispanic church is located.

While the primary focus of this chapter is that of starting Hispanic churches, the truth of the matter is that there are many possibilities for partnerships in which the expertise, energy, resources, and personnel can be shared to start churches among whatever cultural groups might be in the community. Partnerships will be covered in greater detail in chapter six.
Effective Church Planting Approaches

The church planting approach that is employed is of crucial importance for impacting communities with the gospel message. Over the years, various specific approaches have been utilized by church planters and church planting teams. Among the most common are: (1) program-based church planting, (2) purpose-based church planting, (3) seeker-based church planting, (4) ministry-based church planting, (5) relation-based church planting, and (6) affinity-based church planting. Very dedicated and well-intentioned people may see meager results if they employ an approach that does not fit the context of the local cultural group or fit the culture of the target audience.

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Hispanic population is growing exponentially. The question that we cannot escape is the following: *If the Hispanic population is growing exponentially (by multiplication), are we going to be able to keep up if we continue to use incremental (by addition) strategies for evangelism and church planting?* In other words, if we use an incremental church planting method in which it takes a new church five to 10 years to start another congregation, we will never keep up with the explosive growth among Hispanics. On the other hand, if we use exponential church planting methods in which each new congregation is expected to start others, and the new ones are expected to reproduce in the same manner, we can be in a much better position to address the challenge of the exponential growth of the Hispanic population.

In the discussion above about Anglo churches starting Hispanic churches, we stated that several traditional models have been used effectively by Anglo churches to start Hispanic churches. These sponsorship approaches are still being instrumental in starting Hispanic churches, especially in new Hispanic settlement areas. In light of the explosive growth and rapid expansion of the Hispanic population, there is a great need to find ways to make traditional approaches even more productive and to discover and utilize approaches that have reproduction in their genetic code. Some of the expressions we will now discuss are examples of exponential church planting.
Cell-Based Churches

When state conventions, associations, and sponsoring churches seek to discover the approaches that are being used most effectively among Hispanics, they need to be aware of the fact that the largest Hispanic churches in Latin America and in the United States are cell-based churches. Several factors contribute to this.

When it comes to the first visit, Hispanics are generally much more comfortable with the idea of going to the home of a relative or close friend than to an evangelical church. In this sense, the home becomes a bridge for the church. The strong emphasis in the Hispanic culture on social relationships centering on the family and close friends lends itself to the establishment of cell groups. Hispanics who have not grown up in evangelical homes are less accustomed to the idea of speaking in large groups of people. The home, therefore, provides a safe environment for them to ask questions and express opinions. This often leads to the development of leadership skills which are helpful in the growth and multiplication of home cell groups. The cell group necessitates that local lay people assume leadership positions. This contributes to the involvement of more lay leaders than in other congregational models.

The cell-based approach does not require that significant sums of money be spent. This makes it possible for congregations to experience exponential growth, even if they have limited financial resources. The limited financial base of the congregation allows them to acquire a small building with only a few classrooms for Sunday school and, in that sense, the size of the “shoe” determines the size of the “foot.” Utilizing a multiplicity of cells throughout the city for evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship enables churches to continue to grow, even if their meeting facilities are relatively small.
Example of a Cell-Based, Hispanic Church

When Rev. Carlos Navarro first arrived at Iglesia Bautista West Brownsville, he was faced with the challenge of limited church facilities and, more importantly, a limited vision on the part of the church members. The fact that they had acquired a building with a seating capacity of 200 seemed to have taxed the mindset and financial resources of this congregation. Having served on the staff of one of the largest Baptist churches in Latin America, Rev. Navarro had a vision for what could be done in this church in Texas. It took time for him to convince the leadership of this church to begin to experiment with the use of home Bible studies, but they decided to give it a try.

This church now has over 1,500 members, and it is continuing to grow at a very healthy pace. The strategic plan of this church calls for the church members to be involved in a wide variety of ministries. This includes evangelism in the detention centers (operated by the U.S. Immigration Department), in schools, in nursing homes, in the international bridges, in areas where people congregate looking for work, in the city dumps, in assembly plants, in prisons, in the juvenile detention center, in bus stations, in hospitals, and from house-to-house. These ministries help church members get to know people. These new friends are encouraged to participate in the home Bible study cells. They are then invited to church where they can make their public profession of faith and receive training on how to start home Bible study cells. To date, 11 of these cells have become established churches.

A brief analysis of this church in Brownsville reveals that it has a clear, basic strategy. There are the leaders for the cell groups and the hosts. The leaders are carefully and prayerfully selected, trained, guided, and encouraged. This church utilizes personal relationships and group ministries to develop friendships and involve unreached people in their cell groups. This is a very important point. The establishment of personal relationships is absolutely essential for evangelism and church planting among Hispanics.
Another church planting approach that has great potential in Hispanic communities is the “house church model.” While it is referred to as a “house church,” the truth of the matter is that generally the groups meet in a variety of venues including offices, restaurants, conference rooms, mobile homes, apartments, and numerous other places (in addition to houses). As Dr. Stan Norman points out, the term “house church” is found repeatedly in the New Testament. We agree with him that there were a variety of expressions in the New Testament church. He explains:

In the New Testament, the word “church” is used to refer to believers at any level, ranging from a very small group meeting in a private home to the group of all true believers in the universal church. A “house church” is called a “church” in Romans 16:5 (“also greet the church in their house”) and 1 Corinthians 16:19 (“Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house”). The church in an entire city is also called a “church” (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; and 1 Thess. 1:1). The church in a region is referred to as a “church” in Acts 9:31: “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up.” The church throughout the entire world can be referred to as “the church.” Paul says, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25) and says “God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers…” (1 Cor. 12:28). In this latter verse, the mention of “apostles” who were not given to any individual church is a clear reference to the church universal.

Norman correctly mentions the universal church as one of the expressions of the church. In his reference to the local churches, he points out some of the instances in which these met in houses.

House churches have many of the advantages that cell groups have in terms of the personal relationships, the availability of meeting places, and
the utilization of the laity. One of the principal differences between a typical cell group and a house church is that in the cell group structure, people meet in homes for evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship but come together in a central location for worship (celebration including the ordinances) and administration (to make decisions as a group). In the house church structure, however, all of the activities (including the ordinances) take place in the homes or other places where the small groups meet. In some cases (e.g., China), this is done because of government restrictions. In other places, this is done because of financial limitations or simply because it can contribute to unencumbered growth due to the availability of numerous meeting places.

**Example of a House Church Approach**

The San Antonio Baptist Association is in the process of starting church planting networks among a number of people groups, including Hispanics. Under the visionary leadership of Dr. Charles Price, the association has adopted a people group strategy for impacting this city with the gospel. A vital member of the staff, Dr. Roland Lopez, has put together a Hispanic team that has been instrumental in starting over 70 new congregations that meet in homes, apartments, mobile homes, clubhouses, stores, and offices. A very encouraging feature of this strategy is that the various networks of house churches are officially and meaningfully connected to established churches (which they call “Anchor Churches”) and to the association.

This strategy addresses some of the concerns some mission strategists might have regarding connectivity and accountability. Under this strategy, the house churches do not exist or function in isolation. They are a part of a network of house churches that relate formally to sponsoring churches and/or an association. In a number of instances, these house churches sign a covenant in which they commit themselves to work cooperatively with an “Anchor Church,” to contribute to mission causes (through their association and state convention), to participate in the regular training events and other activities sponsored by the association, and to adhere to the SBC doctrinal
distinctive. This type of covenant fosters understanding, cooperation, and fellowship. It also encourages all of the churches (traditional or innovative) to be involved in the task of reaching their area for Christ and participating in activities that relate to worldwide missions.128

Jesse Martinez is another team member in the San Antonio Baptist Association who has caught the vision of church multiplication through the utilization of whatever resources are available locally. In a recent church planting conference, he shared the following testimony:

A house church can meet anywhere to carry out its functions.

Three years ago, the work started under a tree. This was a necessary meeting place for Bible studies. We met under this tree for almost a year being that the group was small and we did not have the resources for a better meeting place.

As the days went by, we realized that these open air meetings were attracting more people, so we started to grow, and at the same time, all of us who met were not only getting to know each other more but were better able to know each other’s needs. Then the moment came when we realized that the people who were attending these meetings were ready for anything, so we bought a mobile home where we are currently meeting.

My dream is to plant the kingdom of God everywhere. Through this experience, I learned that it is better to work with a small group because they can know each other by name, their relationship with their pastor is more personal, and their relationship with God is more intimate. Discipleship is more effective because they practice what they have learned. For me, the church is not a building. The church is the people who experience the presence of God wherever they meet. One does not need to have a university degree to be a church planter.129

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Several things that Jesse Martinez mentions in his testimony fit the church planting strategy that contributes to exponential growth:

- A house church can meet anywhere to carry out its functions. Meeting under a tree for a time was actually an advantage in that it attracted more people.
- Lay people can be involved in church planting. While it is good to provide the best training possible for church leaders, formal training is not an absolute essential for church planting. The leaders of the church planting team of this association are getting ongoing training. Some have received formal training in an educational institution, and some plan to get additional training.
- The small group setting lends itself for evangelism and discipleship, especially among those Hispanics who would be reluctant to attend a “Protestant church.” After they experience salvation in Christ and get to know evangelical Christians in their small group meetings, they are more open to attending a meeting in a church building.

**Conclusion**

We have focused on reasons for starting Hispanic churches, discussed an indigenous philosophy for Hispanic church planting, explored approaches to Hispanic church planting, and presented some effective models being used to start Hispanic congregations. Our purpose has been to inform and motivate you toward Hispanic church planting, so you can be instrumental in a Hispanic church planting movement in your area for the honor and glory of God. The Hispanic population is growing exponentially and is expanding throughout the country so that it has become a mission field that is ripe and ready for the harvest. May the Lord help us to faithfully communicate the gospel message to Hispanics and enable them to start vibrant, reproducing churches.
Chapter Highlights

• The need for Hispanic churches increases exponentially with the population growth.
• Hispanic churches that are planted need to become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.
• There are many effective approaches to starting Hispanic churches.
• Partnership is a key component in starting Hispanic churches.
• Various models for church planting prove successful among Hispanics.

Written by Frank Moreno. Frank is the Director of the Language Division at the Florida Baptist Convention.

Dr. Frank Moreno
Language Division Director, Florida Baptist Convention

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His job functions include: staff supervision, guiding in the development and implementation of strategies and contextualized resources for all language groups, overseeing the budgeting and calendaring process. He gives overall leadership to the work among non-English speaking congregations by assisting churches and associations to fulfill the Great Commission through evangelism, starting new churches, and developing leaders in order to reach the 5 million plus non-English speaking people living in Florida.

Prior to serving at Florida Baptist Convention, Frank worked for a number of years on the staff of Union Baptist Association in Houston as Coordinator of the Programming Section and church consultant. He has also been a church planter and a pastor of several churches in Texas. For over 31 years he has served in a variety of ministry roles in the denomination. Frank has been the recipient of several city and county recognitions in Texas and Florida as a person who has made a difference to improve the quality of life of its citizens.
CHAPTER SIX

Establishing Effective Partnerships Among Hispanics

Someone once said that ministry would be very easy were it not for people. Yet ministry is done in partnership with people. Ministry is all about relationships. This chapter will highlight establishing partnerships as a foundational tool in church planting. Our starting point is the Bible. What are some biblical principles that guide our partnerships? We will then discuss three natural networks evolving from effective partnerships. One is the relational networks that will come about in an informal basis. Another is the developmental networks that will provide support systems, initial strategic preparation, and the contextual equipping of the partners. There is also the connectional network with denominational, community, and civic leaders. These networks represent people moving through different organizational systems. As you read, keep in mind that partnerships are partnerships—regardless of the ethnic group with whom you are working. This chapter highlights some examples of how partnerships are “lived out” in the Hispanic context. You will also see emphasized throughout the chapter that many people at different levels make up an effective partnership.

Biblical Background

In the Bible, one finds many examples of partnerships. Perhaps the most vivid is God’s desire to establish a relationship with sinful man through the person of Jesus Christ. This thread is seen throughout the entire Bible and becomes foundational to any partnership. Other examples are found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Romans 12:4-8 where Paul offers some insight into partnerships. Paul highlights the idea of one body. However, this body is made up of many individual parts—all of equal importance. These passages highlight diversity as part of the unity.
F.F. Bruce draws attention to three outcomes resulting from a partnership: (1) the evangelization of Antioch (Acts 11:19-26); (2) the famine-relief delegation to Judea (Acts 11:27-30; 12:25); and (3) the first missionary tour of Barnabas and Saul based on Antioch (Acts 13:1-14:28). The revolutionary action of these missionaries went against the prevalent Jewish ideas of the church. Jewish leaders’ understanding was that the gospel was only for the Jewish people. One has to remember that the witness of the Jerusalem church was confined to people culturally similar to them. The Antioch church was the catalyst that took the gospel to the “ends of the world.” This daring act of sharing the gospel with heathen Greeks set the stage for a new emerging church. It was “emerging” in that it was reaching out to a cultural group that was rejected by the common religious view of that day. It was emerging also because they were crossing cultural and linguistic barriers.

The Antioch church was a strong partnering church—evidenced by the extensive ways they were able to partner in a very diverse world.

The church in Antioch of Syria was the sending church for Paul’s three missionary journeys. The gospel spread to other centers such as Corinth, Ephesus, and later to Caesarea and Rome. The significance of this church partnership was that it crossed language and cultural barriers from a predominant Jewish to a Gentile ministry. Bruce further brings to light that Paul’s letter to the Galatians is addressing the churches that were planted (partnerships) during his missionary journeys to Pisidian, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

The church at Philippi is the product of the partnership that existed between the church at Antioch and Paul’s church planting team. Paul founded this church during his second missionary journey. The Antioch church was a strong partnering church—evidenced by the extensive ways they were able to partner in a very diverse world. The churches in the region were very diverse in their composition. They had different ethnic groups—Hebrews, Greeks, and other Gentiles. They had different economic groups—
slaves, servants, and masters. They were also different in their educational background and type of citizen. The concern for unity was probably one of the things Paul is referring to when he speaks of “daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). He knew that each church was not an isolated island, but that they worked cooperatively in partnerships with other churches in the four provinces and between the provincial churches and Jerusalem. Unity is important for strong partnerships and is foundational to the relational networking described below. Unity is described by Paul in Romans 12:5 as he describes the function of the body of Christ.

Philippians emphasizes a sense of “koinonia.” This word is translated as fellowship, association, community, communion, and contribution. In this short epistle, the apostle Paul tells us about a partnership of the gospel (1:5), a partnership in grace (1:7), and a partnership of giving (4:14f). If there are reasons for people to partner together, it is because of the gospel. Our partnership in grace with the Lord Jesus Christ is the primary reason we must be partnering with others to share the gospel.

**Biblical Principles**

The following are some biblical teachings about partnerships:

**God’s plan for partnership is to work through people (relational).**

Scripture shows how God used people to accomplish His will—Noah (Gen. 6:14); Nehemiah (Neh. 4:19-20); the Samaritan woman (John 4:39); Cornelius (Acts 10:24); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3); Peter (Acts 2:14); and Philip (Acts 8:34-35). Many of these were of different cultural and educational backgrounds, but each was used in a great way by God. This relationship has a vertical dimension, as well, in that people were empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the work. This was the case in the Antioch church when the prophets and teachers were praying and
fasting, and they were instructed to “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul.” The Bible teaches that every Christian is to minister and serve (1 Pt. 2:5-9).

**God’s plan for partnership is that the church grows to maturity** (developmental).

Since it has been established biblically that God works through people, it makes sense that those people are not abandoned. Ephesians 4:11-12 again paints the picture of the church as one body. The equipping is done to repair the disjointedness in our lives as a result of sin and to make us better able to function in partnership in the body of Christ. Partnerships that focus on development would find their expression in the establishment of support systems offering credible training opportunities, pointing to contextual resources, and connecting partners with partners.

**God’s plan for partnership is that people are committed to the Lordship of Christ (relational and developmental).**

Christ had a partnership with His disciples. He taught them practically about the “how” of ministry. He gave them opportunities for ministry. He also gathered the disciples for a time of accountability as reflected in Mark 6:30 (HCSB): “The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all that they had done and taught.” The people of God need to be instructed about who God is and how they can serve Him. This is a missing element of the present day church that leads many people to spiritual paralysis.
God’s plan for partnership is that we celebrate diversity through partnerships (relational and connectional).

We cannot deny nor be blind to the growing diversity of people and language in our immediate world. Working as partners will require a better understanding of cultural backgrounds and languages. We need to celebrate our diversity together as partners. Jesus came to the well to get water (John 4:7) and had a divine encounter with a Samaritan woman. This was a unique meeting in that He was a man and she was a woman; He was a Jew and she was a Samaritan; and she had, as we all do, some excess baggage. Jesus told her, “For you’ve had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband” (John 4:18, HCSB). The celebration part of this encounter happened when many people from the town believed because of the testimony of that woman.

God’s plan for partnership grows out of a common purpose (connectional).

Partnerships are best developed when they are built around one common purpose. Philippians identifies this purpose as the gospel (1:5), grace (1:7), and suffering (3:10). Nehemiah identifies the purpose as the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem gathered for the purpose of clarifying a theological/cultural issue. It is important to note that the one unifying purpose in all church planting partnerships is the extension of the gospel.

God’s plan for partnership is for responsible stewardship (developmental).

Partnerships enable partners to have a pool for more resources. It also allows for better stewardship of time since partners divide the work they are to do together. You are probably aware of the many churches that sponsor in “name” only but fail to take full responsibility as a caring parent for a new child. Possibly the weakest link in church planting sponsorship is the lack
of a partnership agreement. In the absence of a partnership agreement, the growth and inherent development that will naturally occur will be thwarted.

**Preparing the Field and Partners**

Because of the nature of church planting, there ought to be not only spiritual preparation, but also field preparation. This is usually done by those whom God has given a passion to reach a particular area and people group. “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow” (1 Cor. 3:6). The apostle Paul called on each of us to remain focused on the task as we relate as partners with Christ and those around us.

The partner’s first task is getting to know each other. This is a time of discoveries. Discover strengths, weaknesses, and hopes for the new work. One way to accomplish this is by praying together. Spiritual warfare is a reality in church planting. Prayer will bring partners together while the fiery darts of the enemy seek to destroy that unity. Praying for every house in the selected area of ministry will allow a broader number of people to get involved at the ground level of this new church plant. Developing an intercessory prayer team that will support you in prayer is probably the most important thing you can do. It is imperative that if you ask someone to be part of the prayer team that you (a) share prayer requests on a regular basis and (b) share answered prayers regularly. Another way to build unity among partners is by sharing their life’s journey. What has God done in each partner’s life and ministry? Celebrate together the victories and observe God’s faithfulness.

Field preparation is important. Partners can play a leading role in preparing the field for the new Hispanic planter. One should not go into an area to start a church without knowing the culture and people that live there. The following are a couple of ways a partner can help in preparing the mission field:
Obtain demographic information.

There are many tools that will help you discover this information. Demographic information can be obtained from the U.S. census, chamber of commerce, school systems, city and county planning office, friends, denominational resources, and other organizations. Some organizations will charge for the information, and others will provide it at no charge.136

Encounter the ministry context.

To verify the demographic information, it is necessary for the partners to encounter and experience the area. Get out among the people, start conversations, and learn the pulse of the community. Get to know people. Use all of the information gathered to determine your vision and strategy together.

The Importance of a Partnership Agreement

Partnerships are often the weakest part in the process of planting a new congregation. Partnership agreements are important because they have as their goal to protect, to guard, to guide, and to define for the partners a common purpose in the efforts to start a new congregation. (To see one explanation of the role of each partner, see the special section at the end of this chapter).

Partnership agreements need to be regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect God’s direction for the partnership. The following story illustrates why partnership agreements are important.

Al was an eager and energetic young man who came to start a new church in New Mexico. Frank, the pastor from the sponsor church, was an experienced pastor excited about leading his church to birth a new congregation in that growing urban area. Both Al and Frank attended Basic Training for church planters. During the training, the pastor thought he had everything figured out. The planter’s responsibility would be to do his job as church planter, and Frank’s job would be to “call the shots.”
A few months later, it became apparent that this was not a passing thought, but a reality on the part of Frank. Suddenly, the excitement that was once present now seemed to quickly dissipate for Al. He could not take it any longer. He had to account for every piece of paper he used for ministry. Frank was not letting Al implement his vision. A church planter’s dream was being unraveled. At the center of the controversy was a control issue on the part of the lead pastor. Al and his family resigned after two years and moved out of the state.

This story is repeated often. Utilizing partnership agreements helps prevent many potential problems.

**Components of the Partnership Agreement**

The advantage of a partnership is that it makes participation easier for the small church. Partnerships allow smaller churches to play an essential role in the church planting process. One objection to church planting is “we are not big enough.” In a partnership, small, medium, and large churches can work together to occupy enemy territories with the purpose of starting a new church.

The best partnerships are formed with various people representing varying abilities to contribute to the partnership. These are some that might be invited: church planter, lead church pastor, the pastor of other partner churches, associational director of mission, and a state convention representative. (See *Partners in Church Planting* resource for assistance in establishing this type of partnership. This resource can be found at [www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/picp](http://www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/picp).) Typically, the basis for disagreements is due to different expectations from these various representatives. Therefore, the first component for discussion should be **expectations**.
**Worship style.** Remember that this is determined by the cultural context and the people you are trying to reach. Do not let the partnership’s preference be an obstacle. The music is not for you or about you. It is a means to glorify God and to reach the lost for Christ.

**Growth.** What are the expectations in terms of growth? What will be measured as growth needs to be clearly defined. There are many factors that will determine the growth of a church. Factors such as leadership style, cultural context, and growth potential for the target group in that area will influence growth.

**Giving.** How will the new church participate in giving to the denomination’s mission efforts? What are the expectations in terms of achieving self-support?

**Participation.** Are the pastor and partners expected to participate in certain events? What are these events?

**Training.** Is the partnership going to provide certain training to equip not only the planter but also members of the partnership?

**Mentors.** It is a good idea for every church planter to have two mentors. One is the technical mentor who is assigned to the planter. This is a practitioner who is on the church planting journey and can help the planter with the technical issues of church planting. Some of the technical issues are the development of the launch team, cultural issues, and connecting the planter to key people. The second mentor is chosen by the planter himself. This is a friend who can be an encouragement to the planter and his family.
The second component is **discovering resources**. What resources are now available from partners or other people they may know? What additional resources are needed? The need and appropriation of all kinds of resources must be a continual topic of discussion in the partnership. Expectations should be adequately addressed.

The third component is the **funding strategy**. Perhaps the most explosive area of expectation is finances. Care should be given in the communication and development of all funding. Understanding that everything we have comes from God, we must realize that God uses partners in meeting the needs of the planter and his family.

The fourth component is **accountability**. Here, one can make up a simple form (four columns) showing the task, person(s) responsible, cost, and completion date. These will not only keep all parties informed as to what needs to happen next, it will also keep all parties accountable for what they said they would do in the partnership. Remember that the purpose of accountability is not to make any individual a slave to the agreement, but to produce greater results for God’s kingdom. Effective partnerships result in developing healthy people. This, in turn, produces healthy, reproducible churches.

**Networking for Partnerships**

The creation of the world was born in the heart of God because He wanted a relationship with humankind. The idea of a relational image is also seen in that “male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Jesus’ death on the cross was God’s confirmation to each of us of the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. We were created to have a personal relationship with God. But we also must relate to other people, as well.\textsuperscript{137}

People are our most important resources. One cannot start a church without the support of others. Developing relational networks then becomes very important. Key people should be part of a relational network. The
associational director of missions can be a very helpful person to the church planter. He is one who knows many people in the church and the community and is familiar with resources available to the planter. He could lead out with the church planter in the spiritual and field preparation. Another helpful person is the church planter strategist. This person’s knowledge of church planting can be an invaluable “tool kit” for the planter. Even in the case of helping a planter from a different culture, the strategist should know people of that culture that he can bring alongside the planter. The strategist can also help out by introducing church planting principles (which never change) to the planter. The pastor of the lead church can be helpful in the recruitment of other partner churches.

People are our most important resources.

Partnership in Practice

Fruit Avenue Baptist Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was faithfully meeting with a few faithful and loyal seniors. You could not avoid noticing the passion these people had to reach the lost. They loved their church, but they were lacking the youthful energy they once had to be involved in more direct ministry. The Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Albuquerque began long and detailed conversations with Fruit Avenue Church about the possibilities of merging. After many months of discussion, they completed the merger. The pastor of the Hispanic church, a bilingual person, became the pastor of the new church. They had an English-speaking service attended by both Anglos as well as second generation Hispanics at 9:30 a.m. while the Hispanics were in Sunday school. At 11:00, they would have the Spanish service. This church was able to effectively reach out not only to the Anglo community, but to first and second generation Hispanics very effectively.

Organizations such as the chamber of commerce, hospitals, police department, and school system can help expand the relational network of the planter. An ethnic specialist or people group consultant at the association and/or state convention can provide helpful information to the planter. He also can help the non-Hispanic partners understand the Hispanic culture and contextual church planting methodology. The idea of relational networks is to work out the partnership plan through relationships.
Relational Networks

One example of a relational network is seen in the following story that began with a casual meeting.

Matt and Cody came to the meeting to discover possibilities for a new Hispanic church. Vince, Luis, and Mauricio were there as church planting practitioners to share how to start a Hispanic church in partnership with the church. The associational director of missions and a church planting professor were there observing. Both Matt and Cody were courteous but seemed to be missing the spark that was necessary to ignite a new church plant. A few days after the meeting, it was discovered that there were serious miscommunications in the meeting. Cody and Matt were just exploring possibilities. In short, they received all kinds of ideas to start the new work, but they were not at that point yet.

Can anything good come out of miscommunication? God used this miscommunication to guide Northland Baptist to discover where He was at work. Since that meeting, Cody explored congregational interest for ESL (English as a Second Language) classes. There was a favorable response to this. The church arranged for a person to train those who were interested in teaching ESL. Though the class was not promoted, God brought some internationals to the church. Some might consider this a coincidence. Others would see this as God responding to an obedient church looking for places where He was at work.

Cody’s relational networks expanded after that initial meeting. He discovered two potential planters, an ESL trainer, about 20 possible ESL teachers, new international friends coming to the church, and resources available from the state convention. As Cody continues to work with his relational networks, his goal of starting ESL classes as a possible first step toward a new Hispanic church is gradually becoming a reality.

Developmental Networks

Developmental networks take many forms. In this example, the director of missions (DOM) is our model. A seminary graduate moved to Dunkirk,
New York, as a pastor/church planter. The idea of going to a cold place and being the only Hispanic pastor in the association was quite intimidating. He felt as if all of the social and relational networks that had supported him during his seminary years were now many miles removed. The director of missions came alongside him to guide him in the new church planting journey. It transformed this young pastor’s ministry. The DOM took this young pastor, and for the three years he served there, the DOM taught him about church planting and ministry. They never met in a classroom setting. They did not have a program of study. The DOM truly practiced a “Pauline” style of teaching: “I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me” (1 Cor. 4:16). As they traveled many miles visiting the churches in the association, he would share many church planting principles, ways to deal with problems in the church, outlines of sermons, and he would address those tough, penetrating, and challenging questions. There are two primary ways this director of missions was helpful.

The DOM created a new support system. As a new pastor, he did not fully understand the work of the association. The DOM was a catalyst in helping both the pastor and his wife connect with other pastors and key leaders from the state convention and their spouses. He also recognized that other Hispanic leaders from across the nation had to be a part of this support system. Possibly the greatest help in creating a new support system was his recognition that associational training alone would not be an effective way to train Hispanics because of cultural and linguistic differences. He provided opportunities not only for the pastor and the members of the new church to get training in their own language, but he also gave them the opportunity to sensitize associational leadership about Hispanic culture and ministry opportunities. This support system is integral to any ministry. Church planting cannot be done in isolation. It is so important for church planters to have a good relational network.

The DOM provided relevant training. Every church planter needs a mentor. As a result of the initial partnership, the planter received invaluable
training that strengthened him both personally and professionally. His mentor took it upon himself to make sure the initial plans of the partnership included a time of equipping for the planter. Discovering his personal spiritual weaknesses and how he could grow spiritually helped shaped his ministry. This was also a time when he learned to carefully study the community where a new church was to be planted. The mentor urged him to utilize demographical information in gaining a better understanding of the people in that community. He also put him in contact with key leaders from churches in the association and community agencies. A few local places that were useful in gathering information and obtaining contacts for a new church were the chamber of commerce, hospitals, schools, and the local police department.

Another area where the mentor and the growing relational network have proven to be extremely helpful was in the area of resources in the language of the people. The new church leadership and members were able to receive training that was contextualized to the language and culture of the people. An equipped planter and membership can better contribute to the strengthening of the local association. The church leadership, planter, and members are perfectly positioned to help discover key places for ministry to Hispanics, to train the local association leadership and churches in the language and

**Partnership in Practice**

First Baptist Church of Laurel, Maryland, is a growing congregation. The area of Laurel is in the midst of the “I-95” corridor and a community that has experienced growth in the ethnic population. In the late ‘80s, they took the initiative to start a Hispanic ministry to reach the growing Hispanic population. Later, the church made the decision to call a Hispanic pastor on staff. The Spanish congregation ministers to over 20 different cultures. They have started more than four new works, and many of these are now starting other new churches. This is possible in part because of the very close partnership between the First Baptist Church and a local Spanish congregation, Primera Iglesia Bautista de Laurel Maryland. In this partnership between the two autonomous congregations, they shared resources (financial and personnel) and strategically planned together to impact the lostness of the area. One of the members of the Hispanic congregation leads a worship service to reach out to the younger generation with the help of the English-speaking congregation.
culture of the Hispanics of that area, and to provide training in how to best reach and start new ministries. In short, the local association should be involved and trained to think like a missionary. They will be intentionally involved in reaching the Hispanic world in their neighborhood. Their excitement about seeing people come to know the Lord will be readily seen by others.

An equipped planter and membership can better contribute to the strengthening of the local association.

This was one of many joint gatherings during the year. One of the greatest joys for the participants was to fellowship with people from many different Spanish-speaking countries, to taste the different foods, and to hear regional accents. It was not unusual to have 17 different nationalities represented during the meetings.

Representatives from LifeWay, the Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU), state conventions, and local associations were partners providing resources and personnel for relevant contextual training. In time, many of the members of the local churches were used by these agencies to provide similar training in other associational and state convention events. There are a few things from this example that may encourage others to see the potential outcome of connecting people in a partnership.

Connectional Networks are helpful in providing direction.

The story illustrates the potential outcome of a good partnership. The training described in this story came out of the initial partnership of one church. One of the elements was to equip the local church leadership and members.
Connectional Networks depend on personal relationships.

During the growth of the church, relationships were developed. These relationships spread out like the ripple effect caused by a stone hitting the water. First, the relationships developed within the local church. Then, the ripple effect spread out quickly to the local association, community leaders, and state Baptist convention’s and agency leaders.

Connectional Networks are helpful in providing training.

This network was instrumental in helping to shape mentoring relationships, providing necessary funding and relevant training in the language and culture of the people.

Connectional Networks are helpful in preparing future leadership.

As one looks back, he can see the positive impact upon the development of leadership. Some that were part of that initial partnership agreement are now in leadership positions serving in associations and state convention in Maryland, Washington, and other areas of the country. These are indigenous leaders that today are leading out in starting new churches, training leaders, and reaching out to the lost with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Connectional Networks extend themselves.

These churches continue to be active beyond the wall of the local church, actively participating and impacting the lives of the local association, state convention, and national agencies. Many of these are creating a new path for those who will follow in the future. These leaders are planning and shaping today what Hispanic Southern Baptists will look like in the future. These are influential leaders, and they are spread out throughout the nation.
Conclusion

The North American church planting context presents cultural, missiological, and linguistic obstacles to someone not indigenous to the culture. This could potentially disrupt the development of a healthy planter and subsequently prevent a healthy, reproducible church. A sound partnership agreement can help position the Hispanic planter in the path to successfully planting a healthy, reproducible congregation.

The strategist, sponsoring pastor, or associational director of missions can be very instrumental in creating an effective partnership. A sound partnership agreement will clarify expectations, resources, funding, and accountability from all partners. This partnership can demonstrate itself through three distinct, but related networks. The relational network influences people and strategic directions. Effective ministry results from excellent relationships. It is not possible to do ministry without relating to people. The developmental network provides a support system for the planter. It helps Hispanics to tap valuable resources, preferably in their native language, but it also allows the English-speaking community to understand the Hispanic culture and how best to communicate the gospel to them. The connectional network provides strategic direction and training for present and future leadership.

Partnership in ministry is all about healthy relationships. It takes time and effort to develop relationships. Some come easy, and others are much more difficult. Establishing effective partnerships, like anything involving people, will require that you make a commitment of time. Think about your personal journey in ministry. Who spent time with you? Where would you be today were it not for the commitment of time from these individuals in partnership? Be involved at some level of church planting. Make a commitment of time to a church planter. In time, you will reap the joy as he reaches out to many others because you had a part in his life.
Chapter Highlights

• There is substantial biblical background for establishing partnerships in reaching Hispanics.
• Biblical principles of partnerships should not be ignored.
• It is important that partners develop and utilize a partnership agreement.
• Partnerships can be established which produce relational, developmental, and connectional networks.
• Different kinds of networks take on differing characteristics, depending on the participants and their needs.

What is the Role of Each Partner?
In team sports like baseball or football, every member of that team has a role. Effective teams practice their roles more consistently than other teams. The beauty of establishing effective partnerships is that everyone can participate at some level. Let me briefly share the roles of some key partners. These roles could be used in the establishment of the partnership agreement.

Lead pastor and partner churches:
• Create an awareness for church planting within the lead congregation.
• Get people involved in some aspect of church planting such as prayer walking, community Bible studies, or as a part of the core group.
• Assist with the financial package of the new church planter.
• Be part of the partnership agreement, and be the point person for the partnership. In other words, be the “quarter-back” of the partnership.
• Work the partnership plan throughout each of the three networks.
• Select a church planter.
• Work with church planting strategists to provide a technical mentor.

Hispanic church planter:
• Create an awareness for church planting among partner churches and associations by sharing the vision for the new church and how each can be involved.
• Preach, teach, and practice sound biblical doctrine.
• Share with both partners and associational leaders about the Hispanic culture and social/religious needs.
• Work closely with the lead pastor in working out the plan developed in the partnership agreement.

**Associational Director of Missions:**
• Work with lead pastor and church planting strategist to provide a technical mentor for the Hispanic planter.
• Help out with initial field preparation such as demographic and psychographic materials.
• Provide resources for the Hispanic church planter.
• Help the Hispanic church planter navigate throughout each of the three networks.
• Be a friend to the planter.

**Church Planter Strategists:**
• Work with lead pastor and associational director of missions to provide a technical mentor for the Hispanic planter.
• Lead out in the initial field and spiritual preparation.
• Help bring other Hispanic leaders and resources to the Hispanic church planter.

**Language Missionary:**
• Work with the Hispanic church planter in helping create an awareness of the Hispanic culture.
• Work with the Hispanic church planter in helping to create awareness for a new Hispanic congregation.
• Help the Hispanic church planter understand early on about the need for church multiplication.

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Southern Baptists have recognized in recent decades the effectiveness of new churches for the purpose of penetrating the population with the gospel. Experience has shown that if the world is to come to knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, new churches and church planting movements will have to be an essential part of the strategy. Among Southern Baptists, church planting has been prioritized at every level of denominational work. In so doing, the denomination has done nothing more than to go back to the New Testament model exemplified in the life of the apostle Paul. It was mainly due to his life and missionary strategy that Christianity experienced a period of great expansion. The genius of his ministry was in its simplicity. Paul would:

- Go to where the people were.
- Share the gospel message.
- Gather the converts into congregations.
- Commend them to a trusted leader.
- Go somewhere else ... and start over.

It is not in vain that his work is so well documented in the Bible. In that respect, A. R. Hay writes, “Paul’s ministry and that of his companions is recorded in detail because he and they provide a typical example for the exceedingly important ministry of church planting.” Providentially, mission-minded churches have understood this concept and have reacted wisely, making church planting the focus of their efforts.

Not coincidentally, this renewed church planting emphasis among Southern Baptists came at a time when the United States experienced the greatest influx of immigrants in its history. In consequence, this country
became the most diversified nation in the world. Again, God’s providence was active in helping mission agencies mature in their concept of evangelism, missions, and church planting.

Years of “hands-on” experience have revealed that traditional church planting within a culture differs from cross-cultural church planting. There are basic principles of church planting that will be effective in any part of the world with any target group. On the other hand, unproductive efforts have taught Christianity that culture is a significant factor in how different people groups respond to the gospel.

The clearest example of a contextualized strategy is found in the action of God through the incarnation of His Son, Jesus, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...” (John 1:14). Jesus, understanding the limitations imposed by human cultures and the impossibility of communicating the gospel from the perspective of a heavenly culture, was willing to bridge the gap “…taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7). The apostle Paul eloquently expressed the need for cultural adaptation in the work of his ministry when he said: “… I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul understood that it was always the responsibility of the messenger to cross cultural bridges, and he was willing to pay that price to make the gospel message relevant and meaningful to his audience. The effective servant of Jesus Christ must be willing to bridge the gap that exists between his own culture and the culture of his target group.

When addressing the subject “Finding and Training Church Planters,” it is important to understand that this is done with consideration to the cultural characteristics of our target group.

**Characteristics of the Church Planter in the Hispanic Context**

There are basic characteristics of church planters that are universal in nature and applicable across cultures. Such is the case with those
qualifications that are mandated biblically. The apostle Paul, after years of experience as a church planter, summarizes some in 1 Timothy 3:2-7. These biblical elements are non-negotiable. In addition to the ones mentioned, contemporary missiologists generally agree on specific qualities that apply to all church planters. Most recent publications on church planting have adopted the list of characteristics developed by Charles Ridley. These are:

1. Visioning Capacity
2. Intrinsically Motivated
3. Creates Ownership of Ministry
4. Relates to the Unchurched
5. Spousal Cooperation
6. Effectively Builds Relationships
7. Committed to Church Growth
8. Responsive to the Community
9. Utilizes Giftedness of Others
10. Flexible and Adaptable
11. Builds Group Cohesiveness
12. Demonstrates Resilience
13. Exercises Faith

Church planters across all cultures share these traits. In the Hispanic culture, because of the ingrained value system, some of these characteristics become more significant than others. Beyond that, additional factors are specifically applicable to the Hispanic population. Some of these factors include:

1. Scarcity

The influx of Hispanics into the United States grows from year to year, but among them, evangelicals are a very small minority. As was pointed out in chapter three, only 19.6% of Hispanics consider themselves “Protestant/
Evangelical.” When compounded by the fact that the specific need is for a God-called, Southern Baptist, spiritually-gifted, family-supported, adequately-trained Hispanic church planter that can relate to a specific cultural and socioeconomic target group, it is clear that this is not an easy task. The situation, however, is far from hopeless. The promise still holds true that “God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). To avoid discouragement, the person seeking a Hispanic church planter should understand that it may not be easy and that the search will probably require diligence, patience, and certainly prayer (“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” Luke 10:2b.) Hispanic church planters need to be developed as much as they need to be found.

2. Multinational/cultural/generational make-up

There are 20 Hispanic countries in the world. Though sharing, more or less, a common language, these countries have their own cultures with distinct values, customs, dress, food, and so forth. At times, the differences in cultural values can be minimal, and at times they are very significant. To think that all Hispanics are alike because they share a common language would be as simplistic as saying that the people of the United States, Guyana, the Pitcairn Islands, Singapore, and Australia are all alike because the majority speaks English. In addition, cultural identity changes with time as immigrants’ values and viewpoints become integrated into those of the host culture. Therefore, it is necessary to consider not only the native culture of the planter and group, but also whether they are first, second, or third, generation immigrants. When in search of a Hispanic church planter for a specific group, it is of critical importance to keep in mind the specific cultures of that group and to understand how the nationality and culture of the church planter relates (or does not relate) to the group cultures.
3. Pioneer planting model

The book *Starting Reproducing Congregations* presents a listing of different church planting models. The models discussed are: “Parenting, Pioneering, Propagating, and People Group models.” When describing the *Pioneering* models, the book states: “The main feature of the Pioneering Models is that the church starter has to start from scratch.”  

Many would say that starting from “scratch” is not the best way to plant a church. No doubt, there are great advantages to the options of starting a church with a team of leaders, a core group, and/or a sponsoring church that provides support in finances, outreach activities, and so forth. Experience has shown, however, that in a large majority of the cases, Hispanic churches are started by a pioneer or lone church planter. This fact has serious implications in the selection process of the church planter. It takes a special type of leader to plant a church in the pioneering model.

Coordinating the work of a church planting team and communicating with a highly-involved, sponsoring church requires different skills than that of a planter who finds himself and his family as the lone instruments chosen by God to start a church. The “team” planter, who has an actively participating sponsoring church and a group of leaders who share the church planting load, needs to have skills in the areas of facilitating, coordinating, team building, culture bridging, and a participatory leadership style. For this type of church plant, it is also a higher priority that the church planter be bicultural and bilingual. While the “lone church planter” could also benefit from these skills, there are other traits that are more essential. “Lone church planters should look in particular for such gifts as that of leadership, faith, evangelism, and preaching.”  

A church planter working in this mode needs to have a clear and strong sense of call, must be a self-starter, and must have the resilience to plow hard soil in order to be successful at establishing a Hispanic church.
4. Responsiveness to leader

Different cultures respond to different leadership styles in different ways. Aubrey Malphurs presents the idea of different leadership styles in the following way: “... it’s helpful to view the different approaches to leadership in terms of a continuum. At one end of the leadership continuum is absolute leadership ... At the other end of the continuum from absolute leadership is co-leadership ... Leadership is by compromise ... In essence, it’s an overreaction to absolute leadership.” From the biblical perspective and from that of practical experience, it should be obvious that neither extreme is the ideal for a pastoral leadership style that promotes healthy, congregational growth. It is also obvious that, in a given situation, changing circumstances may dictate that the pastoral leader alter his style. However, under normal circumstances, and understanding that all generalizations are subject to frequent exceptions, it can be said that Hispanics tend to react more favorably to strong leadership than to co-leadership. The strong father figure in the home, the strict teacher at the school, and the often highly authoritarian governments of Hispanic countries have all conditioned the Hispanic mindset to accept and respond to leaders who show evidence of authority and strength.

The Scarborough Institute for Church Growth recently completed a survey of growing Hispanic churches in Texas. “The pastors of these growing churches shared their basic convictions that it is the pastor’s responsibility to produce strong leadership in order for the church to reach its full potential. They see aggressive, servant leadership as the divinely intended method for leading churches.” All other things being equal, a Hispanic group will respond more readily to a strong pastoral leader willing to take risks.
Finding the Hispanic Church Planter

For some, finding the right person for this very significant role can be understandably intimidating. “Where do we start?” is often the question posed to denominational workers. Here are some suggestions:

Prayer

No process in which God and man are to participate jointly should begin without serious dedication to prayer. In prayer, man recognizes the need of divine intervention and becomes sensitive to the will of a sovereign God who is able to meet our needs. Dr. Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board, presents this idea forcefully: “Prayer is not peripheral to missions strategy. It is not to undergird and support mission strategy. It is the heart of our strategy to reach the nations and fulfill the Great Commission.” If there is one decision in which God most certainly would want to participate, it is the selection of that person that will proclaim His Word and usher people into His kingdom. It is not just a coincidence that the church is commanded to pray for the laborers, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:38, NIV).

“Without prayer, as an individual or a church, we are left to our own devices, wisdom, and insight, and the result is usually a struggle to make things happen, to make our programs successful.” The church has a concrete command and clear biblical example in Acts 13 that the selection and sending out of a laborer is a process that needs to be immersed in persistent prayer. God already has in mind the laborer we need and, in prayer, we acquire insight as to His selection.

Calling out the Called

The concept of calling is deeply rooted in the Bible. It offers clear evidence of a calling to special service to Him. The Old Testament recounts special calls to Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos (among others).
In the New Testament, Paul refers to his personal assignment from God as being “called to be an apostle” (Romans 1:1). God has in the past and continues today to call believers to mission endeavors. How does He do this? A majority of today’s ministers would confirm that they experienced this call from God as a messenger extended a specific invitation to Christian service. Historically, a call to special service was a regular part of the challenge presented to believers during times of invitation. It is a practice that must be revived, or at least invigorated today to help identify those who the Lord is calling.

Any pastor, minister, or denominational worker seeking a person to plant a church should be vigilant that God’s call to special service is being verbalized at the local church level. The North American Mission Board has proposed an easily reproducible emphasis through which the practice of calling out the called can be revitalized in local communities. “God calls Christians to engage the lost world around them and to obey the missions mandate of Christ to make disciples of all nations … Calling out the Called (COTC) is an event that identifies and involves those whom God is calling to participate in starting new churches.”

Where Else To Look

In the process of seeking the church planter for a Hispanic group, we need to open our eyes to the resources the Lord has already placed around us. Having asked Him through prayer for His leadership, a diligent search should include the following:

1. Local church

At times, God has placed the answer to prayer in the seeker’s own “Jerusalem.” It is not rare to find a Hispanic or a Spanish speaker that, for one reason or another, is a member of a non-Hispanic church and whom God may be calling to a church planting ministry.
2. Fellow churches

Associational encounters, pastor’s fellowships, and convention meetings are all excellent opportunities for pastors and leaders to meet and share needs. In that context, the Lord can often provide the answer to prayer. While it is true that some pastors may be “protective” of their leaders, many are kingdom-minded, spiritual leaders who are willing to recommend an individual from their own congregations that can become the church planter.

3. Association

In many associations, the executive is accurately called the “director of missions.” It is the role of the association not only to relate to existing churches, but also to pioneer the evangelistic and church planting efforts in their area of ministry. Because of their interest in church planting—and because of their relationship to multiple churches—associational staff members are an excellent resource who may be able to put those seeking a church planter in contact with a person or a church that may be able to fill that need.

4. Convention office

Most state conventions have staff that relate to evangelism and church planting. While convention staff may not have the intimate knowledge of a particular area—such as would be the case of a person working in the association—they do have a broader scope of ministry and, therefore, a larger network. They are often approached by churches needing pastors or church planters and, on the other hand, often receive requests from pastors or church planters desiring a place of service. God can use these ministers to “connect the dots.”

5. North American Mission Board

Southern Baptists are blessed to have an agency that works nationally in prioritizing church planting among all people groups in the nation. Within the structure is the Church Planting Group which specifically focuses on
working with conventions and associations in the task of motivating and resourcing church planting efforts throughout the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. One of these resources, the Church Planting Village (www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net), is perhaps one of the best collections of church planting materials in the world.

6. Seminaries

Southern Baptists have seven seminaries in North America. They are:

**Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary**
(Alberta, Canada)
(403) 932-6622, twilliams@ccsb.org

**Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary**
(Mill Valley, California)
(303) 779-6431, akarr@cbgc.org

**Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary**
(Kansas City, Missouri)
(816) 414-3748, gsuarez@mbts.edu

**New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary**
(New Orleans, Louisiana)
(504) 282-4455, jallen@nobts.edu

**Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary**
(Wake Forest, North Carolina)
(919) 556-3101

**Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**
(Louisville, Kentucky)
(502) 897-4498, jpayne@spts.edu

**Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary**
(Fort Worth, Texas)
(817) 923-1921, dmorgan@swbts.edu
These institutions may be a source of potential church planters for a Hispanic target group. Often they have Hispanics or Spanish-speaking students in their graduating classes who are seeking a place of service. Their placement offices can be a useful resource of information and potential leads. The U.S. seminaries also have extension centers that span the country and may have ministerial students in the area of ministry targeted for a Hispanic church start. Two additional institutional resources should be considered. Many states have Southern Baptist Bible colleges which include ministerial training in their curriculum. Some of these may have the Hispanic candidate that is needed. Another resource that may be of interest is the Baptist University of the Americas—8019 S. Pan Am Expressway, San Antonio, TX 78224-1336. Phone: (800)721-1396 (mranjel@bua.edu). This institution, sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, is the only Southern Baptist theological school in the United States dedicated exclusively to Hispanic students.

7. Internet

Beyond the resources mentioned, the Internet may provide information useful in the search for a Hispanic church planter. Sites like www.sbc.net/ministersearch, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention, provide an instrument to link church planters with church planting needs. Using such impersonal resources requires special diligence in researching the references and background of those being considered; nevertheless, they may provide God’s answer to prayer requests.

Refining the Search

What further steps should be taken to focus on the best person for the task? Here are a couple of suggestions:
1. Background check

Some years back, to think of including a background check as part of the process in considering a candidate for a ministry position would have seemed ridiculous and, perhaps, offensive. We live in a different world today. There are three basic reasons for including a criminal, driving, and credit background check of all candidates to be considered:

- We live in a litigious society. Typing “church lawsuits” in a Google search brings up well over four million hits. Browsing through some, it is obvious that many churches have become financially disabled because of lawsuits that have been successfully filed against them for careless processing of personnel that have committed sexual or other crimes while employed by the church.
- Churches have a moral and ethical responsibility for the safety of their members and to the communities that surround them.
- The testimony and future outreach of a church is severely compromised when a minister commits a crime. Crimes of those in ministry usually become very public knowledge. We need to safeguard, by whatever means necessary, the image we project to a scrutinizing world.

When performing background checks, two things are important. First, advise the candidate that a criminal, credit, and driving record check will be part of the process, and acquire their permission. Second, when performing the criminal check, it is important to check with both state and federal resources since these records are not usually cross-referenced. More information can be found at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net and by typing “background check” in the search window.
2. Assessment

Not everyone who has been called to ministry is called to plant a church. Just as there are different types of ministries, there are different types of ministers. The skills, temperament, and spiritual gifting that each minister possesses ideally equip him for a specific type of ministry. In the process of seeking a church planter for a Hispanic group, it is highly recommended that the person being considered go through an assessment process. Formal ministry assessments are a fairly recent development in denominational work but have become quite generalized. Therefore, it is important that a Spanish language assessment be culturally and linguistically appropriate. Many state conventions and local associations are now employing assessment tools to help orient people to the type of ministry for which they are best suited.

“… many sincere and dedicated people have experienced the frustration and sense of failure that result from attempting to start a church while not having the requisite calling, gifts, skills, and temperament for the church starting task … Church starting leaders are considered so important in the church starting process that entire systems have been developed and assessment centers have been established to evaluate their spiritual, personal, social, and ministerial qualifications for the church starting task.”

As mentioned earlier, an assessment tool prepared by Charles Ridley “… provides some of the most focused work in this area.” But it is only one of several that are available. Further reading on ministry assessments can also be found at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net and by typing assessment in the search window.
Training the Hispanic Church Planting Leader

As stated earlier, finding a Hispanic church planter that can effectively relate to a specific target group is quite a challenge. Most often, the missing element is adequate training. Is discarding the untrained candidate the only option? If that were the case, Jesus should have dismissed all of His disciples, Barnabas should have dismissed Saul, Paul should have dismissed Timothy, and so on. Training a person for ministry in the kingdom is part of the biblical model. It was a vital part of New Testament ecclesiology. Jesus, following the calling of the apostles, trained them by precept and example. He verbally instructed His followers. Parallel to this, He purposefully exposed His disciples to “field projects” that would enhance their education. As in all things, Jesus provides an example of the ideal. He proclaimed and taught, both in perfect balance. What do you do then with the untrained church planter? The biblical mandate for the minister is “study” (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). The biblical mandate for the church is just as simple and to the point—“teach” (Matthew 28:19, KJV).

Fortunately today, more than ever before, there are a great number of ministry training opportunities for those willing to submit to the discipline required. Here are some available options:

Mentoring

Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Georgia, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention (2008-2009), writes: “My greatest joy in ministry is investing what I have learned in young preachers ... By mentoring other young men in ministry, I see one of my life’s goals accomplished. The delight of my heart is to live my life so other people reach their God-given potential.”149 Those words not only describe an excellent example of mentoring, they provide a fairly accurate definition of the term.

In the context of church planting, a mentor is an experienced minister who intentionally establishes a relationship with a less experienced planter
Finding and Training Hispanic Church Planters

to help him achieve his potential. While the subject has been much in vogue in recent years, it is nothing less than revisiting “the old wells.” “While we acknowledge the term mentor does not appear anywhere in the Bible, it does not mean that mentoring did not take place. In fact, mentoring was the primary means of instruction in Bible times.”150 Today’s resurgence of mentoring as a training methodology is confirmation of what centuries of experience have proven—it works. At times, the handicaps a potential church planter may have from the lack of formal training and experience can be lessened by the presence of a dedicated mentor. Jethro was there for Moses, Moses for Joshua, Elijah for Elisha, Barnabas for Paul, and Paul for Timothy. It was not a classroom, but it was very significant training. A wealth of material on mentoring can be found at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net, and correspondence may be directed to mentoringteam@namb.net.

Coaching

Coaching has some distinctive characteristics: (1) it easily focuses on any developing area of the person being coached; (2) it functions through asking good questions which guide discussion and discovery; and (3) it can be driven at any appropriate pace. “It [coaching] provides people with the focus necessary to take their dreams and make them realities ... Coaching can help people take steps that move them toward the completion of the work God has given them to do.”151 Coaching occurs through regularly scheduled meetings. It is not so much about teaching as it is about encouraging; it is more providing support than giving advice. It helps an individual to achieve some objectivity and perspective by providing an extra set of ears and eyes. The coaching process usually goes through what Coaching 101 calls the five Rs:
1. Relate: Establish coaching relationship and agenda.
2. Reflect: Discover and explore key issues.
3. Refocus: Determine priorities and action steps.
4. Resource: Provide support and encouragement.
5. Review: Evaluate, celebrate, and revise plans.\(^\text{152}\)

In recent years, some state conventions, have implemented a coaching process that has confirmed the value of it. This has proven to be a blessing to church planters and pastors. At the same time, it has helped coaches to enhance their communication with pastors and have a clearer understanding of the existing needs.

**Church Planter Networks**

CPN is an effort to provide church planters with a forum for exchange of ideas, experiences, and mutual support. The format is usually a six-hour monthly meeting for church planters and their spouses from a specific geographical area convened by an associational or state worker or pastor. The stated purpose is: “The CPN builds a support system for church planting teams that will result in healthy, reproducing churches that will make a difference in their community.”\(^\text{153}\) CPNs aid church planters in a number of ways:

1. At times, church planters feel very much alone in their ministry. In CPNs, planters find a ready-made support system with others who have similar situations.
2. It provides spouses a forum for sharing their vision, needs, burdens, and so forth.
3. Though working with different specific target groups, many of the challenges faced are similar in nature and the CPN becomes a mutual learning environment.
Through the local association, state convention, or at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net, more information is available about active CPNs in your area of ministry.

**Basic Training I & II**

Basic Training is prepared for those who are called to plant a church. It does not replace a well-rounded seminary-type education, but is rather aimed at those who may have ministry experience but not specifically in church planting. Because it is available as meetings organized by state conventions, through Webcasts, directly by Internet streaming, or in DVDs, it is a resource available to anyone anywhere. The North American Mission Board needs to be commended for making this valuable resource also available in Spanish. Basic Training I and Basic Training II are wonderful examples of technology at the service of the kingdom. More information is available at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net and by typing Basic Training in the search window.

**On and Off-Campus Seminary Programs**

Southern Baptists can be proud of the work being done by their seminaries. Their academic work is accredited at the highest level, and outreach to language groups has been exemplary. Students have the option of attending on-campus traditional programs, ranging from Pastoral Certificate programs to Ph.D.’s. Theological institutions have broadened their accessibility through an extensive network of off-campus programs. These programs are accessible geographically, financially, academically, and linguistically. For the church planter seeking further training in ministry, the opportunities are there.

**Seminary Extension**

The six U.S. Southern Baptist seminaries have joined in sponsoring a curriculum specially geared toward lay people and those that for some
reason cannot access other training programs. The Web page of the Seminary Extension program states: “Our mission is for the delivery of Biblical, Theological, and Practical education to Christians wherever they live via Internet, CD-ROM, local live classrooms, and correspondence.” Here again, it is commendable that most of these courses are also available in Spanish. For further information, please visit www.seminaryextension.org.

## Conclusion

God has brought to America’s shores one of the greatest missionary challenges a generation of Christians has ever known. We know that church planting is an effective way to penetrate a population segment, and a church planter is a significant factor in a successful church plant. Therefore, it is necessary for us to be diligent in praying and seeking out the God-called church planters. Once found, these planters need to be trained and equipped to fulfill the ministry.

## Chapter Highlights

- Basic principles and culture are both important factors in planting churches.
- Basic characteristics and specific Hispanic factors should influence the selection of planters.
- Prayer is an essential part to finding church planters.
- Partnerships can become a path to finding church planters.
- Formal and informal training, coaching, and mentoring are valuable for the development of planters.

Written by Frank Moreno. Frank is the Director of the Language Division at the Florida Baptist Convention.
Dr. Frank Moreno

*Language Division Director, Florida Baptist Convention*

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His job functions include: staff supervision, guiding in the development and implementation of strategies and contextualized resources for all language groups, overseeing the budgeting and calendaring process. He gives overall leadership to the work among non-English speaking congregations by assisting churches and associations to fulfill the Great Commission through evangelism, starting new churches, and developing leaders in order to reach the 5 million plus non-English speaking people living in Florida.

Prior to serving at Florida Baptist Convention, Frank worked for a number of years on the staff of Union Baptist Association in Houston as Coordinator of the Programming Section and church consultant. He has also been a church planter and a pastor of several churches in Texas. For over 31 years he has served in a variety of ministry roles in the denomination. Frank has been the recipient of several city and county recognitions in Texas and Florida as a person who has made a difference to improve the quality of life of its citizens.
From God’s creation, we learn that every healthy, living organism grows and reproduces. If an organism doesn’t grow or reproduce itself, it is said to be unhealthy, dying, or dead. If we accept the biblical concept of the church of the Lord Jesus as being a living organism and not an institution, then we would expect that a healthy and living church would grow and reproduce itself under the power of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into areas of church life that are common to many groups, but particularly characteristic of Hispanic churches. After reading this chapter, you should have a better understanding of some characteristics of Hispanic cultures and how they affect church life. Ultimately, the goal is to put tools in your hand that will help you do your part in assisting Hispanic churches to grow into healthy, reproducing New Testament churches that bring glory to God.

The Bible speaks of the church as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Just as our physical body has to have a balance of diet, activity, and rest in order for it to develop and function properly, the church also has to have a balance in ministries in order for it to grow and develop properly. Some churches are known for having a strong teaching ministry, but they are weak in evangelism. They may have a lot of knowledge but little practical ministry. Others are known for having a tremendous missions ministry, but their worship might be lacking. The Bible admonishes us to grow in all aspects of our Christian life and ministry in a balanced way.

In this chapter, we will discuss 10 areas that are critical in the growth process of a Hispanic church.
Growing Through Meaningful Relationships

People groups of Hispanic background give high importance to personal relationships, and more specifically, extended family relationships. This is seen in the way children are raised, youth are kept under the tutelage of parents until later years, and senior parents are cared for in the home. The concept of youth leaving the home for college after graduating from high school is an American custom that has only begun to be practiced among Hispanics in the last few decades. For the most part, Hispanic young adults, even up to 30 years of age, will live with their parents until they get married; and even then, some stay under their parent’s roof until they are able to make it on their own. Older parents are kept under the care of their children as long as possible, many times even until death. Putting them under the care of a retirement facility is not seen as a sign of being a responsible child.

How can this importance given to relationships influence church growth? Here are some suggestions:

• Take time to build relationships with families that you come in contact with. This is the door that will allow you to share your faith when the time is appropriate. You need to earn their trust before you earn the right to share about Christ. Welcome them to the neighborhood, help them find the stores, post office, or schools. Invite them for coffee one evening or have your kids play with theirs.

• Hispanics, as well as other groups, are suspicious of strangers from other cultures approaching them. This is true particularly in situations when the legal status of the person or family is an issue. Don’t take it personally!

• When planning church events of any kind, be aware that the whole family—parents, grandparents, youth, and children—is likely to attend despite the audience the activity was intended
for. Some Hispanic churches have to provide nursery, as well as children and youth activities when planning leadership development workshops because the leaders would bring their entire families along for the event.

- **Conferences on family issues are always attractive to Hispanics.** Topics such as parenting, grandparenting, financial freedom, and the like work very well.

- **Learn to live with babies and children present in the worship services.** Hispanic parents, particularly visitors in a church, are very reluctant to give up the care of their babies or preschoolers to strangers. Only after attending a church several times and after a certain level of trust has been developed, are parents comfortable leaving their babies in the nursery or allowing their preschoolers to stay in their classes.

- **Plan activities where the entire family can participate.** Picnics, recreation activities, block parties, music concerts, family movies, and sporting events are great opportunities for Hispanic families to engage with other church families and make a connection. Of course, don’t forget to include fellowship meals which everyone loves (sometimes called “comidas”, “convivios”, or “compañerismos”).

**Growing Through Intentional Evangelism**

At some point after building strong relationships, a church that wants to grow needs to be intentional in the presentation of the gospel. Many Hispanics are not familiar with the content and message of the Bible. Providing them with a copy of Scripture in their own language will feed their curiosity and is a good starting point. They will probably need some guidance as to where to begin reading and how to find their way through the different books. The witness needs to make himself or herself available to
answer questions that will arise after the prospect has read a few passages. This can create a tremendous witnessing opportunity.

A Hispanic church that wants to grow in the area of evangelism will have to be aware of the barriers related to acceptance of the gospel. There is a cultural barrier that has to do with the generally accepted misconception among Hispanics that all of them are Roman Catholics. Although this might have been partially true at some point in past history, it is no longer the case. There is the religious barrier for those who actually are Roman Catholics. Issues such as salvation through works, infant baptism as a means of being “christened” or made Christian, the waiting place called purgatory, and others, will have to be dealt with at some point. Then there is the social barrier of rejection that comes to those who decide to follow Christ and are seen as abandoning their Hispanic culture and roots.

On the other hand, many Hispanics will be very open to the gospel because they don’t see their Catholic church doing enough for them. This is a great opportunity for our Baptist churches to step up and show what true Christian love is all about. Furthermore, many Hispanics look at non-Hispanic evangelicals and their way of life, and attribute their wellbeing to their evangelical faith. Since they want to fit into the American society, many are willing to listen to what it takes to become a believer. That’s when the gospel should be presented boldly and unashamedly in a language and in terms that an unbelieving Hispanic person can understand.

The witness who wants to reach Hispanics in North America should also remember that the playing field here is leveled for all religions and denominations. The advantage the Roman Catholic Church has as the official state church in many—if not most—Latin American countries is not present here. So far, we are free to share our faith openly and without restrictions. Members of the church should go where Hispanics are most frequently found: shopping at Latino markets and stores, at Wal-Mart, at soccer games,
dining in Hispanic restaurants, at shopping malls, and so forth. Those are some good places to start building relationships.

**Growing through Community Caring**

Another venue through which a Hispanic church can experience growth is through caring for its community. A local church with vision and ingenuity can easily become the church in its community. The pastor will be a key factor for this to happen. He has to make his presence known at city hall, during community events, and any time the Hispanic community celebrates an important date in its history. It’s been said many times that the pastor and the church he represents should not be known for what it is against but for what it’s for.

The church could rent a space in a city festival or have a display at some other event. Some churches have provided water bottles during marathons during the summer. Others have given out free New Testaments or some other good Christian book for the family. Some great opportunities to get involved in community events are during Cinco de Mayo (May 5) celebrations and during the National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 through October 15).

The church will do well in finding out the needs of the community they are trying to reach. A “Community Needs Survey” is a simple and useful tool to discover some of the ways the church can at least meet the most urgent needs of its community. Some of the things that attract Hispanics to churches can be:

- ESL classes
- Cooking and craft classes
- Soccer, volleyball, and basketball leagues for men, women, and various age groups
- Food pantries and clothes closets
• Citizenship classes
• Immigration services
• Low cost medical and dental services for the uninsured

Special care should be taken in using every opportunity available to introduce people to Jesus Christ. Otherwise, these activities and ministries can become mere social services similar to those offered by other non-religious agencies.

**Growing Through Dynamic Worship**

A lot of Hispanics love music and singing. The vast variety of lively rhythms and musical expressions from various countries and cultures are a testimony of this love. This rich musical heritage should find its way into the worship styles of Hispanic churches as they attempt to praise God in contextualized and culturally-relevant ways. One of the best ways to reach unchurched Hispanics is through music that they are familiar with and that appeals to their souls and hearts.

We can worship the Lord through music from a variety of styles, as long as the message of the words and the music are directing the worshiper to concentrate on God Himself. Unfortunately, in some settings the congregation is more inclined to worship the music and rhythms more than the Lord Himself. In other cases, the problem is that *the only ones worshiping are the members of the praise band*. There is no attempt to involve the congregation in the singing. On many occasions, this is due to the use of unfamiliar songs by the praise band or the difficulty of the tunes for congregational singing.

Whatever style of music used in worship should reflect the highest level of proficiency possible. In other words, we should offer the Lord our God the best that we are capable of, something that is costly, regardless of the style (see 2 Samuel 24:24b). We have all experienced music during worship services that was of very poor quality and that did anything but direct
our attention to the Lord. This kind of situation can be easily avoided by allowing only those with some degree of musical ability to lead the music in the church, and by spending whatever amount of time is needed practicing before standing in front of God and His church to lead in worship.

Worship in the church should be at times exciting, while at other times reflective. It should allow for periods of celebration and exultation as well as for moments of quiet participation and introspection. There should be times for singing, praying, giving, sharing, listening, and responding. Worship services should include a variety of elements according to the purpose of the service. Some services will have an evangelistic emphasis, while others might have an emphasis on stewardship, prayer, or missions.

Hispanic congregations need to be encouraged to worship the Lord with their own music, their own lyrics, using their own creativity and God-given talents. Although there is nothing wrong with using other forms of worship, they don’t have to copy other styles for the worship to be acceptable to God. Our Lord is not as interested in the form and style of worship as He is in the spirit, attitude, and content of what we offer Him. They—as any other congregation for that matter—need to make sure that the worship they practice as a congregation is based on the Word of God and the principles that it teaches. As the reformer Martin Luther is credited for saying, “Within Scripture, everything; outside of Scripture, nothing.”

Growing Through Relentless Disciple-Making

The Bible clearly states that the church is not only to make new believers in Christ but to make disciples, or Christ-followers. Since discipleship is the means by which a Christ-follower grows and matures in Christ, the more disciples are grown and developed the more the church will grow and
develop. Discipleship does not just happen. If it did, all of our churches would be growing, multiplying, and maturing in such a way that existing buildings would not be sufficient to hold them! The church has to be very intentional in its approach to discipleship and relentless in its pursuit of it.

Of all the areas related to our Christian living, discipleship seems to be one of the hardest to accomplish and to measure. Part of the reason is because from the moment we turn our lives over to Jesus and accept Him as Lord and Savior, we begin our journey of discipleship and continue throughout our entire life until God calls us home to heaven. It’s a life-long activity! It’s a process of learning biblical truth, applying it to our lives, and growing a little more every time we repeat the process. The more we learn and practice, the more we grow as disciples of Jesus.

Over the years, Southern Baptists have produced some of the best discipleship resources ever written to help our people grow in Christ. Study courses such as Master Life by Avery T. Willis, The Mind of Christ by T.W. Hunt, Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby, The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren, and Bible studies by Beth Moore, to name a few, are examples of Christian literature that have impacted millions of lives. Fortunately, all of these resources are available in Spanish.

Hispanic believers are known for their avid desire to learn more about God’s Word and its application to everyday life. As was mentioned above, there is no lack of Spanish resources for discipleship. The issue of lack of growth among Hispanic believers is threefold:

- There is the need to make the resources available to congregations. This is an area where the sponsoring church, the local Baptist association, or even the state convention can assist by promoting their use and in some cases, purchasing the resources for them. Oftentimes, resources are not used because pastors don’t know they exist. In other cases, especially among smaller congregations, the finances are not there to purchase them.
• There is the need to involve them in existing training. Again, churches, associations and conventions should provide training events in Spanish so that lay leaders and pastors can be trained to train others in their churches. Once the training events are offered, encourage the appropriate people to attend, perhaps by covering some of the expenses for them.

• Once the church has gone through these discipleship courses, the pastor might need suggestions on how to plan activities, events, or ministry venues for the congregation to put into practice what they’ve learned. Some churches have gone through every existing discipleship course available, but they have only acquired head knowledge. There was never a follow-up ministry or activity to help them implement what they learned in practical ways.

Some Hispanic churches have discovered that small groups are an effective venue through which their members can grow. These can take place on Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, or any other time during the week that is convenient for the specific group. While many of these groups meet at the church facilities, most have found that meeting at someone’s home facilitates an environment more conducive to learning and group participation.

As is true with other issues, in the area of discipleship it is of utmost importance to work with and through the pastor. The pastor needs to be supportive and willing to train his leaders and lay people through discipleship. The training and development of lay leaders is a critical point among Hispanics who have a tendency to follow strong leaders and not get personally involved. With God’s wisdom and much tactfulness, you as a sponsoring church leader, as an associational director of missions, or as a state convention leader can assist the pastor in
this area by helping him see the need for shared leadership in the church. He doesn’t have to do it all by himself!

**Growing Through Passionate Outward Focus**

One of the most important things to keep in mind is that a church that focuses inwardly will ultimately die. In other words, if a church *only* takes care of its members and does not look outside its walls to serve the community it is a part of, it will eventually cease to exist. The Scriptures are clear with respect to the pastor’s duty of caring for the flock, but they are also clear in that the church should be “salt and light” in that part of the world where the Lord has placed it. Too many churches are so caught up in maintaining the health and growth of its members that they totally forget about the world around them that is desperate for spiritual help.

This is true not only in very old congregations but also in newer ones. Many new churches experience the excitement that overtakes a new congregation when they see new believers being baptized, families joining the church, and lives changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is an intentional effort at the start of a new church to impact the community through various ways of ministry evangelism. Then, as the church begins to grow in numbers, the emphasis shifts from being the church out in the world to preoccupation with how to take care of all the staff, ministries, administration, and issues that come naturally with expansion.

God desires for His church to expand and grow. Read the first few chapters of the book of Acts in the New Testament when it talks about the church growing by the thousands almost daily! *Growth is not the problem, the change of focus is.* The church needs to be doing both things at the same time: *continue to focus outwardly while taking care of the flock inwardly.* It’s not either/or, it is both/and.
In your position of leadership in a church that is sponsoring a Hispanic church, or from your leadership position in a Baptist association, or even from a state convention position, one of the ways you can help a Hispanic church grow is by helping them either to begin to have, or continue to have, a passionate outward focus. Help the church get involved in the community in any way possible, connecting with hospitals, prisons, government agencies, schools, and particularly Hispanic community organizations, if there are any close by.

The Hispanic church has a tremendous opportunity to impact its community by offering services such as the ones mentioned above under the “Growing Through Community Caring” section. But most of all, it would do well to keep the unsaved and unchurched Hispanic people around them in its mind and in its heart so that every ministry they do has the ultimate goal of leading individuals and families to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Growing Through Shared Leadership**

Contrary to society’s emphasis on individualism, Hispanics tend to be more group-oriented. Participation in team activities and sports are encouraged among Hispanics more than personal ones. That’s one of the reasons why soccer and volleyball are big sports in Latin America. Young people are encouraged to go out in groups until they are old enough to start dating. There is a great sense of community within the culture that’s reflected in family life, neighborhood relationships, as well as other social, political, and religious activities. This fact is a plus when considering leadership styles that are more effective in a Hispanic church environment.

On the other hand, strong personalities abound among Hispanics, and there is a cultural tendency to follow one strong individual leader. This can be seen happening in the political and religious arenas over and over again throughout Spanish-speaking countries. There is a long and sad history of
political dictators—often called “caudillos”—who have risen and fallen from power in various Latin American countries, leaving scars that mark societies for decades and for generations.

Having said all this, the question we should answer is: How can these cultural characteristics be used in a positive way to encourage and aid church growth? First of all, churches and leaders should stay on the alert with respect to potential dominant, pseudo-charismatic, know-it-all, do-it-all type of leaders who present themselves “in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (see Matthew 7:15 and Acts 20:29-31). They will tend to dominate and control the congregation in every aspect of ministry, not allowing anyone else to participate in the decision-making process of the church. This type of leader will not practice accountability to anyone except himself. Ministry will not be shared since this will be seen as a threat to his leadership position. Consequently, there will be no leadership development of any kind. People in this kind of congregation are allowed to participate as long as they are in total agreement with the pastor and in complete submission to his leadership. This situation will limit church growth and hinder the development of indigenous leaders.

The opposite type of leadership environment should be desired and promoted in a Hispanic church. The church planter or pastor should be a true spiritual leader who promotes team participation from the members of his congregation. Taking advantage of the cultural characteristic mentioned above, the Hispanic pastor should be encouraged to form ministry teams led by key people that would themselves invite others to be a part of their team. As soon as new believers join the church, they should be involved in a class for discovering spiritual gifts so they can serve in areas where they are most gifted. Many well-intentioned and ready-to-serve believers get discouraged because they have nothing to do or nobody shows them a place where they can get involved. Sometimes they can get to the point of leaving the church if they feel they are not being considered for any position of service within the body of Christ.
One good way to discover the gifts and talents of people in a congregation is to do a congregational survey. This helped one church when there was an urgent need to improve the sound during the services. The men working the sound did the best they could, but were having all kinds of problems every Sunday—and it was not the equipment. In looking through a gifts and talents survey the church had done, they discovered that one of the members had expressed interest in serving in the sound ministry. They called him to ask if he was still interested and he said he was. When asked what he did for a living, he said he was a sound engineer in a recording studio in town! They inquired why he hadn’t helped in the church before, to which he replied that he had never been asked. Needless to say, from that point on the quality of sound during their services was excellent. Not only was this dear brother knowledgeable and experienced, but he had a humble attitude and was willing to train others to serve with him.

This case exemplifies something common in Hispanic churches, although not exclusive to them: people usually will not volunteer to do things unless they are asked. So when there is a need to fill leadership positions, the call can be made publically and printed in the church’s bulletin, but at some point there will have to be personal contacts for people to respond.

When leadership is shared, more believers are involved in ministry, and they take ownership of the church. They feel it is their church, not just the church. They will be more willing to serve because they know they are an important part of the body of Christ, and not just a member who attends. For many Hispanics and other people groups, the church is where they speak their language and worship God in their own cultural environment. It is where they feel comfortable to express themselves freely and where everyone understands each other. It’s a piece of the land and life they left behind in their home country. So it is crucial that they have a sense that they are in
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their church and that they play an important role in its life and ministry. Since most Hispanics come from a Roman Catholic background, they are used to seeing the priest and some helpers do everything in church with little involvement of the people. They need to be educated and trained in the concept of a congregational type of government that most Baptist churches practice. They need to know that they have a voice and a vote in the decision-making process and that their participation is not only needed but required.

Growing Through Biblical Stewardship

Stewardship is another area, especially as it relates to church life, in which Hispanics could benefit from a deeper understanding of biblical principles. Some of the practices they learned in the Roman Catholic Church may not adequately tap the biblical wealth on this topic. The concept of stewardship and tithing can be taught in a more enriching way.

Oftentimes, Hispanics who were already believers when they arrived in America and were committed to their churches back home will also be committed and active in their churches here. The believers who were not as committed to the Lord back home may get caught up in trying to achieve the American dream, and have (actually, make) very little time for the Lord and church life here. Others—whether Christian or not—may be so concerned about making money to send back home to support their loved ones that they work non-stop, seven days a week, and therefore, do not make time for God or the church.

The pull on some Hispanics to send money back home may compete with what they set aside for tithe. While many have the ability to tithe, they may not because they haven’t been taught a biblical view of stewardship that affects and permeates every area of life.

When the biblical principles of stewardship and tithing are preached and taught unashamedly in church, people tend to respond in a more natural way. Offerings have been known to double and triple when the case for
Helping Hispanic Churches Grow

biblical stewardship is preached, taught, and discussed openly. Believers need to understand that the giving of tithes and offerings is not just to pay the bills as it is often presented. It is much more than that; it is a lifestyle of obedience to God and dependence on his provision.

This is a subject that has to be kept in front of people at all times. When Christ followers have a correct understanding of Who owns their possessions, and what He requires of us as stewards of His goods, then no matter what happens, they will live by those principles and be governed by them.

Unfortunately, we have allowed worldly practices and principles to govern our lives and the life of our churches to the extent that many congregations trust the economy and the dollar more than they trust in God! Hispanic churches are no exception.

Any leader that wants to assist a Hispanic church or mission to grow in this area would do well in making them aware of the resources available to them in Spanish. The Baptist Publishing House in El Paso, Texas, LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, Tennessee, and Crown Financial Ministries in Gainesville, Georgia, to name a few, all have excellent stewardship resources in Spanish that are based on principles from God’s Word. Books written by best-selling author and radio and TV personality, David Ramsey—although not considered Bible studies on finances—are still based on principles from the Bible as he himself states, and can be of great help to assist individuals and churches in this area.

Growing Through Dependence on God’s Word

Everything we do in our lives as followers of Christ is to be guided by biblical principles. Everything we do in church life should be guided by biblical principles also. Martin Luther, the great reformer, was willing to give his life for the Word of God. In a time when every pastor and church planter is looking for new, exciting, and effective ways to do ministry, it is imperative that we measure everything against Scripture. There is nothing wrong with
trying someone else’s ideas, plans, strategies, models, or methods as long as these are clearly based on biblical truth and principles.

A Hispanic church that desires to grow will be deeply rooted in the Word of God. The Bible should be the foundation for every ministry, program, event, and activity that the church plans, promotes, and produces. Scriptures should be taught at every opportunity available, for all age levels and interest groups. Particular attention should be paid to preschoolers and children. Many churches just “entertain” the children put under their care until the adult activities are finished. To do this is to miss a tremendous chance to teach children of all ages great truths from God’s Word. Through songs, games, crafts, competition, memorization, storytelling, and interaction, teachers can make an impact in those young lives that will prepare them for the rest of their journey.

The same is true with youth groups. There is a need to make church relevant and interesting, but their church experience should not just be all fun and games, sports activities, and entertainment. Their activities should include some spiritual meat to make sure they are being fed and developed as young Christian men and women for God’s purposes. They should be trained to teach others, to share the gospel, to lead in worship and, some of them, even to preach. Most of all, they need to absorb biblical truth to apply and live out their Christianity in a world that is teaching them values that are totally opposite to God’s values.

Adult Bible study groups in some Hispanic churches need to be a little more structured. Since Hispanics have a strong inclination toward fellowship, group leaders might need some guidance as to how to plan the time with the group so as to make better use of it. Whether the group meets in the church facilities, in a home, or some other place, time should be allowed for fellowship, prayer, Bible study, and discussion. Leaders should be taught some techniques on how to facilitate the group without controlling it, but helping move things forward to accomplish the desired objectives. Special
care should be taken to make sure the Bible lesson remains at the center of the conversation. It’s good to have group participation, as long as the discussion is limited to and remains within the subject at hand. That’s why the leader needs good facilitating skills in addition to having prepared the study material.

Pastors, church planters, and Bible teachers need to be reminded to preach and teach the Word of God, not their opinions or what everybody else says about it. The importance of preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God, not just their favorite passages needs to be emphasized. Preparation by spending time in prayer and study is essential. They should expect the Holy Spirit to move in peoples’ lives every time they present God’s Word. Therefore, it’s important that they give people an opportunity to respond to God’s voice in some way or form.

**Growing Through Prayer**

The best way you can assist a Hispanic church to grow is by helping them understand that apart from God they can do nothing. There is no program, no ministry, no event or strategy that will work based only on our own human strength and ingenuity.

Whatever is in your power to do, help them develop a prayer strategy. Resource them with Bible studies on prayer, but more important than that, give them suggestions on how to include prayer as part of everything they do. Help them plan good prayer meetings where believers don’t just spend time sharing their needs, but actually pray for them. Suggest that they organize prayerwalks around their neighborhood or in areas with high concentrations of Hispanics. Share with them about the different kinds of prayers according to the occasion: praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, petition, repentance, salvation, and so forth. Expose them to the various forms of prayer: silent, voiced, individual
and group prayers, conversational prayer, guided prayers, and so on.

A practice that is common among Hispanic churches is the “vigilia de oración” or prayer vigil. This is usually done on a Friday night for several hours or even until the next morning. This is the closest thing to what the Bible calls a solemn assembly, calling the people of God to pray during times of special need or crisis. These can be excellent experiences for the church body if they are well planned and executed. They should include a variety of elements such as singing, a few testimonies, short meditations from Scripture, and of course extended periods for prayer. This is a good opportunity to practice the types and forms of prayer mentioned above so that there is variety and participation. Refreshments should be kept to the minimum so the spiritual aspect of the vigilia is heightened.

The pastor or church planter who wants to see his church grow should be a man of prayer himself. He has to set the example for his people to follow. As an associational, state convention, or even lay leader, you can help him by making sure he sets his prayer and devotional life as a priority above everything else. His relationship with the Lord, with his spouse and family, and his ministry depend on it. Show him your concern about this by scheduling time to pray with him either weekly or monthly. Share with him some good books on prayer. The most popular ones are available in Spanish.

Remember that the church will grow as far as its pastor grows, particularly in the discipline of prayer. The pastor and his congregation need to depend on God’s power for life!

Conclusion

We have shared some suggestions on how to help Hispanic churches grow. We realize that we’ve only touched the surface on this important subject. As you’ve seen, the examples that were mentioned here are the same that can help any church of any kind to grow. It is our prayer that as you work with Hispanic churches in the area of North America where God has
put you, you will be used by Him in a powerful way to make an impact upon this growing segment of our society that desperately needs to experience Jesus Christ in their lives and their families.

**Chapter Highlights**

- Personal relationships are an essential part of a church growing and being healthy.
- A growing church will take advantage of the receptivity of Hispanics to the gospel.
- Participating in acts of service and ministry in the community will strengthen the church.
- Worship can be an attraction and celebration among Hispanic communities.
- Special attention should be given to the discipleship activities within the church.
- A healthy church has an outward focus as well as an inward one.
- Special attention should be given to the development and use of leaders within the church.
- Healthy churches have members who practice biblical stewardship.
- The strength of the congregation comes from its commitment to God and His Word.
- Prayer is an integral part of any strong church.

Written by Jorge Sedaca. Jorge is the Multi-Ethnic Coordinator for the Church Planting Group at the North American Mission Board.
Jorge Sedaca is responsible for the development of contextualized church planting resources for all people groups in North America other than Anglo and African-American. Included in that group are intentional multiethnic church plants. He also represents the Church Planting Group of the North American Mission Board in Region 2, which includes North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In this capacity, he assists these partners in the development of contextualized church planting strategies.

Jorge has been with NAMB since January of 2008. Prior to his present position he served as the Language Ministries Leader for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan for 8 1/2 years. Before going to Michigan, he served as Multiethnic Catalytic Missionary with the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans, Louisiana, helping start churches among many ethnic groups. One of those was a Messianic Jewish Congregation that he started and led for over 2 years. Between 1988 and 1993 he was the pastor of First Spanish Baptist Mission in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In that period of time the church doubled in membership, began and expanded several new ministries, and moved to a larger church building.

In 1980, Jorge graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, with a Masters Degree in Music, with a concentration in Conducting. He taught Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and also served as Minister of Music in churches in Argentina and the U.S.
CHAPTER NINE

Hispanic Resources

We at the North American Mission Board are praying that God will bless North America with a time of spiritual awakening resulting in a great church planting movement. We long to see God working in such a powerful way that every person and every place on this continent has a healthy, New Testament church proclaiming the gospel in contextually appropriate ways.

In order to see this happen, it is important that we are earnestly praying for God to move, while we actively sow the gospel among the people groups—especially among Hispanics—of North America. It is impossible to have a great time of harvest without a deliberate time of sowing. Most sweeping revivals were preceded by a time of spreading the Good News of Christ’s love, so that individuals could respond to the gospel message.

The resources and tools included here have been developed to help you, our partners, be informed of existing resources in Spanish to do the work of sharing the gospel and planting Hispanic churches.

These resources have been arranged according to how they fit within the Church Planting Process. The four components of the Church Planting process are: Readiness, Enlistment, Equipping, and Multiplication. The resources were arranged this way with the hope that the users of this book can quickly find the resources needed for the stage of the process that they are implementing. We recognize that many resources can fit in more than one part of the process. When this happens, the resource has been placed in the category that it best fits.

A few of the resources found here are not produced by the North American Mission Board; however, we have provided the information on how to obtain these resources from the corresponding organization.
It is a great joy to be able to provide quality resources for our church planting partners. The majority of these are available on our Web site at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net. For a printed copy of most of the items in this chapter, please call our resource line at (888) 749-7479.

May God pour out His blessings on all of us as we assist churches to plant churches across North America among the Hispanic population!

**Readiness (Preparación)**

**Motivated by Love (Impulsados por el amor)**

*Impulsados por el amor* is a book that will inspire all those who participate in church planting. In order to perform obediently and successfully in God’s work, a church planter needs to examine his true motivation to accomplish what the Lord wants him to do. Therefore, this book is a necessary summary that shows how God’s love is for the entire world, and that church planters should love people with the same intensity. This resource can be ordered by visiting www.wmustore.com.

**By Love They Gave Their Life (Por amor dieron su vida)**

Eight Baptist missionaries died because they were willing to be in a place where their lives were vulnerable. Offering eternal life to others was more important than maintaining their own earthly lives. To obtain this resource, visit www.imb.org/resources.
Demographic Reports
The Center for Missional Research is able to provide church planters with detailed demographic information. This information is a key component for understanding your community. To get your free demographic study, go to www.NAMB.net/demographics. (This resource is not available in Spanish at this time.)

The Mind of Christ (La mente de Cristo)
La mente de Cristo teaches believers how to think the thoughts of Christ and have the mind of Christ. It brings, through Scriptural scholarship, the teachings of freedom in Christ, becoming like Christ, Christ’s lifestyle, the servant mind, the glory of humility, Christ’s conduct among humans, living in the Spirit, holiness and love, the crucifixion, resurrection, and the kingdom of God. The book includes daily learning activities for 12 weekly sessions and is available at www.lifeway.com/espanol.

The Net (CD-Rom) (La red)
La red is a very useful resource when the objective is to reach an entire community for Jesus. After short conferences, the objective is to get out and witness. A mentor shows others how to do it and week after week encourages others to witness. The progressive instruction prepares them to participate and develop skills so that they become mentors to someone else. For this resource, call the resource line or visit www.nambenespanol.net.
Compass I (CD-Rom)

Compass I is an SBC church planting start-up kit on CD. It contains information church planters can use to plant healthy, SBC congregations. Resources include a review of Baptist history, Southern Baptist World Missions, the Cooperative Program, and the Baptist Faith and Message. The resource is available by calling the resource line or visiting www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Compass1.

Compass II (CD-Rom)

The Compass II CD is a church planting resource CD that features resources to help church planters engage in ministry. It includes tools for personal and corporate evangelism, new Christian follow-up, missions, leadership, stewardship, and small group Bible study. All of the resources on this CD are available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, English, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, and Vietnamese. This resource is available by calling the resource line or visiting www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Compass2.

Voices of the Faithful (Voces de los Fieles)

This year-long devotional book includes amazing experiences by missionaries living life on the edge. These stories tell of what God is doing today around the world. To order this resource, visit www.imb.org/resources.
Taking Prayer to the Streets (Llevando la oración a las calles)

Taking Prayer to the Streets includes everything needed to help believers pray and share Jesus with people in the communities where they live, work, play and worship. This resource is available by visiting www.namb.net/prayer, then clicking on “Other Resources” in the sidebar.

Church Planting Vision 2020 (Iniciación de iglesias visión 2020)

This brochure is a guide to the church planting process as projected by the year 2020. The vision is as follows: “We see the day when healthy, reproducing churches are planted for every person in every community in the United States, Canada, and their respective territories.” To obtain this brochure, call NAMB’s church planting resource line at 1 888 749-7479.

Pray as You Walk (Ore mientras camina)

God is using prayerwalking to call believers out of their church buildings to intercede for their communities and communities around the world. This six-week study guide can transform any believer into an effective prayer walker. This resource is available at www.imb.org/resources.
Seven Steps for Church Planters (Siete pasos para iniciar iglesias)

Seven Steps is a collection of resources crafted to guide church planters and their partners to plant healthy, reproducing congregations. There are two editions in the series: Seven Steps Planter Edition and Seven Steps Partner Edition. Planter Edition is available in Spanish at [www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Spanish](http://www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Spanish) or by calling the resource line at 1 888 749-7479.

Our Growing Hispanic Presence in North America

The Hispanic presence in North America is growing! How will you respond to the opportunities? This brochure outlines ways you can be a part of a movement of God among Hispanics with statistics to help you understand the growing Hispanic population. A color-coded map reveals the urban centers with the highest Hispanic population, as well as the ratio of Hispanic SBC churches to Hispanic population in the United States and Canada. To request this brochure, please call the resource line at 1 888 749-7479.

Survival Kit (Sígueme uno: Cómo crecer espiritualmente)

This resource for new Christians will help them understand and deal with conflicts between old and new patterns of thoughts and habits, as well as develop a regular pattern of quiet time, prayer, Bible study, and Scripture memorization. This six-week study includes the leader guide and teaching aids. To request this resource, please visit [www.lifeway.com/espanol](http://www.lifeway.com/espanol).
Enlistment (Alistamiento)

Bivocational Church Planters (Plantadores Bivocacionales de iglesias)

*Bivocational Church Planters: Uniquely Wired for Kingdom Growth* takes a close look at bivocational church planting and tells the stories of 16 bivocational church planters. This book will be a helpful tool for potential church planters considering bivocational ministry. Free hard copies can be requested by calling the resource line at 1 888 749-7479.

The Acts 1:8 Challenge (Hechos 1:8 Guía para líderes)

Discover how your church can develop an overall missions strategy to reach out to your community, your state or region, our continent, and our world. You can get this resource at [www.imb.org/resources](http://www.imb.org/resources).

Calling out the Called (Llamar a los llamados)

*Calling out the Called* challenges church members to fulfill the Great Commission through church planting. The guide gives detailed information about the Calling out the Called process and event. It helps to equip the reader to begin forming a strategy for using Calling out the Called to mobilize a church or group of churches to plant new churches. To request this resource, call the resource line at 1 888 749-7479.
Peoples Search (Búsqueda de Gente)

*Peoples Search* is a multi-phase process that assists churches, associations, and denominational workers in getting a handle on the diversity found in their communities. It also helps them identify unreached places and the different groups of people living in their communities. To request this resource, call the resource line at 1 888 749-7479.

People Strategy (Estrategia de Gente)

In this twenty-first century environment for church planting, the art and skill of strategy development and implementation is critical. Whether you are a new or seasoned strategist, this training is aimed at providing you with the basic foundation, understanding, and practice necessary to perform the duties of your missionary calling at a higher level. To request this resource, call the resource line at 1 888 749-7479.
Church Planter Assessment Tools (Certification Required)
Herramientas de selección (Requiere certificación)

Church Planter Assessment tools are designed to assist our church planting partners to properly assess a potential church planter’s calling, character, compatibility, and competency using the 13 qualities and behaviors of successful church planters that were identified by Dr. Charles Ridley. There are two levels of training for potential assessors, each level supported by both written guidebooks and DVDs. Resources include a Level One Training Guide, Level Two Training Guide, and Assessors Guidebook. These are available to certified trainers through the resource line (1 888 749-7479). For more information about being trained as an assessor, contact your state convention office.

Discovery Tools (Herramientas de descubrimiento)

This self-assessment booklet provides insight into how God may be preparing an individual for church planting. The booklet helps potential church planters explore the following areas: call, spiritual gifts, passion, ministry preference, and past behaviors. Request by calling the resource line at 1 888 749-7479, or download now at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/discovery.
Basic Training (Entrenamiento básico)

Basic Training is a comprehensive set of resources that enable church planting partners to train church planting teams. Research has shown that planting teams who have completed Basic Training are much more likely to plant healthy, reproducing congregations. Resources include manuals for participants, guidebooks for trainers, and DVDs that can be used in the training sessions. For more information on Basic Training, please contact the church planting office at your state convention office. Materials are available in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Ukrainian.

Basic Training II (Entrenamiento básico II)

Basic Training II is for planting teams who have already launched a new church. The training will direct the team to consider pointed questions such as, “Where are we?” “Where are we really?” and “Where do we go from here?” Resources include training manuals, workbooks, and DVDs. These materials are also available in Spanish. For more information on Basic Training II, please contact the church planting office at your state convention.
The Learning Place: Online
(El lugar de aprendizaje: aprendizaje en el internet)
Classes for both Basic Training and Basic Training II are available online through The Learning Place. For more information about distance learning through Internet training in English or Spanish, call your state convention office or go to www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/onlinelearning.

Church Planter Mentor Training
(Entrenamiento para el mentor del iniciador de iglesias)
Church Planter Mentor Training is a workshop experience designed to train those who will be mentoring church planters. The mentor is taught to walk with the church planter, helping him or her finish well in the church planting venture by considering both personal growth and effective church planting actions. Certified presenters can get these resources by calling their state convention office.

The Call to Teach (Los llamados a enseñar)
This book is a useful tool that will help the church planter in his activities as a teacher of the Word of God. This resource is a multiple help to those who are called to teach and who have the responsibility to teach others who also will become teachers. Since the church planter is a person in process, this book will facilitate his growth as a leader of future leaders, as well as in the ministry of communicating the message of Christ. This book will show how to develop others in their call to teach. This resource can be ordered by visiting www.christianbooks.com.
Straight Street (Calle Derecha)

Straight Street is a spiritual preparation guide to be used by members of a church planting team two to eight weeks before attending a Basic Training event. There are eight units in Straight Street: prayer, vision, core values, people group focus, mission, relationships, evangelism, and worship. A participant can choose from one of three versions: scenic route, business route, and express route. Copies are available through your state convention church planting office or online at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Straightstreet.

Partners in Church Planting (El Viaje Hacia la Iniciación de Iglesias)

Partners in Church Planting (PiCP) resources provide a system for equipping and nurturing partnering/sponsoring churches to plant healthy, reproducing churches with evangelistic passion. This system can be used by any local church as a stand-alone guide through the partnering process. However, key support for many churches will come through a PiCP Consultant. These have been trained by state partners to work directly with partner churches at the local level. The Partners in Church Planting Spanish guide can be downloaded at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/picp.

How to Plant Churches (Cómo Sembrar Iglesias en el Siglo XXI)

This book covers relevant methods to starting new churches and presents a variety of church models. This book can be ordered by visiting www.churchstarting.net.
Hispanic World Library (Biblioteca Electronica Mundo Hispano)

In this resource, the church planter will find several versions of the Bible. Several commentaries have been included together with other books that will facilitate and give excellent background in the preparation of sermons and Bible studies. It will be a good investment for the ministry. This resource can be ordered by visiting www.editorialmh.org.

Ministerial Library (Biblioteca de ayuda ministerial—Vols. I y II)

La biblioteca de ayuda ministerial (Volume 1) includes books that are out of print. These are books dealing with Bible study and Christian doctrine. Volume II presents ideas for evangelism, as well as how to develop new believers. These two resources will prove to be invaluable in the ministry of the church planter. These two volumes can be ordered by visiting www.lifeway.com/espanol.
Multiplication (Multiplicación)

Church Planting Group Podcast
(Podcast del Grupo de Iniciación de Iglesias)

The Church Planting Group Podcast is an online tool which enables church planting practitioners to hear innovative ideas for healthy church planting. The podcasts feature church planting leaders from across North America who have a story to share about God’s blessings in their ministry. In addition to English podcasts, there are also podcasts in Spanish. You can download a podcast from the Internet, hear the podcast through your computer, or you can register to have the podcast automatically updated in your iPod or MP3 by subscribing at: www.namb.net/cpgpodcast.

Multiplying Church Network (Red de iglesias mutiplicadoras)

This resource describes how to form a group of church planting leaders who meet regularly to pray, share experiences, plan, learn, and share accountability. Together they find ways to start healthy, growing, reproducing congregations. Resources include a Facilitators Guide, Church Network Worksheets, and a CD-Rom. These tools are available in both English and Spanish. These resources can be downloaded at www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/MCN.
The Acts 1:8 Challenge, Study Guide
(El desafío Hechos 1:8, Guía de estudio)

*The Acts 1:8 Challenge* explains the intention of the Lord Jesus Christ when He commissioned His followers to continue the task of spreading the Good News—even to the end of the world. This resource is available at [www.imb.org/resources](http://www.imb.org/resources).

Beginning Steps: A Seven-Step Growth Guide for New Believers
(Pasos Iniciales)

*Beginning Steps* is a guide for growth to the new believer. This book outlines seven initial but crucial steps for a person to mature into a dedicated child of God. It goes all the way from assurance of salvation to being an active participant in the life of the church. Copies can be ordered by visiting [www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Spanish](http://www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Spanish).

Design for Discipleship:
A whole series for the developing of the new believer
(El Diseño Del Discipulado)

Each book presents an interactive Bible study with activities of biblical research, application and reflection, with ample room to write down the answers. These materials can be obtained by visiting [www.editorialmh.org](http://www.editorialmh.org).
Experiencing God (Mi experiencia con Dios)

*Experiencing God* is a detailed twelve-week study that will help you get to know God better. Studies and daily devotions will help the church planter to develop an intimate relationship with God so as to hear His voice; adjust his beliefs, his character, and his behavior to God’s will; and discover the importance of doing God’s will and trusting Him. This resource will train a Christian to seek, find, and do God’s will. To order this resource, visit [www.lifeway.com/espanol](http://www.lifeway.com/espanol).

The Hope (La esperanza DVD)

Through this highly professional production presenting 36 biblical events, organized in 12 chapters, the central message of the Bible comes to life. This evangelistic tool can be used to have biblical studies in houses or in churches. It is produced in such a way that each chapter covers interesting topics to encourage participation with comments that open the dialogue to present the message of salvation. In beautifully and attractive fashion, different biblical ideas come to life so that the work and life of Christ becomes clear. The idea of hope is based in the work of Christ. To order, visit [www.nambenespanol.net](http://www.nambenespanol.net).
Sharing the Good News with your Catholic Friends
(Comparta Las Buenas Nuevas Con Sus Amigos Católicos)

Here is a book written to help Christians understand the way Catholics think and feel about their salvation. Evangelistic strategies can be drawn to reach the Hispanic population that has a Catholic mentality. The authors show many mistakes committed when trying to evangelize Hispanics. Many times they hurt the feelings of their Catholic friends instead of opening the door to the gospel. This can result in them closing their minds and hearts forever to the gospel. It offers instruction on how to go about making friends and how to show them many doctrines we have in common in the rich history of Christianity. It shows how to invite them to accept the salvation by faith in Christ. You can order this and other helpful books both in English and Spanish by visiting www.churchstarting.net.

Planter’s Update

Get connected to the North American church planting community by subscribing to the Planter’s Update. This e-newsletter covers topics of interest to church planting practitioners. Each update features an article that is available in Spanish. Spanish resources are also frequently featured. You can register to receive your bi-monthly copy by going to www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/planterupdate.

Our Bridge (Un puente nuestro)

Our Bridge explains the vision, history, and services of the International Mission Board and the department of Hispanic Mobilization. You can get this material by visiting www.imb.org/resources.
Now Is the Time (Ahora es el Tiempo)

This is a video that challenges Hispanic churches to get involved in missions and shows how God is using Hispanics to impact a lost world with God’s love. To get this resource, visit www.imb.org/resources.

Spanish SnackPack (Loncherita Misionera)

SnackPack Missions is a collection of lesson plans for children (grades 1-6) featuring a learning activity, lesson, and a challenge that encourages children to become involved in missions. Children will learn Acts 1:8 and Great Commission principles along with Southern Baptist Cooperative Missions. Each lesson has an optional parent letter that engages parents in what their children are learning. These lessons can be integrated into existing ministries such as Royal Ambassadors, Girls in Action, Awana, Backyard Bible Clubs, etc. Each lesson takes approximately 15-20 minutes. Download the free lessons from www.nambenespanol.net.

One Day/One Hour Witnessing Workshop

Imagine equipping believers in your church to be effective witnesses in one day or in as little as one hour! This material gives the believer the skills necessary to present the basics of the gospel. A Spanish Workshop is available for download at www.namb.net/onedaywitness.
Intentional Community Evangelism

The purpose of the ICE strategy is to strengthen the local church and to equip the believer to be intentional in developing relationships to share the gospel. ICE will help develop opportunities through community ministry, prayerwalking the community, and follow-up of the new believer and his or her family. For more information, visit www.namb.net/ice.

Hispanic Evangelistic Tracts

These are some of the tracts that can be used to reach the Hispanic population. To order Spanish tracts visit www.nambstore.com.

Additional Spanish resources are available at www.nambenespanol.net and www.ChurchPlantingVillage.net/Spanish. In addition, the Church Planting Village Web site has a Spanish URL: www.plantariglesias.net.

Written by Roberto Gama. Roberto is a North American Mission Board retiree.

Dr. Roberto Gama
North American Mission Board Retiree

Roberto Gama served at the North American Mission Board as Resource Development Associate in the Readiness Team of the Church Planting Group until his retirement.

Previously, Roberto worked as an Associate in the Hispanic Church Planting Unit. Prior to that, he worked as a contract worker for the Home Mission Board. He served as Dean of Academic Affairs at Valley Baptist Academy, worked as an editor for the Sunday School Board, and was a pastor for several churches in Texas.

A native of Colombia, South America, he received his bachelor’s degree from Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois and his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.
The explosive growth of the Hispanic population coupled with rapid expansion throughout the country constitutes one of the greatest missionary opportunities that Southern Baptists have ever faced. This has motivated us to include vital information about this strategic people group and to share some of the most effective approaches that are being used to lead Hispanics to Christ. Our prayer is that this will enable Christian leaders to plant biblically-based, culturally-relevant, and reproducing churches that will impact their communities with the gospel.

In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His followers to “make disciples of all people.” Hispanics are the fastest growing people group in America and will constitute a fourth of the population by 2050. This, coupled with the fact that they are showing more receptivity to the gospel than ever before in the history of this country, presents an awesome challenge.

Southern Baptist Hispanic work has grown in recent years. Nevertheless, we are reaching a very small percentage of the Hispanic population living in North America. Millions of Hispanics are living without the direction, hope, and peace that can only be found in having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Many need churches where they can hear the gospel in their heart language. Others need churches where the gospel is communicated in culturally-appropriate or preferred styles.

What can we do? What is our responsibility? We are commanded to sow the gospel and make disciples of all nations, and planting churches is one of the most effective ways to do this among all people, including the Hispanics in our communities. May the Lord give us wisdom, strength, and passion to reach this great mission field that is at our doorstep for His honor and glory.

2 It is interesting to contrast this finding with the response Catholics gave with regards to the possibility of their leaving the Catholic Church. “Hispanic Catholics are highly unlikely to leave the Catholic Church. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanics who identify as Catholics are very unlikely to leave the Catholic Church. Almost three-fourths of Hispanics Catholics (74%) say they could never imagine leaving the Catholic Church, while only 21% say they could imagine it.” (Suro and Lugo 2007).


6 Ibid., 7.

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 8-9.
9 Ibid., 9.
14 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.


28 While it is true that there are variations in the manner in which the different groups speak the Spanish language, there are sufficient commonalities for most Hispanics to understand one another.

29 For a more extensive discussion of these groups, see Daniel R. Sanchez, Hispanic Realities Impacting America, (Church Starting Network, 2006), 65-76. Some portions of this material were included in this chapter with the author’s permission.

31 See World Book Encyclopedia, s.v. “Juan de Oñate” by Richard A. Bartlett.


33 Ibid., 953.


35 See Figure 2, chapter one of this book.


37 Ibid.

38 See Figure 2, Chapter 1 in this book.

39 During the 1600s there had been Spanish monks engaged in missionary activity in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida among Native Americans. There were, however, no Spanish permanent colonies established at that time. For more information, see Juan Gonzalez, A History of Latinos in America: Harvest of Empire, (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 14.


42 Harvard, op. cit., 312.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 217.

45 See Figure 2, chapter 1 in this book.

47 For a listing of some of these, see Eugene A. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 6.


49 Ibid., 245-246.


53 People who are not aware of this may wonder why it takes so long to baptize some Hispanic converts.


56 Montoya, 18.


59 The folk religions practiced by the native inhabitants were animistic involving the worship of the sun, the moon, physical nature that surrounded them, and the spirits associated with these.

Nida, 106-124.

For a more complete discussion, see Daniel R. Sanchez, Rudolf Gonzalez, *Sharing The Good News With Roman Catholic Friends*, 2003, 69-75. The Spanish version is *Comparta Las Buenas Nuevas Con Sus Amigos Católicos*. Both can be obtained through Church Starting Network, www.churchstarting.net.


Ibid.


Nida, 106, 107.


Ibid., 38.

Ibid., 5.

From a doctrinal standpoint, two of the major barriers to a personal experience with Jesus Christ among Hispanic Catholics relate to their devotion to the Virgin Mary and their ingrained belief that salvation is attained through good works. Many Roman Catholics feel that Evangelicals do not show enough respect toward Mary. Some Evangelicals in their efforts to avoid worshiping Mary go to the other extreme of not giving her the place that she is given in Scripture. This can create barriers to the communication of the gospel message.
73 Daniel R. Sanchez, op. cit.
74 Daniel R. Sanchez, Sharing the Good News with Roman Catholic Friends, Church Starting Network, 2003, 57-63. This an adaptation of the process described by David Hesselgrave, in Planting Churches Cross-Culturally (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).


76 See Figure 2 in chapter 1 of this book.


79 Ibid.


85 This case study is based on interviews conducted by one of the contributing authors of the book, Jorge Diaz. He has changed the names of the people to protect their privacy.


87 These factors will be discussed in more detail in the chapter that deals with evangelizing Hispanics.


92 Ibid.


94 For further information see the study entitled “Immigration in America” conducted by the National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Kennedy School of Government in September of 2004.

96 That tendency which seems innate to the Hispanic nature (to fellowship with those who are most like them) is what sociologists call “primary relationships” versus “secondary relationships.” For more information, see Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origin*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 31.


98 Roland Lopez, e-mail message to Bob Sena, May 6, 2009.


100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Many devout Roman Catholics are quite knowledgeable about the Bible. The vast majority of those who are nominal Catholics have a very limited knowledge about the Bible.

104 According to the Roman Catholic Church, the “sacraments” are the religious rites that the channels by which people receive Christ’s grace (e.g., Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction). The “sacramentals” are the things that enable Catholics to express their faith (e.g., holy water, the sign of the cross, the Rosary). *** See Felician A. Foy, *Catholic Almanac* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1992), 210, 220-28.
105 For more information on this, see Daniel R. Sanchez, Rudolph Gonzalez, *Sharing the Good News with Catholic Friends*.

106 Survey conducted by Richie Stanley and Daniel R. Sanchez, in November of 2004.

107 This is an adaptation of activities discussed in Daniel Sanchez, *Iglesia: Crecimiento y Cultura* (Fort Worth: Church Starting Network, 2004), 83.

108 This was South San Filadelfia Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas.


110 Ibid., 101-126.

111 Some excellent Bible storying resources can be ordered through the Bible Storying Web site (www.Bible-Storying.com) and through the Church Starting Network Web site (www.churchstarting.net).


116 For an extensive discussion on church planting models see, Daniel R. Sanchez, et. al., *Starting Reproducing Congregations*, (Forth Worth, Tex.: Church Starting Network, 2000), 75-101.
117 The establishment of churches that support themselves, that govern themselves, and that multiply themselves should be the goal of every church planting effort. For more information, see Verdict Theology in Mission Theory by A. R. Tippett, Missionary Methods: Saint Paul’s or Ours? by Roland Allen, and Balanced Church Growth by C. Ebbie Smith.

118 Some church planting strategists use funds for startup materials (e.g., Bibles) and for special events (e.g., block parties, advertisement, etc.) but are careful not to commit funds for the salaries of the leaders of the house churches because this will ultimately limit the number of house church leaders that can be involved.

119 David Garrison, Church Planting Movements (Richmond: International Mission Board, 2000), 33.

120 This parallel funding strategy may involve: 1) utilizing the regular cooperative funding (NAMB/state convention) for more traditional churches that are started; 2) utilizing funding for the training of the house church leaders while encouraging them to be bivocational and to receive support from the congregations they lead. For more information, see Bivocational Church Planters (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2008).


123 Some call it “basic church” because this model carries out the basic functions of a church as described in Acts 2:40-47.


126 By “networks” we are referring to groups that meet in homes and are linked to one another, to the sponsoring church, and to the association under which they serve. These are not isolated units but are groups that function in a cooperative manner and under the doctrinal and ecclesiastical guidelines established by the churches in the association.

127 For more information, contact Dr. Charles Price www.sanantoniobaptist.org.

128 For a more extensive discussion, see Daniel R. Sanchez, editor, *Church Planting Movements in North America*, (Forth Worth, Tex.: Church Starting Network, 2002).

129 Jesse Martinez shared this testimony at a Church Planting Conference in San Antonio, Texas, August 1, 2008.

130 David Garrison defines a church planting movement as “a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a people group or population segment.” David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond: International Mission Board, 2000), 7.


133 Lenski, 490.

134 Bruce, 287.


136 You may obtain initial demographical information at www.census.gov and the Center for Missional Research at the North American Mission Board www.namb.net/demographics.

138 Hospitals and police can be places the Hispanic planter can help out by serving as translator or chaplain.


142 Ibid., 147.

143 Sanchez, Smith and Watke, 347.


145 Ibid., 61.

146 *Calling Out the Called* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2007), 7-8.

147 Sanchez, Smith and Watke, 135-6.

148 Ibid., 141.


152 Ibid., 29.


155 One such case is the New Life Baptist Church in Garland, TX, under the leadership of Pastor David Galván.

I commend to you this great book which details how the Great Commission can be accomplished among the Hispanic population of our continent. It is with great joy that I affirm this book with its pertinent information and strategies for reaching the lost for Christ.

DR. FRANK S. PAGE  
Vice President of the Evangelization Group  
North American Mission Board, SBC

You cannot talk seriously about North American church planting and not focus on church plants among Latinos. *Reaching Hispanics in North America* is a book that fills a great need. It’s an informative and practical tool for anyone interested in reaching Hispanics, sharing Christ, and starting churches. It will give you a better understanding of the Hispanic culture and strategic ideas to do more effective church multiplication ministry.

DR. ED STETZER  
President of LifeWay Research

As the first Hispanic State Convention Executive Director, I have been waiting for this book. I have no doubt that this resource will guide us to more effectively impact the unchurched Hispanic community for Christ. I recommend it to state staff, directors of missions, pastors, and lay leaders as they pray, seek, and engage the Hispanic community where they minister.

DR. FERMIN A. WHITTAKER  
Executive Director  
California Baptist Convention

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