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DEVELOPING CIVICALLY ENGAGED, JUSTICE ORIENTED CHURCHES RIGHT FROM
THE START – A HISPANIC PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

A PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY
AT SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

ELIZABETH D. RÍOS

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“It is good to have an end to journey toward;
but it is the journey that matters, in the end.”

— Ursula K. Le Guin

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Abstract

Most church planting training programs train pastors in typical church operations systems as well as how to build their teams with a strong mission. However, often their training is vague and even non-existent in the area of biblical justice and advocacy, an area of pressing need in the changing face of the United States. We are more racially divided than ever, and we struggle with a myriad of socio-economic issues that need to be addressed at the root level. Those who are called to plant churches must therefore understand that unlike any other time in history, church planting today requires an additional set of skills, particularly when planting in urban locations where lack of justice abounds. This research project provides a biblical basis and justification for training church pastors to establish civically engaged, justice-oriented churches right from the start by returning to an old framework of partnership between evangelization and justice, which I suggest is particularly important for churches who desire to make a real difference in their communities and to be more effective in bringing long-term, sustainable change.

Chapter One introduces the problem, and its relation to the ministry of the writer. Chapter Two explores a biblical and theological framework in support of justice-oriented church planting through a selective reading of key texts. Chapter Three discusses the Hispanic population's importance in the United States, which is the particular population of interest as it relates to church planting. Chapter Four reports on data collection and

analysis as well as describing the content of seminar sessions. Chapter Five and Six discuss lessons learned and recommendations for further research.

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Chapter One: Introducing the Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a training seminar entitled “Right from the Start: Developing Civically-Engaged, Justice-Oriented Churches.” This training seminar will be geared to prospective Hispanic church planters and pastors in their first three years of church planting including non-Hispanics who seek to minister to and with Hispanics. The goal is to prepare these participants to understand why the world needs churches that go beyond rhetoric and that from the outset are planted with the intention of returning to a partnership between evangelization and justice, and between spirituality and civic action, both of which are at the heart of the gospel message. In addition, an important consideration for churches who desire to make a real difference in the communities in which they are planted is that churches that have been able to advocate for their communities have shown to be more effective in bringing long-term, sustainable change.

Eldin Villafañe aptly said, “The challenge to the church in the twenty-first century is not just to speak the truth; the real challenge is to live the truth! As Christians we are called to incarnate the gospel, to live a life informed by the cross.”¹ Thus the focus of this project is to develop a four session seminar that will help church planters reflect on how to live their lives informed by the cross and how to plant churches that incarnate the gospel message by not only speaking the truth but living the truth. Specifically, this

1. Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 73–74, Kindle.

project advocates for a justice and advocacy training program that is based on the actions of Jesus.

Most church planting training programs already train pastors in typical church operations as well as how to build leadership teams with a strong mission. However, training is often vague and even non-existent in the area of biblical justice and advocacy. Such vagueness is particularly debilitating when planting and pastoring a church in an urban community because it is especially in its urban contexts that the United States has changed radically. Our racial divisions and our struggles with a myriad of socio-economic and justice issues need to be addressed at the root level, and to do that those who are called to plant churches must understand that they require an additional set of skills.

According to a 2019 Gallup Poll, trust in institutions including organized religion and the church has declined markedly since 1975.² Public scandals of evangelical mega-church pastors and televangelists and the sexual abuse scandals in the Roman Catholic church have contributed to that distrust. Like Gallup, a Pew Research Center study found that social trust, defined as a belief in honesty, integrity, and the reliability of others, has similarly decreased³ because social capital, which in its most “fundamental form is the family” (both nuclear and extended), has weakened.⁴ In addition, the US has become

2. Gallup Poll, “*Confidence in Institutions*,” accessed February 1, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>.

3. Pew Research Center, February 2007, “Americans and Social Trust: Who, Where and Why,” accessed February 1, 2019, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2007/02/22/americans-and-social-trust-who-where-and-why/>.

4. Robert D. Putnam. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65–78, accessed February 6, 2019, <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.

more racially diverse and population growth in cities are doubling that of rural communities. This is significant because the Pew study also discovered that whites are more trusting of institutions than blacks or Hispanics, and that families with lower income are less trusting of institutions than families with higher income. The study likewise revealed that the married are more trusting of institutions than the unmarried, and people who live in rural areas are more trusting of institutions than those who live in cities.⁵

What does all this do with church life? A 2016 report by George Barna found that while “seven out of 10 new churches are in cities or dense inner suburbs,”

ministering in cities [also] presents unique financial challenges for many reasons. Urban centers and their surrounding communities are often diverse, but may be segregated by race, education level, economics, age and cultural differences. Thus, urban [church] planters are more likely to have diverse congregations with varying levels of income and needs, as well as higher operational and facility expenses, than their suburban or rural counterparts. Plus, residents of urban centers, no matter their level of income, live in environments with a higher cost of living. This puts extra strain on a church planter’s personal finances.⁶

In short, disparities between urban and rural dwellers have become greater, especially as regards social and political concerns.⁷ Taking such issues into account would help the

5. Pew Research Center, February 2007, “Americans and Social Trust: Who, Where and Why.”

6. George Barna, “Church Startups and Money: The Myths and Realities of Church Planters and Finances,” accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/research/church-planters-and-the-cost-of-starting-a-church/>.

7. Pew Research Center, May 2018, “What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities,” accessed February 1, 2019, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/05/Pew-Research-Center-Community-Type-Full-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

church be a “credible witness”⁸ in their community, important because “the church is God’s showpiece, a living demonstration in time and space of what God intends for all of humanity and a foretaste of what heaven will be like.”⁹

Given the severe lack of economic opportunities and poverty, urban dwellers tend to prefer to give their allegiance to indigenous pastors who have lived among them and understand the unique and complex issues of their community over someone who has just moved to the area or who lives outside their community and visits only to minister there. While all church planters who pastor in such communities may care about their people, few appear to have a plan for how they will work towards sustainable long-term change for them there, though those pastors who live among them are more likely to do so.

Whether or not a pastor serves at the margins of society in such an urban environment, most pastors do encounter marginalized people. Those numbers are increasing as more churches are planted in urban communities. Many of these pastors start churches with the good intention of saving souls and providing services to improve social conditions. However, research suggests that long-term sustainable change is hard to sustain without a deliberate plan for a church’s civic engagement. In a National Congregations Study, a repeated cross-sectional survey of congregations in the United States conducted over a period of three years (between 1998, 2006–2007, 2012) Brad

8. A credible witness as explained by Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil is being believable about what it is a person preaches, “the gospel” and the church being a witness to the reality of the kingdom of God and his power to reconcile his people to God and to each other. For more information, see Brenda Salter McNeil, *A Credible Witness: Reflections on Power, Evangelism and Race* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 17.

9. Salter McNeil, *A Credible Witness*, 11.

Fulton observes that “providing short-term relief of immediate needs through service provision without also pursuing long-term strategies to improve social conditions through political participation can limit congregations’ ability to effectively and comprehensively address social needs.”¹⁰ In the first year of data collection, Fulton discovered that service-oriented churches were increasing but that churches’ involvement in political activities was decreasing. Yet as the years progressed, he found that participation grew twice as much in congregations involved in service-related activities than political activities. The most substantial decreases in involvement were among evangelical Protestant, predominately white, and politically conservative congregations. By contrast, Fulton found that political participation rates of Catholic, predominately Hispanic, and politically liberal congregations had been increasing. Overall, Fulton demonstrated that “congregations continue to play a substantial role in addressing social needs; yet their involvement is shifting to occur primarily through acts of service and less through political engagement.”¹¹ This shift obviously has implications for a church’s overall impact in contributing to the social transformation of its community.

However, there are exceptions. There are evangelical pastors, including Hispanic Pentecostals, who like their Catholic and Black brothers and sisters have had a strong history of addressing social issues by providing congregation-based services or starting

10. Brad R. Fulton, “Trends in Addressing Social Needs: A Longitudinal Study of Congregation-Based Service Provision and Political Participation,” *Religions* 7, no. 5 (2016): 51, accessed July 10, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7050051>.

11. Fulton, “Trends in Addressing Social Needs,” 2.

nonprofit organizations. In fact, congregation-based social services are so common among Hispanic Pentecostals that they “do not see anything special about them but rather assume that is what Christians are supposed to do on a daily basis for their hermanos/as as a way to demonstrate the love of God to unbelievers.”¹²

Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori document in their book, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, that Pentecostal churches around the world had a “dizzying array of services, programs, and ministries.”¹³ Among other things, such churches provided food, clothing, and shelter; helped respond to natural disasters; educated the poor or provided a safe space for children of those being educated; provided counseling for those dealing with addictions; provided medical care and assistance; and even provided micro-loans, job training, and affordable housing. Yet Miller and Yamamori found that while the churches they visited were providing all these services, they still tended not to engage in the political realm because of long-held theological understandings of the mission of the church and the corruptness of the world. It is not that these pastors did not care, but simply that they did not see such political engagement to be a good use of their time. For them, saving souls from eternal hell was more important than liberating them from the hell they might be living on this side of heaven.

12. Gaston Espinosa, “Righteousness and Justice: Faith-based Action for Social Change,” in *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 322.

13. Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 42.

However, Miller and Yamamori did find a few churches that had a long-term strategy for creating a better society, such as through mentoring and nurturing a new generation of leaders to run for political office.¹⁴ Therefore, it would be a mistake once again to dismiss Latino Pentecostal and Evangelical churches as lacking a theology for civic engagement because they truly are “sites of political empowerment.”¹⁵

Latina Pentecostal women have also been a big part of addressing social issues through the church from a spiritually-based holistic perspective, typically a blend of prayer, evangelizing, preaching, and social work. An example of this goes all the way back to the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, at which Susie Villa Valdez would serve, sing, and pray for the rejects of society, the “ex-cons, prostitutes, alcoholics” in the slums of Los Angeles.¹⁶ Another example is Leoncia Rosado Rousseau or “Mama Leo” as she was affectionately called by those she affected directly or indirectly through her ministry. She too would serve and minister to the outcasts of New York’s “barrios,” the drug addicts, gang members, prostitutes, and alcoholics. Many of them went on to become great leaders, preachers, and pastors of their day. One of them was Nicky Cruz of *The Cross and the Switchblade* fame.¹⁷

14. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 125.

15. Daniel Ramirez, “Public Lives in American Hispanic Churches: Expanding the Paradigm” in *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 178.

16. Ramirez, “Public Lives in American Hispanic Churches,” 324.

17. Elizabeth Rios, “The Ladies are Warriors: Latino Pentecostalism and Faith-Based Activism in New York City,” in *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 203-04. See David Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (1977; repr., New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 1962).

However, while the last few decades have seen an increase in evangelicals' political involvement for community change, there are still Christians who are not trying to reform society or challenge political systems—except perhaps through prayer. To such persons Joel Edwards called for “a contemporary Pentecostal response to injustice and advocacy” at a Pentecostal conference in Europe.¹⁸ A beginning response, he noted, was hosting an event on justice and Pentecostals. But by and large, he observed,

Pentecostalism is not readily associated with matters of biblical justice—even when we are actively involved in social action. Pentecostals and political engagement is still something of an oxymoron... There is still something endemic in our theological and cultural heritage which detaches us from political activities.¹⁹

Like US-based Pentecostals, he acknowledged that by and large the Pentecostal church in Europe is growing, although some churches still struggle to survive. In addition, he referred to two shared beliefs of most Pentecostals, namely “a holiness tradition that emphasizes individual piety and withdrawal from the world, and a gulf between academia and pastoral preaching, a slow osmosis between the classroom and pulpit.”²⁰ Edwards argues that Pentecostal academia has had the desire and authority to “explore socio-political issues but has not transmitted those ideas in the local church where the bulk of our discipling take place.”²¹ Selina Stone would agree with Edwards in part because she

18. Joel Edwards, “Justice and Pentecostals,” *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 31, no. 1 (2011): 5–16, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/jep.2011.31.1.002>.

19. Edwards, “Justice and Pentecostals,” 5.

20. Edwards, “Justice and Pentecostals,” 6.

21. Edwards, “Justice and Pentecostals,” 6.

believes that discipleship, or what others term “spiritual formation,” is politically significant in Pentecostal theology and ministry. However, she would also argue that perhaps a broader understanding of “political” is warranted, one which “includes each citizen and each gathering that shapes life in the polis through activity or inactivity.”²² According to Stone, everything is political and everyone is faced with a choice to engage or not engage. It really does not matter whether one is located in the United Kingdom or in the United States: politics is at everyone’s doorstep. To engage or not engage are choices that have political impact. Thus, while there have been modest efforts to date to mobilize Pentecostals, there is room for much greater intentional education, impact, and involvement.

Much of the plight we see in the US today is related not only to how people think culturally but also to how they think theologically. This is where orthodoxy and orthopraxy have an opportunity to meet. Edwards therefore suggests that the time has come for Pentecostals to develop a “robust theology of engagement that can “take us beyond important social action to prophetic advocacy with and on behalf of the poor.”²³ The difference between them he illustrates with a quotation he attributes to David Beckmann: “God did not send Moses to Pharaoh’s courts to take up a collection of canned goods, but rather to insist on political and economic change—the liberation of the

22. Selina Stone, “Pentecostal Power: Discipleship as Political Engagement,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, 38:1, 24–38, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2018.1434727>

23. Edwards, “Justice and Pentecostals,” 6.

slaves.”²⁴ Murry Dempster urges Pentecostals to be the models and witnesses to the power of the Gospel message, and as such to see the church “as the social structure through which the gospel works to change other structures.”²⁵ The church should be the agent of transformation God uses to be the pointer to others to develop a theology of Pentecostal social concern. A theology that does not promote justice is bad theology. It is for this reason that the type of training proposed is important. The issue is not that church planters are not educated, the issue is that in some cases, there are important topics left out of their training or they are miseducated altogether by being told that a theology of justice is not an important concern for soon-to-be pastors.

Purpose for Addressing the Challenge

Pastors pray for justice, but such efforts are typically at best Band-Aids for issues that need to be addressed systemically. Why this disjuncture in methods? Many reasons exist, particularly in the Hispanic Pentecostal community, such as the inability to speak two languages well (or at least to speak English well), and lack of finances, leisure time, and social capital. “Social capital” in this context refers to the real-time access to resources (information, financial support, influence, skills and solidarity) due to

24. David Beckman, “What Christian Development Practitioners Need from Christian Researchers” in Schaffner Smith Dean, ed., in *Attacking Poverty in the Developing World* (Milton Keynes: Authentic/World Vision 2005), 5, quoted in Joel Edwards, “Justice and Pentecostals,” *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 31, no. 1 (2011): 5–16, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/jep.2011.31.1.002>.

25. Murry W. Dempster, “Pentecostal Social Concern and the Biblical Mandate of Social Justice,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Fall (1987): 137.

membership in a network. However, historical and contemporary literature also suggests that a major reason why pastors are not preparing their congregations with social justice knowledge or civic engagement responsibility has been their own sense of inadequacy due to their lack of education, particularly about justice and advocacy, including about how the Bible expects disciples of Jesus to respond to such issues.²⁶ Besides a lack of education, another reason for this has been that Pentecostals operate from an eschatological mindset that focuses on eternity and heaven, rather than the here and now, and a belief that the primary mission of the church is to evangelize for the purpose of saving souls. As Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes, “There is no denying the fact that in the formative years of the movement many Pentecostals’ eschatological fervor blurred the meaning of social improvement. Why invest in a world that was believed would fade away?”²⁷ Moreover, as a branch of Evangelicalism, some Pentecostals have believed that any focus on “doing justice” would signal that they were less concerned with sound doctrine and were even perhaps “watering down the gospel.” Godfrey Harold states, “Within Evangelicalism, right doctrine takes precedence over right action. This focus created a dysfunctional understanding of the world and how one engages it.”²⁸

26. Kirkpatrick G. Cohall and Bruce S. Cooper, “Educating American Baptist Pastors: A National Survey of Church Leaders,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 19, no. 1 (January 2010): 27–55, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656211003630174>.

27. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Are Pentecostals Oblivious to Social Justice? Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives,” *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXIX, No. 4 (October 2001): 417–431, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://doi-org.seu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/009182960102900402>.

28. Godfrey Harold, “Evangelicals and Social Justice: Towards an Alternative Evangelical Community,” *Conspectus —The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary*, No. 25 (March 2018): 21–37, accessed July 10, 2018, <https://www.sats.edu.za/harold-evangelicals-and-social-justice>.

However, this was not the case with all Pentecostals and certainly not with Hispanic Pentecostals, who were typically much more involved in matters of justice and social concern on a micro-level. For them, right action was actually proof of right doctrine, and they saw their work as evangelistic social change, not necessarily the lingo we are more accustomed to in this day and age of social justice. On such group I highlight in this project are the Latina Progressive Pentecostals who were part of the social transformation taking place in New York City pre- and post-9/11; I describe how they viewed their activism and service as a call from God based on Joel 2:28, a text by which they understood that God could use even them, as women, to change the world.²⁹ But such involvement is broader than simply one or two select groups, and the reasons for their involvement more nuanced. Gastón Espinosa (for example) notes that,

Although Latino churches are less active than their white counterparts on standard measures of social action, they were as active or more active than their black counterparts in select social activities. The degree of Latino faith-based action is shaped by key factors like immigration status, generation, income, education, religious affiliation and participating.³⁰

While many Pentecostals continue to focus on evangelism, personal salvation, and heaven, for decades there has been a shift in some sectors of the group. Donald Miller's research on the involvement of Pentecostals in social action and transformation highlights this shift; he notes that 85 percent of the churches they interviewed were Pentecostal or

29. Elizabeth D. Rios "The Ladies are Warriors: Latina Pentecostalism and Faith-based Activism in New York City," in *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, ed. Gastón Espinosa et al., (NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 197.

30. Gaston Espinosa, "Introduction: U.S. Latino Religions and Faith-Based Political, Civic, and Social Action," in *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 14.

charismatic.³¹ In addition, Kärkkäinen states, “Pentecostals are now exceptionally optimistic about both their present and future existence,”³² particularly in the role they play in society. Keith Warrington notes another shift, namely that “Pentecostals are now more often engaging with those who are in positions of national and international authority and who have the power to make changes.”³³ He notes that this new engagement is mostly evident among people in minority groups, spurred into action because of their own personal experiences with injustice. Such believers no longer think that they should be disengaged from what is happening in the world around them, and consequently their theology is changing to what Warrington describes as “a more robust determination on the part of some to effect change by other means than only prayer.”³⁴ Thus, to the dismay of some, while advocacy has always been some small part of

31. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 212.

32. Kärkkäinen, “Are Pentecostals Oblivious to Social Justice?,” 419.

33. Keith Warrington, “Social Transformation in the Missions of Pentecostals: A Priority or a Bonus?” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 31, no. 1 (2011): 17–35, accessed July 10, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1179/jep.2011.31.1.003>.

34. Warrington, “Social Transformation,” 25.

35. Elaine Hatfield, Michael Salmon, & Richard L. Rapson, “Equity Theory and Social Justice,” *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 8, no. 2 (2011): 101–121, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766086.2011.581818>.

36. There are many variations of the Golden Rule, and some religions emphasize it more than others, but all want to instill a moral code in people. Carolyn Dewald, “Alternatives to the Golden Rule: Social Reciprocity and Altruism in Early Archaic Greece,” in *The Golden Rule: The Ethics of Reciprocity in World Religions*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2008), 38. In addition, the Golden Rule is “A principle identified in the west since the eighteenth century and cherished in some form in nearly every religious tradition. In the Jewish Book of Tobit we find, ‘Do to no man that which you hate.’ The Hindu Mahabharata teaches, ‘Let no man do to another that which would be repugnant to himself.’ In the Confucian Chung Yung (Doctrine of the Mean, we read, ‘What you do not wish others to do to you, do not do to them.’ The Buddhist Dhammapada teaches, ‘To all is life dear. Judge then by thyself, and forbear to slay or to cause slaughter.’ Jeffrey Wattles, “Levels of Meaning in the Golden Rule,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 15, no. 1 (Spr 1987): 106–129.

pastoring on a micro-level, civic engagement advocacy has become a much bigger part and responsibility for pastors, meaning there is an expectation that pastors will advocate in society and its systems for the people they serve, and display a practice-based Christianity, not simply a belief-based one. Such pastors “walk their talk.”

Advocacy is the epitome of “walking your talk,” and today’s diverse communities of believers insist that their pastors be advocates. While American pastors will continue to have different opinions regarding the practice of social justice, social action, social transformation, and advocacy by virtue of their education, socio-economic status, race, and experience,³⁵ there is still an expectation that pastors will make an effort to see others’ world from the perspective of those living there.

When a leader such as a pastor speaks up and advocates for the people in their community, they are kin to the many men and women of God who have felt called to do more than offer thoughts and prayers. Some of these men and women have been Baptist pastors Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Walter Rauschenbush; minister and Reformed theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Catholic priest John A. Ryan, and Hispanic Pentecostals like Rev. Aimee Garcia Cortese, Rev. Ana Villafañe, Rev. Rosa Caraballo, and Leonicia Rosado Rosseau (the aforementioned Mama Leo), Rev. Susie Villa Valdez, and Rev. Raymond Rivera. More importantly, when pastors stand up and speak up in the halls of power on behalf of the voiceless, they imitate the life, ministry, and the heart of Jesus, the One whom they claim to follow.

Although many religious people and organizations believe they should be working toward social justice through social action and community transformation in the footsteps of those like the aforementioned leaders, they differ in what they understand justice to be and to what extent they need to take as radical an approach as Jesus did. That Jesus was a radical social activist is something to which the Pentecostal community still needs to become accustomed. Many people of various religions refer to the concept of the Golden Rule as the basis for addressing the needs of the poor and vulnerable in their communities.³⁶ Beyond that, their definitions often differ depending on their culture, experiences, and upbringing. While the Golden Rule is good, the reasons Jesus people should be involved in justice is because it is biblical and Jesus modeled the way. A simple review of New Testament books, Matthew, Mark and Luke would prove that point.

Precisely because it is the heart of the gospel message, this researcher advocates for a return to a partnership between evangelization and justice, and between spirituality and civic action. Specifically, this dissertation advocates for a civic advocacy training paradigm for church planters that is based on the actions of Jesus.

In an increasingly urban, complex, and multiracial society, pastors can no longer be silent about social justice and consider worship services and food pantry distributions to fulfill their people's obligations to their neighbors. More and more people are expecting their pastors to lead them in caring for their community—for the well-being of people's spirit, body, mind, and relationships. Too often, that well-being is at the mercy

of systems and policies. The marginalized need leaders who will advocate for them and push for systems and policies that are just and promote equity. Church members look to their pastors to provide such leadership and advocacy. It is the hope of the researcher that Hispanic Pentecostal planters and pastors, and those who seek to work with them, will feel encouraged, empowered, and informed to do the work of justice as many Hispanics before them have done, equipped with a theology of civic engagement that is biblically based. This biblical basis for such action is crucial. For as Gaston Espinosa put it, “it is only after also drinking from their own wells of history, faith, and culture that Latinos can find the inner strength, confidence, and passion to engage society and become active and responsible participants in American public life.”³⁷ With specific regard to church planting with and to Hispanics, this project aims to show how there is precedent, both biblically and in the Hispanic community, for civically-engaged, justice-oriented leaders, and to demonstrate that with the right training, churches can be planted with this very DNA right from the start.

Central Research Questions

The central question that will drive this study is: What is the biblical basis and justification for training pastors in civic engagement alongside of their other church

37. Gaston Espinosa, “Introduction: U.S. Latino Religions and Faith-Based Political, Civic, and Social Action,” in *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 14.

planting training? In addition, several subsidiary questions helped design this research study.

Subsidiary Questions

Research Question 1: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how study participants felt about their ability to equip others to become advocates and activists?

Research Question 2: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how confident study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

Research Question 3: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how competent study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

Research Question 4: Which element of social justice advocacy reflected the greatest degree of impact from the targeted training session?

Relation of Research Project to the Ministry of the Writer

The researcher serves as vice president and board chair of an organization that focuses on developing healthy leaders for multi-ethnic church planting. Plant4Harvest (P4H) discovers, develops, and deploys church planters to cities across the United States. Denominational executives, parent churches, or individual prospective church planters hire P4H to prepare them for deployment to expand the Kingdom of God. Since 2015, the organization has started over fifty churches, oversees ten nontraditional faith communities, and has at least ten affiliate traditional churches (meaning they meet for Sunday services) and nontraditional churches (who meet in a variety of formats and times

but not for Sunday services) who count on them for leadership, training, and spiritual oversight.

In addition, in May 2019, the researcher was appointed to the Send Institute's missiologist council, which is composed of thought leaders and practitioners who gather to address issues facing evangelistic church planting in North America and to propose new models and paradigms for church planting.

Lastly, the possible impact of this study is of personal importance to this researcher as the spiritual cultivator of a nontraditional model of ministry called The Passion Center, whose focus it is to help people grow in their passion for God and live out the gospel's mandate for biblical justice by loving God, themselves, and their neighbor.

Contextual Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

The preparation and execution of this project will occur between August 2018 and October 2019. A limitation is the relatively small size of the participant group—twenty to thirty church planters and pastors. Pre-selected males and females who represent a variety of cities and who are current or former members of the Plant4Harvest church-planter training program will be the main invited participants of the training. However, trainers, planters, and pastors from other church planting training associations will also be invited for feedback on the initial training.

Since the researcher predominately works with and trains people of color, the study group participants will represent this mixed demographic and the intention will be to develop a training curriculum precisely for this population who, based on an initial survey, feel they lack necessary knowledge about the biblical basis for civic engagement and who have fewer resources to engage in the major focus for this study.

Assumptions

Among the project's assumptions are that:

1. Characteristics of the participants in this study will be representative of those participants that are part of the P4H church-planter training program.
2. Participants will have some basic theological understanding of what is meant by social justice.
3. All participants will have a minimum of two to three years of ministerial experience.
4. Over 80 percent of participants represent minority populations.
5. Due to the representation of minority populations, most participants are likely to have experienced racial and/or socio-economic injustice in their lifetimes.
6. Most participants will have a strong motivation to complete the training given their understanding of ministerial calling and preparation.

Definition of Major Terms

For the purposes of my study, I relied primarily on the definitions from theologians and practitioners who are respected nationally and internationally and who are on the frontlines of work in civic advocacy, faith-rooted organizing, and justice and

social transformation through faith-based organizations. In this project several terms will dominate the discourse. I define these at the outset of my project below.

Advocacy. This term can be defined as using one's voice to call on leaders who have influence over the structures and systems that are affecting a particular community, city, state or country. Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel define it as "The process of calling on leaders (whether corporate or governmental) to make public commitments to use their power in ways that respond accurately and effectively to the needs of those affected by their decisions."³⁸

Civic Engagement. Civic engagement became a widely discussed topic around the early 1990s, but it is actually part of a much bigger debate surrounding American democracy.³⁹ Robert Putnam defines civic engagement as the connection people have with their community, not just politics.⁴⁰ Matthew Loveland provides even greater clarity, defining civic engagement as "individuals working toward a shared vision of a good society and engaging in the social public acts that are required to achieve the desired ends while at the same time submitting to the basic authority of a yet more broadly shared

38. Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel, *Faith-rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 8.

39. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); Theda Skocpol, "The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy," *Social Science History*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 455–479, accessed February 1, 2019, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0145-5532%28199724%2921%3A4%3C455%3ATTPEI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-V>.

40. Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," in *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65–78, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://muse.jhu.edu>.

civic culture.”⁴¹ Thomas Ehrlich uses a definition that works best for the purposes of this study. He defines civic engagement as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes.”⁴² Essentially, civic engagement refer to persons getting involved in the life of the city by means of community organizing and/or politics in a variety of ways that contribute to the common good.

Contextualization. Context is important especially as it relates to working in urban areas and with people of color. Often canned approaches to church planting are introduced to these urban areas without an appropriate exegesis of the community and attempts to plant a church fail. Therefore, there must be an attempt to communicate the gospel in word and deed in a way that is understood by the people in their own cultural situation or context. Orlando Costas adds, “To contextualize is not only to ask about the past and present of a text in the light of the past and present of its readers and hearers, but especially to ask about its future, its transforming effect upon those who will come into contact with it.”⁴³

41. Matthew T. Loveland, "Civic Congregations: Congregational Dynamics and Individual Civic Involvement" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2005), 140, accessed February 1, 2019, ProQuest Database.

42. Thomas Ehrlich, *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), vi.

43. Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 5.

Hispanic. There is no agreement among people of Hispanic descent as to what word to use them and their heritage, specifically whether Latino or Hispanic. The terms Latino or Latinx are often chosen to address gender concerns or to include Brazilians, but is often controversial in conservative circles due to its attempt to be inclusive of gender-nonconforming people and its use in the LGBT community. In the Latino community, it is often viewed as offensive because it is seen as an erasure of the Spanish language. For the purposes of this project, the researcher will use the US government-created term “Hispanic,” which a US dictionary defines as, “Of or relating to the people, speech, or culture of Spain or of Spain and Portugal, of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent living in the U.S.; especially: one of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin.”⁴⁴ A 2012 Pew Study revealed that when it comes to how they are identified, 51 percent of Hispanics surveyed don’t care, but of those who do, 33 percent prefer the term Hispanic.⁴⁵

Progressive Pentecostal. In this project, I use the term “progressive Pentecostal” which has various definitions being used in today’s society for this term. Bryant L. Myers defines this kind of Pentecostalism as one with a “deep commitment to social ministries

44. *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. “Hispanic,” accessed August 12, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Hispanic>. The discussion on which term to use is always a heated one between, Hispanic, Latino/a or the newest term Latinx. Most people from Latin America or the Caribbean prefer to use Latino/a/x because it keeps the Spanish language intact and is more in line with identity, but it never fully represents gender correctly.

45. Paul Taylor, Mark Hugo Lopez, et al., *When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2012), accessed August 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2012/04/04/when-labels-dont-fit-hispanics-and-their-views-of-identity/>.

organized around the congregation and its neighborhood or village.”⁴⁶ I prefer the explanation used by Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori because I believe it captures the importance of the Spirit, which is a defining distinctive of Pentecostals in general. They define progressive Pentecostals as “Christians not linked to any particular political movement, who claim to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus and seek to holistically address the spiritual, physical, and social needs of people in their community.”⁴⁷ This researcher considers herself to be a Progressive Pentecostal.

Social Justice Advocacy. The researcher understands this as a broad umbrella term to define advocacy based on a social justice understanding. It includes the definitions of advocacy, social justice, and civic engagement.

Social Justice. Here, social justice refers to efforts made to address local community issues, relieve poverty and hunger, as well as promote world peace and other humanitarian justice causes.⁴⁸

Social Gospel. The “social gospel” movement emerged in the late nineteenth century and peaked around the 1920s. The movement amalgamated the ethics of Christian faith with social/political activism. It emphasized the idea that Christians had a

46. Bryant L. Myers, “Progressive Pentecostalism, Development, and Christian Development NGOs: A Challenge and an Opportunity.” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 3 (2015): 115–120. <http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/2015-03/2015-03-115-myers.html>.

47. Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 2.

48. Nathan Todd and Nicole Allen, “Religious Congregations as Mediating Structures for Social Justice: A Multilevel Examination,” in *American Journal of Community Psychology* 48, no. 3–4 (2011): 222–237, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9388-8>.

responsibility to apply their faith to engage in bringing about the kingdom of God in the here and now, and no focus only on the life to come.⁴⁹

Project Goals and Objectives

The project has five goals:

The first goal will be to develop a theological framework for a civic engagement curriculum for the purposes of educating pastors on why social justice advocacy is a skill that not only has biblical precedent but that can also help them bring long-term sustainable change to their community.

The second goal will be to assess the research participants' current knowledge, philosophy, and practices of civic engagement for social transformation in their current or planned ministries. Their responses to a survey will identify their personal and ministerial philosophy of ministry as it pertains to justice, civic engagement, and social transformation. In addition, leaders (or subject matter experts) in the field of advocacy will be interviewed to learn from their experience in advocacy and what they believe would be important in a curriculum. The information from the research from both church planters and subject matter experts will be used to develop the theology of civic engagement curriculum that will fill the church planters' knowledge gaps in the area of how the Bible implicitly or explicitly justifies civic engagement and social justice advocacy. The

49. Gina Zurlo, "The Social Gospel, Ecumenical Movement, and Christian Sociology: The Institute of Social and Religious Research." *American Sociologist* 46, no. 2 (June 2015): 177–193, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-014-9231-z>.

objective will be to send out the pre-project survey by October 2018 for completion by January 2019.

The third goal will be to develop lesson plans for a one-day (four-hour) teaching curriculum on justice and civic engagement from a biblical perspective. The objective for this goal will be to complete a one-day training, which will include lesson plans for each hour of a four-hour day. The target date for this goal will be August-September 2019.

The fourth goal will be to implement the newly developed curriculum at a one-day training seminar. The training seminar will take place sometime in August or September of 2019. The pre-project survey will be re-administered to the participants of the training to see to what degree they have grown in knowledge and commitment to justice and faith-based civic engagement and advocacy. The objective of this fourth goal will be the implementation of the newly developed curriculum by a target date no later than the end of September 2019.

The fifth and final goal will be to administer the post-project participant survey to see how church planters responded to the training and how they foresee using what they learned there in their church-planting future. The fifth goal's objective will be to administer the post-project participant survey, and the target date to administer the survey will be on the day on which training is completed.

Anticipated Outcomes

Upon completion of this seminar, the participant should be able to:

1. Identify and describe what barriers keeps planters and pastors from being advocates for social justice.

2. Construct a theological framework for a civically-engaged, justice-oriented church.
3. Understand biblical conceptions of justice and advocacy for the marginalized, measured by pre- and post-survey responses.
4. Understand the biblical expectations of believers to advocate against injustice toward their neighbors, especially the most marginalized.
5. Discuss and form strategies for future transformational advocacy practice.

Seminar Description

Using texts from both the Old and New Testament, along with contemporary urban ministry practitioner literatures, the four-session seminar will emphasize an ecclesiology for ministering in a captive world (the totality of human dilemmas people are often faced with), advocating for justice and using faith-rooted organizing and advocacy practices to seek to restore shalom and work for the common good in their communities.

Training Schedule

Date 9/21/19	Title
	Session 1: Ministering in a Captive World Session 2: Justice is Biblical Lunch Session 3: Walking with the People:– Planters in an Ecosystem Planting with/among Hispanics Session 4: Faith-rooted Organizing & Advocacy Discussion & Post-Project Survey

Project Chapter Overview

This project proposes the development of a training seminar entitled: Right from the Start: Developing Civically-Engaged, Justice-Oriented Churches. The seminar will be for Hispanic church planters and pastors (and those who seek to minister with and to the Hispanic community). The goal of the seminar is to help participants return to an old framework of partnership between evangelization and justice, and between spirituality and civic action, which is at the heart of the gospel message. The project paper that develops from these efforts will include six chapters.

This first introductory chapter has introduced the problem, research questions, project goals and objectives, the anticipated outcomes of the seminar, and their relation to the ministry of the writer. Chapter two will explore a biblical and theological framework in support of justice-oriented church planting through a selective reading of key texts in

the Old and New Testaments that implicitly point to the role of the believer and the church in regards to justice advocacy as evidenced by the life of key prophets and Jesus. Chapter three will discuss the Hispanic population's importance in the United States, this being the context for this study. The chapter will elaborate on Hispanics believers' early roots and involvement in social transformation as an evangelical and Pentecostal community. In addition it will discuss Progressive Pentecostalism and give an overview of some key contemporary Hispanic practitioners of justice ministry. Chapter four will report on the methodology of the project, such its research design, the role of the researcher, and data collection and analysis, as well as delineating the content of the seminar sessions. Chapter five and six will discuss how the project will be evaluated, including final conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Project in Perspective

This researcher advocates for a return to an old framework of partnership between evangelization and justice, and between spirituality and civic action because it is the heart of the gospel message. Specifically, this dissertation argues that churches who desire to help bring long term sustainable change in communities with a large population of the urban poor would do well to be trained in civic advocacy. Those churches with pastors who understand justice and evangelization as a model of Jesus that is not an either/or choice but a both/and decision are likely to have the greatest impact in their communities.

Introduction: Toward a World of Justice and Shalom

Our world in 2019 is not the world that God created and envisioned. The God of love and justice envisioned a perfect world, a world where shalom was present. Shalom, which is a prominent Old Testament term, has a wide range of connotations such as peace, wholeness, health, security, well-being, and salvation. Shalom has an equally wide range of contexts, such as the relationship between God and humanity, the relationships among humanity, and the state of the individual. Shalom is the desired state of harmony and communion between people, their world, and God.⁵⁰ As this chapter will detail, due to the Fall of humanity, everything was corrupted. Dennis Jacobsen states that the world as it is “is the enemy of God [and] the people of God.”⁵¹ Despite the Puritan desire to

50. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Peace.” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1634.

51. Dennis Jacobsen, *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), Kindle, 55.

create a city on a hill that brought light to the nations, today the United States' secular values, attitudes, foreign policy, and social views on poverty, immigration, and abortion directly contradict the shalom that God intended. God loves the world but desires for it to be "rooted in truth, love, and community."⁵² God calls every Christian to co-labor with God to restore the world to the Creator's original intent of shalom, and that work is done through various vehicles, like preaching, teaching, leading, educating, feeding, housing, and clothing. In other words, shalom is not narrowly creating peace and harmony and stopping there. It is also working to restore a person's wholeness and a city's prosperity and welfare.

Robert Linthicum, an urban ministry practitioner who was the Founder of Partners in Urban Transformation, a ministry that was dedicated to empowering urban churches and communities delineates three responsibilities of the Christian as they work towards restoring shalom. "First, we need to have a vision for the world as God intended it to be where nothing is missing and nothing is broken. Second, we need to have a realistic understanding of the world as it is, a fallen and broken world. And third, we are to work in the world as it actually is in order to draw it toward becoming the world as God desires it to be."⁵³ That is to say, if the truth of what is seen in society cannot be acknowledged, it will be difficult to commit to the work of justice. Such justice is driven by the God-given desire to see the world move closer to what God has had in mind since the

52. Jacobsen, *Doing Justice*, 179.

53. Robert C. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 28.

beginning. Given these responsibilities, church planters need to see their work as part of this divine justice agenda.

Biblical and Theological Dimensions of this Study

A Biblical Theology of Justice

Today, there seems to be more confusion than ever about the place of justice in the life of an evangelical. Sadly, society knows evangelicals less for their love than for their political stances. Within the church, now more than ever there seems to be a boundary line: the right side for those who battle for moral purity and, most recently, a nationalist political agenda, and the left or so-called liberal side for those who make social justice a priority and the mark of a true Christian. While these are overgeneralizations and stereotypes, most people in evangelical churches have felt the need, consciously or unconsciously, to choose between these two sides. James 1:27 is a guidepost for some believers: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” Perhaps pleasing God requires both – being pure *and* working for justice.

The methodology for searching the scriptures and ministry praxis highlighted in this section is based on what theologians Jon Sobrino, David Gushee, and Glen Stassen

call a “hermeneutic from below”⁵⁴ or “justice from below,”⁵⁵ respectively. It is simply taking on the perspective of the victims, wearing the lenses of the people who are oppressed. This is important because, as Sobrino states, those who are victimized often “bring suspicions, questions, and illuminations that make the texts about Jesus Christ give up more of themselves.”⁵⁶ In addition, Obery M. Hendricks Jr. suggests that when reading the Word of God one must become a “resistance reader,”⁵⁷ taking into account the context and sociological reality of those who were the implied readers. In other words, good hermeneutics is hermeneutics from below.

Kingdom Praxis

In their book *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, David Gushee, a professor of Christian Ethics and Director of the Center for Faith and Public Life at Mercer University and Glen Stassen, a Baptist theologian and ethicist point out that Christians usually live their lives waiting for the kingdom to come rather than being ready for it when it does by already implementing the kingdom now. Being ready would move people from speculation to participation in this world. They assert,

The kingdom of God is both performative and participative; it is God’s performance in which we disciples actively participate. If we make this into an

54. Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 7.

55. David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 137.

56. Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 7.

57. Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Universe Bends Toward Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church, and the Body Politic* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 1321, Kindle.

either/or, we mess up the delicate theological balance. If it is all up to us, we can displace God and treat our various projects as if they are equal to God's work in the world; the Social Gospel had that tendency. If it's all up to God, we can retreat into passivity.⁵⁸

Bruce Chilton, an American scholar of early Christianity and J.I.H. McDonald, a professor of Christian ethics are of the believe that the praxis of the kingdom people is the reversal of a lifestyle tainted by what the world values—such as power, status, and wealth. Instead, it means adopting what Jesus values: a lifestyle of service, humility, and seeking justice. In their eyes, Jesus lived this way and so should those who profess to follow him. Equally important is the understanding that the kingdom is not a place to come in some distant future, but a place we create now through kingdom praxis.⁵⁹ Thus, in trying to educate others on what the role of Christians and the church should be when it comes to justice, it makes sense to look at Jesus. Jesus reframes everything. When in doubt about what to do, asking what was God's original intent and what did Jesus model for his followers is a great guide. In a world that has a variety of opinions, there is truly only one path for answers: What does the Word of God show us?

58. David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 12.

59. Bruce Chilton and J.I.H. McDonald, *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 35.

A Brief Canonical Review of Select Scripture

The Torah – Shalom, a Key Aspect of Justice

While the average person may not know Hebrew, it is very likely they have heard of the word “shalom.” Some use the word as a greeting, to wish the recipient blessing (Genesis 29:6; 2 Kings 4:26; Jeremiah 15:5), but when it is first introduced in the Bible it is actually used to describe the peace or tranquility of death in the passing of Godly people (Genesis 15:15, Exodus 18:23; 1 Kings 2:6). It is a nuanced word that has many different modern translations. Shalom and its variations (שָׁלוֹם, *shalom*; εἰρήνη, *eirēnē*)⁶⁰ appear over 550 times in Scripture, and mean “peace” “completeness,” “wholeness,” “well-being,” or “welfare and peace.”⁶¹ It is also defined as “peace” as in “Total well-being, prosperity, and security associated with God’s presence among his people.”⁶²

When shalom is translated as “peace,” this peace is more than the mere absence of war or strife. It describes a peace that is positive: a time, place, and condition that features love, righteousness, calmness, political and moral uprightness, and much more. In the Old Testament, the term “peace” is often used to describe God’s ideal for relationships. These relationships were characterized by friendship, care, loyalty, and

60. Joshua M. Greever, “Peace,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

61. Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 135.

62. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Peace,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1634.

love, and were both with God and between people. A close friend in the Old Testament is commonly called “a man of my peace” (Ps. 7:4 and 41:9; Jer. 20:10; 38:22; Obad. 7).⁶³ The general meaning behind this word is unity and wholeness that results in a restored relationship with God. When shalom with humanity was lost (Gen 3), God immediately found a way for humanity to have a restored relationship through the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:6) and the prophesied Messiah (Isa 53:6).

While this word is used often, what is frequently lost in translation is how the scriptures point to how shalom is to be practiced and lived as a key theological foundational truth. As Linthicum writes, “Shalom is the theology of the hope of Israel and the early church, its vision of what the world someday will be.”⁶⁴ This was the initial and central vision for what life with God was meant to be as rooted in the creation story (Gen 1–2) before it was corrupted by the Fall of humanity and brokenness and captivity as sin entered our world and created separation between humanity and God (Gen 3). Essentially, shalom i.e. right relationship, should be sought with God, with others, and with oneself.

According to American theologian Cornelius Plantinga, “In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures

63. Joshua M. Greever, “Peace,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

64. Robert C. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 89.

in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.”⁶⁵ Randy Woodley affirms that sentiment:

Shalom is a large concept that requires us to ask large questions. Shalom living is how life is meant to be. When we ask how life is meant to be we are also concerning ourselves with the how and why of life’s purpose, such as, “Where do we all come from? “How did evil come into the world?” “What is the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation?” “How should people live with one another?” Western philosophy tends to require precise definitions and prior knowledge in order to fully discuss what is common to us all.⁶⁶

Given corruption, wars, violence, dreadful rulers, addictions, greed, sexual abuse, poverty, and so forth, it is easy to see that the world is not what God hoped or intended it to be. It is in this world *as it is* that the concept of a biblical justice matters. And so what is needed is justice, a righting of the wrongs. But it is more specific than this as we see in the Hebrew word commonly translated into English as justice is “*mishpat*.”⁶⁷ This term is “used in relation to uplifting the righteous and oppressed and debasing the unrighteous and oppressors.”⁶⁸ Thus, this kind of *mishpat* (justice) is embodied by people who are acting, thinking, attempting to work toward what God intended for this world. This is not the “an eye for an eye” kind of justice as referenced in Exodus 21:22–14 and Leviticus 24:19–21 but a justice that seeks the flourishing of all creation, not merely the absence of

65. Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 150.

66. Randy S. Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 126, Kindle.

67. Jeremiah K. Garrett, “Justice,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Logos 9 Bible Software.

68. Jeremiah K. Garrett, “Justice,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Logos 9 Bible Software.

conflict. The Bible actually links mishpat with shalom, and it was a major part of Israel's concept of social justice. In a number of Old Testament scriptures, shalom and/or shalom and mishpat are mentioned in relationship to God and humanity (Ps 85:8; Jer 16:5); person to person (Gen 34:1; Exod 22:18–23; 23:1–13; Deut 16:19; 24:17; 27:19; Zech 7:10); and nation to nation (Deut 2:26, Josh 10:21, 1 Kgs 4:24, 5:12).

Other concrete examples can be found in Leviticus 19:13, where God commands the Israelites not to oppress their neighbor, and in verse 18, where He commands them to love their neighbor. In Deuteronomy 23:14; 24:14; 25:19 there are a number of laws that instruct them not to take advantage of each other in business dealings, not to oppress employees or withhold wages; never to forget what it feels like to be helpless and in trouble (reminding them of their time as slaves in Egypt), and to handle legal issues with dignity and proper supervision. In Isaiah 59:8, the prophet reminds the Israelites that it is their sin that keeps them from being delivered, not God's inability to deliver on his promises. God found them guilty of sin because they did not know the way of peace, neither in relation to God, nor to themselves or their fellow human. "It is guilty of murder, untruth, and injustice, and buried in all kinds of evil. Israel looks like the nations instead of God's people. The people are like mothers of evil who hatch vipers and cover sin with a veneer as thin as cobwebs."⁶⁹ That's certainly not the world that God intended!

69. Willem A. VanGemeren, "Leviticus," ed. Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000). Logos 9 Bible Software.

Lisa Sharon Harper, the founder of Freedom Road a consulting company that trains groups around the country on how to do justice in just ways, shares what God did intend in her book, *The Very Good Gospel*:

Shalom is what God declared. Shalom is what the kingdom of God looks like. Shalom is when all people are treated equitably and have enough. It is when families are healed. It's when churches, schools, and public policies protect human dignity. Shalom is when the image of God is recognized, protected, and cultivated in every single human.⁷⁰

Shalom is what the kingdom of God is supposed to look like. When shalom is seen from this perspective, it is possible then to accept that it has both a social and personal dimension. Viewed through these multiple dimensions, church leaders can then challenge people who want to make the gospel more about religion than about renewal and relationships. Individually, shalom is peace, and total-wellbeing, while for relationships shalom invites people to work toward trust, caring, loyalty, and love, and these in turn should lead Jesus' followers also to seek shalom for groups and societies through practices that are rooted in justice. Throughout the Torah, attaining shalom and practicing *misphat* is at the root of everyday life for those who understood its importance to God. Fundamentally, to know shalom is to do *mishpat*.

Scott Sunquist, the former Dean of Intercultural Studies and Professor of World Christianity at Fuller Theological Seminary argues that “God’s concern is to bring his shalom to the world—and the church is the only means by which his much greater work

70. Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right* (New York: Waterbrook, 2016), 138–39.

would be accomplished.”⁷¹ As a result, Jesus’ followers should view shalom as central to the mission of God and His church, rather than it being an optional alternative.

Adam Gustine, who leads CovEnterprises which is a social enterprise initiative of Love Mercy, Do Justice for the Evangelical Covenant Church calls justice-oriented churches “gardeners of shalom,”⁷² who commit to nurturing, promoting and stimulating environments in which every individual has the opportunity to flourish. Churches need to develop a community ecosystem that responds to those that are struggling and are failing to thrive. The Hispanic church is both “a sign of protest”⁷³ to an unjust world and also an “agent of shalom,”⁷⁴ according to scholar and Hispanic Pentecostal theologian, Eldin Villafaña. If shalom is about “wholeness in every dimension of life”⁷⁵ and God’s ideal for all relationships, the church would want to fulfill its role to seek shalom, practice justice, and essentially fight against anything that counters shalom restoration, which is at the heart of the gospel and thus should be an integral part of evangelization and the core mission of the church right from the start.

71. Scott Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 135.

72. Adam L. Gustine, *Becoming a Just Church: Cultivating Communities of God’s Shalom*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 91.

73. Eldin Villafaña, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 105.

74. Villafaña, *The Liberating Spirit*, 105.

75. Darrow L. Miller, *Rethinking Social Justice: Restoring Biblical Compassion* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2015), Kindle.

The Prophets as Social Justice Champions

Jewish theologian and Rabbi Abraham Herschel said, “According to Aristotle, the gods are not concerned at all with the dispensation of good and bad fortune or external things. To the prophet, however, no subject is as worthy of consideration as the plight of man.”⁷⁶ Some Christians would find it hard to believe that the ones calling for justice in the Old Testament were the prophets. The prophets were trying to keep the nation of Israel aligned with the traditions and values that God had established for them because they were neglecting them. Fretheim argues, “In promoting social justice, the prophets were religious conservatives. They built on the ancient traditions of Israel and the central promises of God to call Israel to attend to issues of justice on behalf of the oppressed.”⁷⁷ Fretheim explains that these prophets, heroes of justice, were “essentially conservative.” They were conservative because the prophets were calling Israel back to their ancient tradition of justice—to care for the other. Indeed, “never do we find the prophets putting forward any sort of practical suggestions for change in the structure of society.”⁷⁸ What they did do, boldly and unashamedly, was practice what Fretheim stated was a “get in your face”⁷⁹ speaking strategy—and they did so publicly. Much like the biblical justice advocates of today, they did so because they were driven by a sense of urgency; they

76. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (1962; repr., NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 6.

77. Terence E. Fretheim, “The Prophets and Social Justice: A Conservative Agenda,” *Word & World* 28, no. 2 (2008): 159–168, accessed August 12, 2018, https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/issues.aspx?article_id=312.

78. Fretheim, “The Prophets and Social Justice,” 160.

79. Fretheim, “The Prophets and Social Justice,” 161.

“believed that the future of their communities was at stake.”⁸⁰ This section will show that in many books of the prophets there is a vision for a society that is free of injustice, a society in which the weakest among them is cared for and treated with respect.

Amos 5: The Urgency of Justice

One prophet with that sense of urgency and vision for justice was Amos. Although the book of Amos is a short book, it is nonetheless powerful and often used in biblical justice discussions. For this prophet has a lot to say about the poor, social structures, God’s view of justice, and how God dealt with individuals, particularly, the people of Israel. In fact, “Amos is one of the most powerful statements in the Bible of God’s judgment against injustice, oppression, and hypocrisy.”⁸¹ Perhaps more than any other book in Bible, Amos holds people accountable for how they treat others. It is believed that Amos’ historical context when writing this was the “early to mid-eighth century BCE, during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah/Azariah of Judah.”⁸² Amos was speaking to the people of Israel who were living in the land of Palestine at that time in a period of peace and prosperity but also of major neglect of the laws of God. Some scholars believe that Amos himself was poor, given not only his self-descriptions

80. Fretheim, “The Prophets and Social Justice.”

81. Thomas E. McComiskey, “Amos, Book of, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 77.

82. M. Daniel Carroll R., and Carol J. Dempsey. "Amos." In *The Prophets: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, by Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page, and Matthew J. M. Coomber, 845–56 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2016). doi:10.2307/j.ctt1b3t76j.18.

but also his harsh criticism of the injustices done by the wealthy. He might have been a migrant worker or farmer.⁸³

Amos is considered to be the prophet of social justice due to the accusations he laid upon Israel for the way they treated the poor and needy amongst them. Of the nine chapters in the book of Amos, six of them can be divided into three categories addressing justice issues i.e. the poor and needy (2:6–7; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4–6), despising what is right and willful blindness to justice (3:10), and denying justice and integrity (2:8; 5:7, 10, 12, 15, 24; 6:12).⁸⁴

Moreover, while most people know Amos for how much he addressed social justice, he was more outspoken about Israel’s relationship with God. Amos reminds Christians today that lack of concern for social justice is always the result of an underlying issue. It is always connected to a meager relationship with God. At that time, it was a broken covenant with God. Their rejection of God was what led to their sins of injustice.⁸⁵ Their broken relationship directly manifested itself in their mistreatment of the poor, needy, and vulnerable in their society. That may shed a little light on why some evangelicals could support unjust policies politically. It is simply a manifestation of that broken relationship. The problem then and now is not morality; it is relationship (with

83. Douglas Mangum, “Amos, Book of,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

84. Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, et al. “The Book of Amos,” in *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2001), Logos 9 Bible Software.

85. Joanna M. Hoyt, “Amos, Jonah, & Micah,” in *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 9.

God). This was “Not simple intellectual ignorance; the defect lay in the heart and will.”⁸⁶ Thus, Amos’ message is an important one: to stop injustice one must first fix the relationship.⁸⁷ The Israelites had the facade of following God but their hearts were not in it.

One key concern that Amos had was seeing the collapse of the social structure that Israel believed God had set up. For example, the wealthy were stealing from the poor and giving to themselves, while they also ensured that the poor had no fair living wages but more likely to experience an increase in debt. Furthermore, the rich continued getting richer and abusing their power over the poor.⁸⁸ Additionally, Amos rebuked the women of high position in Israel, who he felt were at the root of the corruption and extortion of the poor due to their extravagant demands on their husbands (4:1).⁸⁹

One biblical scholar, Roy Honeycutt, gives us some larger context for Amos’ pronouncements:

Amos challenged people to live by covenant standards and condemned them for their failure to reflect the covenant in daily life. He was concerned about people who “do not know how to do right” (3:10 RSV). His word of judgment was severe for the “first ladies of Samaria” who encouraged the injustice and violence of their husbands “who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’ ” (4:1 RSV). Because of such injustice

86. Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, et al. “The Book of Amos,” in *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2001), Logos 9 Bible Software.

87. Joanna M. Hoyt, “Amos, Jonah, & Micah,” in *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 12.

88. Amos 2:6–8; 5:11; 6:6

89. Joanna M. Hoyt, “Amos, Jonah, & Micah,” in *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 141.

and the failure to bind authentic religious experience with a social conscience, Amos claimed that the nation was already dead.⁹⁰

In contrast, what God wanted was for justice (*mishpat*) to roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (v. 24). God wanted Israel to right wrongs, punish wrong-doers and fulfill their covenantal responsibilities.⁹¹

Perhaps the most striking of all the rebukes in the Book of Amos can be found in chapter 5. God is speaking his heart to this people (v.1) and lamenting who they have become (v. 2). There was so much corruption taking place, such as bribery and unfair taxation, and no regard for truth or the pleas of the poor. Religious leaders were oppressing the poor and found ways to make themselves richer at the expense of the poor. Furthermore, Amos accused Israel of showing “utter contempt” for the Mosaic covenant—and Yahweh (v. 7) because they turned “sweet justice” into “bitter wormwood,” letting them know that it was not only a pungent smell to God but left a bitter taste to him as well. “They turned what was supposed to be good into the complete opposite.”⁹² The Prophet Amos goes on to describe how Israel were actually haters of justice and doers of injustice because they were in direct defiance of the Mosaic covenant which called on them to support the poor not levy taxes against them and taking more of

90. Roy L. Honeycutt, “Amos, Book Of,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 62.

91. Richard D. Patterson and Andrew Hill, “Minor Prophets Hosea-Malachi,” ed. Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), Logos Bible Software 9.

92. Andrew Knowles, “Amos,” *The Bible Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), Logos Bible Software 9.

their share of what the land produced (vv. 11, 12). Yet Amos reminded Israel that they could still repent “and live” by seeking good and not evil (v. 14), by hating what is evil and loving what is good and establishing justice (v. 15). In fact, God despised all the feasting the people of Israel did in his name. God was not accepting any of their offerings (v. 21–23). God used Amos to call out the injustices he was seeing and reminded the people of God’s view of justice. God found their hypocrisy offensive.⁹³

Amos is a reminder to the church at large today that religion had become compromised and can become so again. Amos serves notice to religious people that “acceptable religion before Yahweh cannot be divorced from justice.”⁹⁴ Amos reminds today’s churches that God wants his people to exhibit the virtues of justice, and in the same way, churches should cultivate that practice from the start. The prophetic voices of an intentional prophetic church committed to an orthodoxy and orthopraxy of justice are the ones that can communicate what Old Testament Scholar Walter Brueggemann calls the “prophetic imagination,”⁹⁵ through which they can share how to see and build towards what God imagined for the world.

93. Barnes, Albert Barnes, et al., *The Ultimate Commentary On Amos: A Collective Wisdom On The Bible*, Kindle.

94. Carroll, *Seek Yahweh, Establish Justice*. Kindle.

95. Walter Brueggeman, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 40th ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018), Kindle.

A Look at Micah 6:8

Micah's background and ministry span is relatively unknown. However, what is known is that Micah ministered during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah from approximately 740 to 690 BC. Micah was not even called a prophet in his day, and many scholars believe that he was not a "career" prophet but someone who was in a different occupation (some suggest a farmer) before God decided to use him in this role.⁹⁶ As in Amos, the Mosaic covenant is the overarching focus of this book. Micah acted as a "prosecuting attorney" essentially bringing up charges against the people of Israel for so easily forgetting how faithful God had been to them, yet being unfaithful to God.⁹⁷

Micah shares how the people have a love for sin, including defrauding people and scheming against them, coveting, and seizing fields and inheritances. He echoes Amos by saying they loved evil and hated good (Micah 2:1–2; 3:2). Micah also reminds the religious leaders of their responsibility not just to know justice but to do it, and he lists a myriad of ways they were not acting on their knowledge. Furthermore, he portrays these leaders as "enemies of justice and right...who bring progress to that city through oppression and violence (Micah 3:1–5)."⁹⁸

96. Joanna M. Hoyt, "Amos, Jonah, & Micah," in *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 539.

97. Al Fuhr and Gary Yates. *The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 200, accessed October 19, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.

98. R. K. Harrison, "Amos," Walter A. Elwell, ed. in *Baker Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), Logos 9 Bible Software.

Although this has already been spelled out for them in the covenant, in Micah 6:8 God yet again proceeds to remind Israel of what he does want to see. Christians reading this passage from Micah have long seen it as an important guide for their faith and practice. The Word of God states, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”⁹⁹

Micah 6:1–8, but particularly verse 8, is a foundational scripture for this dissertation project because though the people of Israel were used to offering sacrifices to God, they were not actually practicing what God required of them. What is made crystal clear in this verse is that God is not impressed, only still more outraged with the offer of sacrificing first-born children, which was in fact a forbidden practice in Israel and Judah. “The people mistakenly thought they could please the Lord by carrying out religious rituals and offering sacrifices apart from a lifestyle of justice and mercy.”¹⁰⁰

For Micah, justice is “a transformative virtue that seeks to establish or restore community, while aiming to balance personal good with common good.”¹⁰¹ Micah was attempting once again to call on the people of Israel to give account of their actions to God, the one who had made the covenant with them, the one to whom they promised not only that they would receive God’s laws but also obey them. But, as was also customary

99. Mic. 6:8 NASB.

100. Fuhr and Yates, *The Message of the Twelve*, 200.

101. David Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds., *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary 1 Year A* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2008–2011), 295.

for the people of Israel, they once again disobeyed. Micah in this passage is trying to help the Israelites get back on the right path to repair their relationship with God by providing this instruction. As Longman explains,

[Micah] contrasts external religious acts (sacrifices) with inward religious attitudes (justice, mercy, humility). These verses have been distorted to say that Micah and the prophets in general detested the priestly sacrificial system. Most scholars now admit that Micah was not attacking the sacrificial system itself, but the conviction that external religious acts without inward piety can establish a right relationship with God.¹⁰²

What might be the most important part of Micah 6:8 is the last one. What is meant by a “humble walk” (*halak*) is that our friendship with God is what creates the conditions for our practice. “Only when one takes a humble walk with God will one come to learn and understand how to do justice and love kindness.”¹⁰³ Robert Linthicum calls this the “relational and reconciling justice of God.”¹⁰⁴ In this text, justice is identified with the nature of God and with all the activity with which God is concerned. Linthicum emphasizes that God’s nature is a relational one, and that God called Israel to practice a justice that is relational, one that is based on humility and love instead of the cultic sacrificial system that was retributive in nature.¹⁰⁵ The Lord desires the primary forms of love—justice (do justice), mercy (loving kindness), and faithfulness (walk humbly)—as

102. Tremper Longman III, “Micah,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible 3*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 657.

103. Carol J. Dempsey, *Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013, accessed August 24, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.

104. Robert C. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 15.

105. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power*.

the expressed response of God's people to his redemptive acts.¹⁰⁶ In keeping with this line of thinking, David Dockery stated, "Although they tried to buy God's favor with ritual sacrifices, God's primary demand was for justice, mercy, and humble obedience."¹⁰⁷ Going to the altar with sacrifices did not replace the need for justice and kindness. Israel needed to be reminded of that truth, and of how their relationship with God directly correlates with their actions. Linthicum states the relationality of God's justice this way:

All God wants is a relational people, relational systems, a relational culture...what Micah is doing in this page is quite extraordinary because what he is doing is taking the way God loves his people and turning that around so it becomes the kind of love with which we are to love one another in public life.¹⁰⁸

Thus, Micah 6:8 reminds followers of Jesus that God does not care about the show; he only cares that we act with loving kindness to our neighbor, that we walk humbly in a posture of reverence and openness, and that we are truly godly people by living out love through acts of justice and kindness to others.

Malachi: The Messenger of Social Responsibility

The Book of Malachi is the final prophetic message before the close of the Old Testament. Unfortunately, not much is known about him other than what can be gleaned

106. *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1705.

107. David S. Dockery, ed., *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 483.

108. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power*, 15.

from his book.¹⁰⁹ Although some scholars debate whether Malachi was the actual name of the person who wrote the book or a noun designating a role,¹¹⁰ for this study I will simply accept the former.¹¹¹ Note that Malachi means “my messenger.”¹¹² Some scholars believe that the prophet gave himself the name once he felt the call of God.¹¹³ The book is also an oracle, a word from Yahweh. “Oracle” (meaning “burden”) is a technical, prophetic term for a word of judgment on both the [Gentile] nations, and on Israel and Judah. The prophet functions as an ambassador whose duty it is to proclaim the Word, no matter how burdensome the message or how unresponsive the people. The prophet is appointed by God to discharge his office, and feels a consequent sense of urgency about this task (Jer. 20:9). He must proclaim the oracle, because the oracle is the word of Yahweh!¹¹⁴

Malachi reminds readers that God required higher standards for the temple priests. We know that to be the same for religious leaders today, including for Christian pastors.

109. Dockery, *Holman Bible Handbook*, 499.

110. Robert Alter, Malachi, *The Hebrew Bible Volume 2* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 1385.

111. Blessing O. Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, “Malachi’s Concern for Social Justice: Malachi 2:17 and 3:5 and Its Ethical Imperatives for Faith Communities,” *THS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (July 2014): 1–9, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2072>.

112. E. Ray Clendenen, “Malachi, Book of,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1070.

113. Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Nottingham, England: IVP Academic, 2015, 306, accessed August 19, 2019, <https://search-ebscohost-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=960746&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

114. Willem A. VanGemeren, “Malachi,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 705.

Religious leaders then and now are responsible for correcting error and being the voice of God anytime God's people smear his name or forget him altogether.

In Malachi 1:1–5, the prophet tells Israel that God loves them and that there is proof of God's love in how God dealt with the Edomites. The people of Edom were being unhelpful to the people of Israel as the latter journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. Basically, God wiped out the Edomites. God showed his love, but was not feeling that love back from Israel. When it came to sacrifices, the priests stopped being responsible for guarding the sanctuary and the sacrifices they inspected (2:1–9), and that led to “some people... promising a good animal and then swapping it for a reject.”¹¹⁵ This is when Malachi gives the priests a warning about the high standard God has for them and that they should never forget their responsibility as representatives of God.

Much like today's world, Malachi “confronts a population given to religious cynicism and political skepticism as alluded to in Malachi 2:17. Malachi's day was one of disillusionment and gloom.”¹¹⁶ People had expected God to fulfill promises that Haggai had made and did not see any of it come to pass. Thus, people started to look out for themselves by begrudging offerings (1:14) and forgetting the poor (2:17-3:6). “The less-privileged—the widows, orphans, and foreigners—were ignored and/or even

115. Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 2001), 397–98.

116. Boloje and Groenewald, “Malachi's Concern for Social Justice,” 3.

persecuted. Discrimination was the norm.”¹¹⁷ Judges were showing favoritism toward the elites rather than showing mercy, and were perverting justice (2:9).

Given certain similarities between the Old Testament world and today’s, especially with regard to such injustices, this information from prophets like Malachi matters. Israel did not think that God would intervene in light of the injustices taking place in their society. But God did. God sent a messenger, Malachi, who went to speak to those who in Yahweh’s name were being dishonest, oppressing widows and the fatherless, those who “needed divine and governmental protection.”¹¹⁸ In addition, there were priests allowing diseased animals to be sacrificed at the altar, worshipers swapping out good animals for rejects, and married people being unfaithful and allowing divorce with pagan women.

Thus, like the priests and prophets of yesterday, today God also expects religious leaders to speak on behalf of these similarly vulnerable people, and to teach others who confess to follow the same God the things that God considers important. As argued by Boloje and Groenewald, “Yahweh’s concern for widows and the fatherless and aliens, as indicated by Malachi, calls for Christian social responsibility.” They add that this is the “greatest overarching theme of Yahweh’s call in the Bible, and that “Malachi’s prophetic narrative calls Christians to be committed to the quest for justice, truth, and equity.”¹¹⁹ Malachi also instructed his people to have hope. Like the prophets before him, Malachi

117. Boloje and Groenewald, “Malachi’s Concern for Social Justice,” 3.

118. Boloje and Groenewald, “Malachi’s Concern for Social Justice,” 6.

119. Boloje and Groenewald, “Malachi’s Concern for Social Justice,” 9.

reminded a post-exilic Israel that God has and will always love them, that they were in covenant with God and one another, and that those who live according to God's ways and fear God will be blessed abundantly one day.

These lessons from Old Testament prophets and their social justice message carries over to the first Christians and their writings. The importance of justice is inescapable in reading the Old Testament. Many of the biblical texts are more of a call to action than simply an idea for consideration.

Throughout the biblical canon, God makes it clear that the expectation of those who claim to know the Creator and love the Creator is to advocate for the oppressed and help the impoverished, or their worship might be rejected. God wants us to live within the framework of what J. David Pleins calls a "theology of obligation," which begins with the covenant to which the people of Israel were bound.¹²⁰ Pleins notes that as the Bible took shape over the centuries in the shadow of empire and domination, the biblical writers struggled to make sense of their traditions and their sacred obligation and laws, which reminded them to take care of the poor, the immigrant, and others among them. The failure to care for the poor is a major theme in the Bible, and the prophets—as the announcers of God's judgment—remind the people of their day and we in ours of living in an unjust society.

In considering the arguments of Sobrino, Gushee, Stassen, Hendricks, and Pleins, one could be persuaded that reading scriptures from a resistance-reader perspective is

120. J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 52.

actually how it has long been done. Hendricks even states that this practice is “part of the Gospel tradition itself,” especially when looking at the example of Jesus. Jesus approached scripture by practicing a hermeneutic from below, “resisting traditional and status quo readings of reality that were promulgated in a number of types of texts of his day: not only written texts, but also spoken texts of conventional wisdom and official texts of pronouncements by those in power.”¹²¹

God demands God’s people to live like changed people, not just to believe but to practice. Scripture gives us explicit and implicit directions, yet it has often been our socioeconomic background and geographic location that has determined how we have interpreted and lived out those directions. Scripture clearly shows that God is a God who does take sides—the side of the poor, oppressed, and distressed.

The Gospels and Jesus

Scholars believe that the Gospels were written anywhere from thirty-five to seventy years after Jesus was crucified.¹²² The storytellers most Christians have come to know as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote to urban Christians who were very different from the rural Galilean followers located where Jesus spent a good deal of his time in ministry. Although scholars have questioned the reliability of the gospels as

121. Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), accessed August 24, 2019, EBSCOhost database.

122. David L. Turner, “The Gospel of Matthew,” ed. Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), Logos 9 Bible Software.

historical records, suggesting they were perhaps merely significant stories, most agree that these books can teach present day disciples of Jesus a way of practicing Christianity, individually and through the church. In short, the gospels show us how the early Christians themselves understood the meaning of the teachings of Jesus for their faith and practice, including practices of social justice. This is critical for the practices of advocacy church planters today should develop, especially those ministering in urban contexts.

Matthew

Some scholars believe that Matthew was written in an urban setting—perhaps because he mentions the word “city” twenty-six times in his gospel—although this cannot be proven. While Christianity’s origin may have been in area of Galilee, its spread took place in the urban centers of that old world. This speculation about the gospel’s urban origins is important to keep in mind when thinking of urban church planting and the tensions that arise in fast-paced areas, in particular. Furthermore, Matthew’s gospel is important for this project on embracing biblical justice because of the biblical imperatives in Matthew for those who follow Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew calls for a higher ethical behavior than even the most religious in Jesus’ day, such as the Pharisees. Matthew also contains the Sermon on the Mount (5–7) which sets the standard for the behavior expected of followers who seek to align with the will of God. “The Sermon on the Mount

is Jesus' authoritative teaching about the way believers should live today."¹²³

“Righteousness” is a term used repeatedly in this book and highlighted in the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, the emphasis on “righteousness” (also translated “justice”) communicates its importance to Matthew’s readers. “Righteousness” is mentioned once in Luke (1:75), not at all in Mark, but seven times in Matthew. There is no mistaking that Matthew was particularly concerned with ethical behavior but also wanted to encourage followers that if they did what was right and just, God would bless them and bring them favor in the end.

The Gospel of Matthew discusses the law extensively, but is especially concerned that the right interpretation of the law be practiced. For Matthew, the essence of the Law is summed up by two sayings of Jesus found in Matthew 22:36–40:

When Jesus was asked ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus wanted those who repented to understand how to live the kingdom way (5:1–7:29) and that way was not for human approval but for God’s reward and blessing.¹²⁴ Blessings would fall upon those who were grieving about injustice (v. 4) and wanted to see justice prevail and take responsibility for doing what was right (v. 6) as well as those who were humble (v. 5) and merciful (v. 7–10). Therefore, we can conclude from this book that the

123. David L. Turner, “The Gospel of Matthew,” ed. Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), Logos 9 Bible Software.

124. David L. Turner, “The Gospel of Matthew,” ed. Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), Logos 9 Bible Software.

love of God and neighbor is fundamental to the work of justice-oriented church planters and their churches.

Matthew is also known for how the book speaks to the church. It is the most ecclesiastical in nature for a variety of reasons but mostly because as the Jews accepted Christ as savior they needed to learn how to live in this new Christian way of life as disciples. In addition, these new believers were forming faith communities, the early church, and Matthew provided an appropriate transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. It is the only Gospel where the word church (ekklesia) is found (16:18; 18:17). Particularly noticeable in this gospel is his inclusive pastoral approach as he tries to bring two very different groups together; the Jews and their past with the Gentiles and their future. Every parent might even believe that Matthew spoke of himself when he said, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old (13:52).” That the newer believers were being embraced did not mean the older ones were being dismissed. Perhaps this is one of the greater gifts to the church that this gospel brings, a pastoral methodology for inclusivity and helping all people find themselves in God’s grand story.

Matthew also offers “the great commission” (28:16–20), which many evangelicals interpret as only referring to evangelism as the sole mission of the church especially as it relates to international missions. There are evangelicals that put the emphasis solely on the “moment” a person hears and responds positively to the gospel message and it ends there at the “conversion” experience. Yet, the great commission has two parts: baptizing

and teaching. “This reminds us of a major concern from the very beginning in Matthew, and that is [that] you learn the true way of righteousness. Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. He teaches His disciples how to live out righteousness. He tells His disciples, “Baptize everybody, all people, whatever their nationality, and then teach them everything I’ve taught you.”¹²⁵ As a result, “it must be affirmed that God’s aim is to recreate in the believer the image of his Son Jesus Christ, the New Man, and that this involves a process of transformation which lasts throughout life.”¹²⁶ In fact, Jesus reminds believers that this process of transformation will have a cost which begins with denying themselves, taking up their cross to follow him (Matt 16:24). Jesus goes so far as to say that those who don’t do this are not worthy of him (Matt 10:37). Every disciple must learn that.

Fundamentally, there is no genuine discipleship if the disciple is not taught the will of God and the way of Jesus. C René Padilla puts it this way:

Jesus’ disciples are not distinguished by mere adherence to a religion, a Jesus cult, but rather by a lifestyle which reflects the love and the justice of the Kingdom of God. The church’s mission, therefore, cannot be reduced to proclaiming the “salvation of souls.” Its mission is to “make disciples” who will learn obedience to their Lord in all the circumstances of daily existence, private and public, personal and social, spiritual and material. The call to the gospel is a call to a total transformation that reflects God’s purpose to redeem human life in all its dimensions.¹²⁷

125. Frank A. James III; Bryan Litfin; Lynn H. Cohick, “The Gospel Message in the Early Church” (Lecture, Logos Mobile Education, Bellingham, WA, 2016), Logos 9 Bible Software.

126. C. René Padilla, “Introduction: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission,” in *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission*, ed. Tetsunao Yamamori and C. René Padilla (Buenos Aires: Kairos, 2004), 30.

127. C. René Padilla, “Introduction: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission,” in *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission*, ed. Tetsunao Yamamori and C. René Padilla (Buenos Aires: Kairos, 2004), 30.

Lastly, the Gospel of Matthew, particularly in chapter 18, gives the church a vision for what it could and should be. It should be a church that is humble, forgiving, and responsive. When Jesus is asked who is the greatest in the kingdom, he states it is those who become like children (Matt 18:1-5). To think of the greatest as children in today's society is inconceivable because children are dependent. Yet that is exactly what Jesus wants to see in his disciples and his church, a dependency on him. The body of believers must also be forgiving. Matthew has already mentioned forgiveness in the Sermon on the Mount (6:14–15) but he does so again, revealing its importance by sharing the parable of the unforgiving servant and the dialogue between Peter and Jesus on how often a disciple must forgive a brother or sister (18:23–35). The church is expected to be forgiving to those who offend them. In addition, if forgiveness was the expected action of those who were offended, responsiveness was the expected action to those who were in need. Four times in this gospel, Matthew refers to the “little ones” (10:42; 18:6, 10, 14) and it wasn't meant to be children but the poor, and the marginalized. Those who had no power or influence and who had to fight to survive.¹²⁸

Jesus expects a church that knows it has been sent to walk in a humble, forgiving and responsive posture to those around them. These are the demands of a disciple of Christ.

Luke

128. David L. Turner, “The Gospel of Matthew,” ed. Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), Logos 9 Bible Software.

While the entire canon of Scripture makes reference to poverty and the responsibility that people should bear for the poor, Luke's Gospel is particularly known for its emphasis on the subject. Jesus' concern for the poor (and cynicism towards the rich) is seen from the very first chapter in what is known as Mary's Magnificat (1:46–56), in which she notes that God “has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed” (v. 53). In addition, the Third Gospel has a great perspective on Jesus, perhaps most especially because it is in this gospel that Jesus is recorded as making his announcement that he has come to “bring good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). However, Luke's definition of poor is broad. It is not simply those who are materially poor due to their financial status. He has also come to bring good news to those who are considered of low status— “children, barren women, widows, gentiles, tax collectors, sinners, the demon possessed, and those with physical deformities and diseases. Some are relegated to a low status because of their age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status; others due to moral and ritual impurity.”¹²⁹ Like Matthew, Luke also includes the Sermon on the Plain (6:17–26), in which Jesus discloses the values of the kingdom of God for those who would receive help from above. The list of recipients begins with the poor, the hungry and those who weep (vv. 20–21).

In light of the types of communities to which many church planters will be ministering, engaging the Gospel of Luke as a biblical-theological resource can provide them with a distinctive understanding of how Jesus expected people to treat the

129. Diane G. Chen, *Luke*, A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), Logos 9 Bible Software.

vulnerable ones among them. Thus the vulnerable people we find described in Luke's gospel from the communities back in his era should guide the ministry that takes place in today's communities.

First, Luke speaks to Christians today by reminding them that God has a special love for the marginalized and oppressed groups, especially the poor. Darío López

Rodriguez refers to this Lucan perspective as follows:

... God has a special love for the poor and the marginalized, including the fragile, those on the periphery, the needy and the destitute, the ragged of the world, and the "nobodies" that predominant society has condemned to social ostracism and the basement of history.¹³⁰

Second, Luke brings to the forefront that women particularly mattered to Jesus; by extension, they deserve our special attention. He describes the relationship between Elizabeth and Mary, and how the former blessed the latter's womb (1:42). It is through Luke's mention of Mary's Magnificat (1:46–56) that Jesus' concern for the poor is laid bare so early in this chapter. Luke also mentions Anna, the prophetess who blessed the child Jesus (2:36–38). He makes special mention of the women who traveled with them for ministry purposes and helped finance his ministry. These women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna wife of Chuza, and Susanna (8:1–3), as well as the women who observed the crucifixion (23:27, 49), anointed his body (v. 55–56), and were the first to discover Jesus' tomb empty (24:1–3). Luke notes that the women were just as credible as their male counterparts in bearing witness to the ministry of Jesus and just as good examples for others to emulate. Recall, for example, the woman who anointed Jesus and

130. Darío López Rodríguez, *The Liberating Mission of Jesus: The Message of the Gospel of Luke*, trans. Stefanie E. Israel and Richard E. Waldrop (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 2.

was forgiven (7:37–50), how Mary listened while her sister Martha worked (10:38–42), as well as parables featuring women like the woman with the lost coin (15:8–10), the widow who repeatedly went to the judge seeking justice (18:1–5) and the woman with two small coins for the temple offering (21:1–4).

In addition, women were highlighted as recipients of healing. Among them, recall Simon Peter’s mother-in-law (4:38–39), the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead (8:40–42, 49–55), the healing of the women with the twelve-year-old issue of blood who had spent all her money trying to find a cure, but to no avail (8:43–48), and the woman with the bent back (13:10–17). In addition, recall that Jesus addressed women directly, which was unusual for a man to do (John 4:27), and that he addressed them in a respectful and caring manner as a “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:12).

Justo Gonzalez reiterates such findings, reminding us that,

Here again the Gospel of Luke is particularly relevant to our time. Women have a significant role both in Luke’s Gospel and in Acts—which, given the conventions of the time, may well be seen as one more instance of the great reversal. In the Gospel, the first person to hear the good news of the birth of the Messiah is a woman; and the first people to hear the good news of his resurrection are also women. Luke is the only Gospel writer who informs us that the early Jesus movement was financed by women (8:1–3).¹³¹

Among the Gospels, Luke also seems to have given “equal time” to women more than the others, by, for example, mentioning them often—and often before men. There also

131. Justo L. Gonzalez, *Luke: Belief, A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible) (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010). Kindle Edition.

seemed to be an intentionality behind the way Luke frequently placed “a story or parable about a man with one about a woman.”¹³²

Third, there are some specific guidelines that have to do with structuring society justly, meaning for the benefit of everyone. For example, exclusively in Luke’s Gospel John the Baptist insists that “those who have food or clothing must share them with the needy. Greed must not rule even in tax collectors and soldiers, among whom extortion is customary.”¹³³ This aligns with the thinking of early church father Justin Martyr, who similarly stated,

We who once valued above everything the gaining of wealth and possession now bring what we have into a common stock, and share with everyone in need; we who hated and destroyed one another, and would not share the same hearth with people of a different tribe on account of their different customs, now since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and try to persuade those who unjustly hate us to live according to the good advice of Christ, to the need that they may share with us the same joyful hope of a reward from God the master of all.¹³⁴

Fourth, Luke’s Gospel contains both good news to outsiders and surprising news to insiders. In Luke 4:16–30, Jesus finally returns to his hometown, Nazareth, and visits the synagogue, as was customary for faithful Jews. It was also customary to read in the

132. Gonzalez, *Luke: Belief*, 238.

133. Gonzalez, *Luke: Belief*. Gonzalez is referring to the words of John the Baptist in Luke 3:11–14, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same. Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.” (NIV).

134. George W. Forell, “The Early Church,” in *Christian Social Teachings: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 21.

Sabbath service. He intentionally reads Isaiah 61:1–2 and uses it to proclaim his purpose on earth. The insiders, the ones who know the Jesus who grew up in the neighborhood, were proud of him and had expectations of special favor. But Jesus essentially told them there are no favorites, no insiders. Jesus pulls the carpet from under the people who think they have an inside track to whatever he is going to do. Instead, what he is sharing will be for all people, including the people they view as outsiders. Gonzalez comments eloquently:

People are not angry because he claims to be the fulfillment of the prophecy. On the contrary, they are quite thrilled about it. It is when he tells them that they should expect no special favors—not even what he has done in places such as Capernaum—that they turn to him and seek to kill him. Thus, Luke depicts the public ministry of Jesus as beginning with one of the many reversals that will appear throughout his Gospel. What Jesus tells his audience is that they, who had every reason to believe that they were in, are out, just as the many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, and the many lepers in the time of Elisha, were out, and the prophets ministered to a Phoenician widow and a Syrian leper.¹³⁵

A theme of grand reversal is also seen in Luke. Jesus came to “flip the script”¹³⁶ in a masterful way. Everyone expected power and decisions to come from the place of power Rome. However, Luke begins to tell his story from a marginalized land known as Galilee and takes that message to the center of political power at that time. Many of our most powerful children’s stories employ the dramatic impact of reversal, and Gonzalez states that this is exactly what needed to happen at that time, as it still does today. He

135. Gonzalez, *Luke: Belief*, 1299.

136. *The Free Dictionary.com*, s.v. “Flip the Script,” is an urban street term that means to reverse something unexpectedly. The dictionary defines it as to change or reverse something dramatically, accessed on August 25, 2019, <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/flip+the+script>.

observes that “there is one point that still rings true: justice requires a reversal of conditions for the excluded and the oppressed—and, if they insist on their privileges, also for the insiders and the oppressors.”¹³⁷

James Cone further elaborates on this theme of reversal of expectations in Luke’s Gospel when he states,

This reversal of expectations and conventional values is the unmistakable theme of the gospel. “What is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God” (Lk 16:15). “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Lk 18:14). This “transvaluation of values,” as Niebuhr put it, finds its apotheosis in the cross. “In Jesus’ cross God took up the existence of a slave and died the slave’s death on the tree of martyrdom” (Phil 2:8).¹³⁸ The ultimate grand reversal.

Luke’s Gospel reminds us that Jesus’ favorite thing to do was to upend expectations and reverse anticipated outcomes because sometimes that is what doing the right thing requires. Sometimes, perhaps most times, doing the right thing – justice – requires siding with the underdog.. Miguel De La Torre writes, “Justice begins with the plight of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the outcast, and the disenfranchised. To engage in justice is to do it with, and from, the perspective of those whom society considers as (no)bodies.”¹³⁹ The Gospel of Luke certainly encourages such a justice-oriented focus for individuals and most certainly for churches who seek to follow and disciple others in the way of Jesus.

137. Gonzalez, *Luke*, 201.

138. James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011). Kindle.

139. Miguel De La Torre, *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views*, ed. Vic McCracken, (NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014). Kindle. 103.

The Acts of the Apostles

While the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles has long been debated, most scholars believe it to be the same Luke as wrote the Gospel. Among the many reasons he wrote the book, one was simply to continue what Jesus started. The book of Acts is important to this thesis project because it highlights the way the early church handled its business. It exemplifies what they were able to do and how big they were able to grow through the empowerment of the Spirit of God. More importantly, it is a historical text that documents what the early church believed and practiced.

Not very different from church plants, established churches, or even the workplace in general, one can see that the early church had to face disagreement, resistance, and shortfalls in money and people, but that they were able to make progress and do great things for God through the power of the Spirit and through being united in their beliefs and intentions. Acts is a great model for the why behind the what of ministry, specifically of service, and especially of service to those who are in a weaker position or more vulnerable state. There are many lessons that can be learned from Acts. For this project, what is particularly noteworthy is how from the very start these people—these early followers of Jesus—knew their mission, depended on the Holy Spirit for direction, and went from being a group of strangers to a community of believers focused on expanding the kingdom of God.

Acts 2:42–47 describes the work of the Spirit in building this community:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were

together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Especially telling was how this new community of converted followers, once complete strangers, developed a kingdom praxis. Acts 4:32–37 describes it best,

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as who owned lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds from what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native from Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of Encouragement"). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

British New Testament scholar James Dunn notes that unlike what was practiced in Qumran, which Dunn considers an obligatory sharing of goods, the kind of caring for one another described here was "wholly spontaneous" and "an expression of eschatological enthusiasm."¹⁴⁰ Acts simply helped form a picture of what radical generosity in Christian community can and should be like. Acts helps Christians understand the primary characteristic of God's kingdom, in which we are keepers of our brothers and sisters, responsible for one another's welfare.

One great, yet sad, example that Luke highlights as a life lived for others is Tabitha (Dorcas), who is introduced near the end of her life. Scholars suggest she grew

140. James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 50, accessed August 25, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.

up outside Judea and was a Hellenistic Jew who assimilated to Greek culture. She was devoted to helping people, especially widows (9:36–43). The widows she helped were weeping at their loss and this is where “Peter’s presence declares an unmistakable truth: women matter. This woman matters, and the work she does for widows’ matters to God. It matters so much that God will not allow death [to have] the last word.”¹⁴¹ It is she who gets a taste of resurrection power, and through this many believed in the Lord (v. 42).

Acts is also where Paul is introduced and his conversion story is told. Dunn believes the amount of space Luke devoted to Paul shows how important he felt he was to the expansion of the church in these early times.¹⁴² His writings would later impact ecclesiological practice in major ways, including through church planting. The book of Acts showcases the beauty of diversity. The Kingdom of God is portrayed as comprised of men and women, poor and rich, from every ethnic group, who all had equal access, standing, and importance before Christ. These are all important reminders for church planters today too. In moving from Acts to the general epistles, we find how justice was highlighted in the book of James.

James 2:1–13

The topics on which the Epistle of James focuses are relevant still today. Those topics include maturity in Christ and how to deal with a variety of sins that include pride, slander, the careless use of words, works and Christian concern for a world in need.

141. Willie James Jennings, *Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 100.

142. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 8.

James reminds followers of Jesus to put their faith into action and to allow it to permeate every area of their lives.

This Epistle is considered to be the most Jewish and least Christian book in the New Testament because it had few references to Christ. Besides the speculation that it was written by a Jew, this letter is believed to have been written for Jews who believed in Jesus.¹⁴³ The Jews of Jerusalem were poor, although the religious leaders along with landowners had wealth. Apparently during the time of this writing, the fervor of the new Christian converts was beginning to wane. The Christian believers who were being persecuted by the religious zealots in the city were having a hard time being obedient as they saw the exploitation of their people. The city was in religious and political turmoil as Jesus followers were a persecuted minority under occupied territory where Christians had no power as they were ruled by the Roman government. Jerusalem had become very poor due to the greed of the Roman government and that impacted the economy in such a way that there were many people who had very little, essentially the Christians in that moment in time were poor. Due to this, many believers were tempted to compromise on their values and beliefs to improve their economic situation or escape persecution.¹⁴⁴ James wrote this letter to correct believers' faults, to help those whose faith was

143. D.C. Allison, 2015, 'The Jewish Setting of the Epistle of James', In *die Skriflig* 49(1), Art. #1897, 9 pages, accessed January 12, 2019, [http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v49i1.1897](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v49i1.1897)

144. Bruce B. Barton, David R. Veerman, et al., *James*, Grant Osborne, ed. Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), Logos Bible Software 9.

wavering, to help them understand that trials and hardship are opportunities not hindrances to exercise their faith, and to encourage true discipleship.¹⁴⁵

James is warning Christians against having favorites and discriminating, especially in regards to the rich against the poor. Right from the start of chapter 2, James states, “My friends, if you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, you won’t treat some people better than others” (2:1). He then shares a story about a rich man not getting better treatment than another (poor) man just because he was poor (2:3). To illustrate, he describes how antithetical to the Christian way it is to offer a rich person the best seat at table, and a poor person a place on the ground. He considers such preferential treatment to be evil (v 4). James notes that discriminatory behavior has a way of seeping into the social fabric of the church. He reminds the Jewish believers that God has chosen the poor to be “heirs of the kingdom,” and critiques them for “dishonoring the poor” (v. 5–6). James is making a point here, reminding them of the law of love or the “royal law.” This law stated they were to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Those who do so, he says “are doing well” (v. 8). Those who did not, he accused of sinning and of being lawbreakers (v. 9). In addition to not showing favoritism, James felt that this law also advocated taking care of the orphans and widows (1:27), being merciful (12–13), clothing the naked and feeding the hungry (14–17), being a peacemaker (3:17–18), not speaking ill of others (4:11–12), and praying for each other (5:13–16). To him, keeping the royal law was a

145. Dan McCartney, 2009. *James*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 137, accessed October 19, 2019, EBSCOHost.

powerful demonstration of a believer's faith and concern for justice. In this regard, Bruce Barton reminds today's Christians:

Our world is filled with those who need compassion, mercy, and love translated into food, shelter, medical care, counsel, and friendship. God's message to the church, and thus to us, through James is to obey the law of love. This means supporting Christian welfare and mission agencies and individuals with our prayers and money. It also means being sensitive to the needs in our neighborhoods and looking for ways that we can become involved personally.¹⁴⁶

In today's US context, society has largely internalized a belief that all poor people are lazy and looking for a handout. These particular people, among them certain self-proclaimed Jesus followers, support policies that demonize poverty, policies that hurt black and brown people the most. Wesley Wachob, a pastor/theologian within the United Methodist Church denomination concludes that James was most concerned with "the piety of the poor, and the accompanying opposition to the rich and to the world."¹⁴⁷

These are some examples of what was very important to Jesus. Now we turn from the message of specific gospels to the overall picture of Jesus and the exemplary standard to which those who follow him are called.

146. Barton, *James*, Life Application Bible Commentary, Logos Bible Software 9.

147. Wesley Hiram Wachob, *The Voice of Jesus in the Social Rhetoric of James*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 60, accessed August 25, 2019, EBSCOhost Databse.

Jesus, A Most Perfect Model

Jesus's notion of and desire for justice is deeply embedded in many narratives of the New Testament Gospels. The following section explores models that are consistent with the biblical justice of Jesus.

Jesus as Prophet

Jesus identified heavily with the prophet's role in Israel. Prophets are known to foretell the future and to remind people of truths revealed by God. In the Old Testament, prophets relayed God's words to the people. Jesus did both of these things.

Often those who call Jesus a "prophet" know very little about him.¹⁴⁸ However, British theologian N.T. Wright argues that "Jesus's public persona within first-century Judaism was that of a prophet, and the content of his prophetic proclamation was the 'kingdom' of Israel's God." Yet he notes that "the prophetic aspect of Jesus's work is often surprisingly ignored."¹⁴⁹ Theologians David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen also refer to Jesus living in the tradition of the great prophets in light of the message that he proclaimed and the life he lived. For example,

He confronted the people with the folly of their ways, summoning them to a different way, and expecting to take the consequences of doing so. Elijah had stood alone against the prophets of Baal, and against the wickedness of King Ahab. Jeremiah had announced the doom of the temple and the nation, in the face

148. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 624–25.

149. N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 11.

of royalty, priests, and official prophets. Like Jesus, they were accused of troubling the status quo, as prophets always are accused.¹⁵⁰

That was exactly how people expected to see a prophet. But they did not see Jesus in this way. Wayne Grudem, an American evangelical theologian and Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Phoenix Seminary argues that they avoided calling him a prophet because “although Jesus is the prophet whom Moses predicted, he is also far greater than any of the Old Testament prophets in two ways[:] he was the one the prophecies pointed to and he was not just the messenger (like the other prophets), he was the source of the message.”¹⁵¹ Pentecostal theologian and professor, Murry Dempster adds that when Jesus did behave in a conventional prophetic manner, he would often draw on Old Testament concepts that were justice-oriented, specifically the affirmation that human beings are God’s image bearers, the aspirations for justice in human affairs, and the importance of covenant in creating social bonds for an ordered society.¹⁵²

The American New Testament scholar and historian of early Christianity, Luke Timothy Johnson reminds us that, “Prophecy is not merely a matter of words spoken, but a way of being in the world: it brings God's will into human history through the words, yes, but also the deeds and character of the prophet.”¹⁵³ Evidence of Jesus’ prophetic

150. David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 138.

151. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 625.

152. Murray W. Dempster, “Social Concern in the Context of Jesus’ Kingdom, Mission and Ministry.” *Transformation* 16, no. 2 (April 1999): 43–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026537889901600203>.

153. Luke Timothy Johnson. *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2011), 606-607, Kindle.

ministry can be found in Luke when he foretold the future destruction of Jerusalem (21:20–22); and when he proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was coming and that God would fulfill his promises to his people (Mark 1:15, Luke 11:20). Jesus called his followers to a justice that surpassed that of the Pharisees (Matt 5:20), and took the liberty of interpreting the law in his own way to the dismay of many (Mark 2:18, 23–28; Matt 5:17–48). By announcing the kingdom of God, he challenged the political and religious system that was in place and he even alluded to himself as a prophet: “Truly, I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown” (Luke 4:24, Col 4:1). He inferred the same when he said “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me” (John 7:16). Johnson describes prophetic ministry best when he explains that, “The prophet is led by the Holy Spirit not only to announce God's word—that is, God's vision for humanity—but also to embody that word in the prophet's own manner of life, and to seek to realize that word through action in the world.”¹⁵⁴ In the role of prophet, Jesus saw himself in continuity with Moses. His life embodied the message of the Torah, which at its core was about love of God and neighbor. Jesus called for religious leaders to apply the Torah because he recognized that their lives were not centered on love and genuine justice (two themes closely linked for Jesus and the prophets). In fact, like so many prophets before him, through his words and calls to action, he was also a disruptor.

154. Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church*, 1891–1893.

The Disruptor

Another New Testament indicator of the heart of Jesus for justice is the symbolic yet powerful scene with the temple money changers (Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–18). Jesus flipped tables in righteous anger about the injustice that was going on there. Jesus was a disruptor. Here Jesus did not just counter a person but an entire system. Jesus compared the temple keepers to a “den of robbers.”¹⁵⁵ Jesus calls them all robbers (v. 13b, quoting Jer. 7:11)—both the merchants for their exorbitant prices and the money changers for their exorbitant rates of exchange. Among the sins indicted in Jeremiah 7, for example are oppression and stealing (vv. 6, 9).¹⁵⁶ Jesus implicitly judges the priests for stomaching unethical trade. The men in question are also robbers by their very presence, for they usurp the place that God ordained to be a house of prayer (v. 13, quoting Isa. 56:7). John Barry supports J. Knox Chamblin’s argument by stating that Jesus’s rebuke of the money changers—which quotes Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11—suggests that he is condemning corruption of the temple. This judgment was probably aimed at commercial activity within the temple courts and signaled that oppressive and unjust practices were involved.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Jesus expels the tradesmen because they operate in the Court of the Gentiles. The temple was to be “a house of prayer for all

155. Matt. 21:13 ESV.

156. J. Knox Chamblin, “Matthew,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible 3*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 748.

157. John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Matt. 21:13.

nations” (Isa. 56:7); yet the one place reserved for Gentiles was being taken from them.¹⁵⁸ Jesus’s actions against favoritism are seen in verses 14–17, in which he reverses 2 Samuel 5:8. By healing the blind and the lame right within the temple, Jesus defies the Jews’ assertion that the blind and lame should be barred from God’s house (2 Sam. 5:8).¹⁵⁹

David Garland, a professor of Christian Scripture suggests that what Jesus did there was a symbolic and prophetic action of protest against injustice and cover-ups (where religious leaders would do all they could to hide their true actions from the general public against the marginalized).¹⁶⁰ If the prediction was that everything was going to be destroyed, why would he attempt a cleansing of the temple? He did it because he was symbolically attacking the injustice that occurred there. When he carried out this action, he quoted two scriptures (Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7). Furthermore, the temple was supposed to be an inclusive rather than exclusive place, but the priests had excluded anyone who was considered an outcast at the time, and had made the court intended for Gentile worship into a commercial site. “At that time, the temple was the nationalistic symbol that served only to divide Israel from the nations.”¹⁶¹ For Jesus, this was unacceptable.

158. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible*.

159. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible*.

160. David E. Garland, “Mark,” in *NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 433–39.

161. Garland, *NIV Application Commentary*.

The Isaiah Supporter

Another key indicator of Jesus's concern for justice is how often he cited the prophet Isaiah, who characterized Israel as a nation that had rebelled against God. For example, Jesus quotes Isaiah eight times during his ministry. This prophet of God spoke often about the judgment coming to Israel and of God's promise to be with them afterward. Jesus often quoted Isaiah to display the disconnect between the people and God. For example, Jesus fulfills Isaiah's prophecy when he speaks of "eyes that do not see" and "ears that do not hear" (6:9–10; Mt 13:14–15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10); when Jesus did his disrupting at the temple by overturning tables, he referenced Isaiah's words on how the house of God was supposed to be a house of prayer (56:7; Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46); likewise when Jesus called out the religious leaders for their hypocritical lip service to God while their hearts were far from him, he was referencing Isaiah (29:13; Mt 14:8–9; Mk 7:6–7).

Thus, Jesus frequently referenced the book of Isaiah because he wanted to make the case that justice and righteousness are what God desires. Since Jesus was on earth to do the will of his father, he aligned his life with the prophecies concerning him. Jesus even used Isaiah's prophecy to tell the world how he would die a sinner's death (53:12; Lk 22:37). However, the most prominent of all of Isaiah's words that Jesus himself used when beginning his ministry on earth was Isaiah 61:1–2. It became his manifesto to tell the world why he was here and what he planned to do—to heal the blind and bring good news to the afflicted (61:1–2; Mt 11:5; Lk 4:18–19, 7:22). Using Isaiah's words reminded him and all those around him that God is not impressed with religious devotion devoid of

a faithful commitment to the poor, the sick, the immigrant, and indeed all the vulnerable. Jesus and Isaiah were cut from the same cloth; both insisted on obedience, righteousness, and a world of justice.

The Most Perfect Way

God's justice was incarnated in his son, Jesus. He embodied the justice of God. A life modeling what God felt was important is a great indicator of what true followers, not just fans of Jesus, must also do. We might indeed ask in our lives what Jesus would do in similar circumstances. We know that he welcomed the stranger, rejected all types of discrimination, and rejected most kinds of violence. He stood in the tradition of the prophets in love, truth, and grace, and when necessary, righteous anger. He loved unconditionally, and was a truth-teller and a ferocious forgiver. He showed God's people then and he continues to show God's people today what justice means and how we can work toward real biblical justice. He calls us to imitate him, the most perfect model. As Graham Hill notes, "Jesus Christ demonstrated a deep and responsive concern for the poor. He was passionate for the silenced, marginalized, vulnerable, forgotten, and oppressed. We must make sure that our theology and ministry are contextual, compassionate, and lived."¹⁶² Jesus modeled the path to the most perfect way. He was the prophetic embodiment of the gospel. What Jesus did, his followers must also do. That is

162. Graham Hill, *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission Revitalizing Our Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 73.

true discipleship. We must incorporate these values in our justice-oriented church planting training endeavors.

Theological Foundations for Justice: Moving from Jesus to Today

When we care about social justice, like Jesus did, we reflect the heart of God. As Ken Wytsma states,

Justice is the single best word, both inside and outside the Bible, for capturing God’s purposes for the world and humanity’s calling in the world. Justice is, in fact, the broadest, most consistent word the Bible uses to speak about what ought to be...To do justice means to render to each what each is due...It is based on the image of God in every person—the Imago Dei—that grants all people inalienable dignity and infinite worth.¹⁶³

Justice (מִשְׁפָּט *mishpat*; δικαιοσύνη, *dikaiosynē*) as it is used in the Bible signifies “divinely righteous action, whether taken by humanity or God, that promotes equality among humanity. It is a result of a kingdom culture. It is used in relation to uplifting the righteous and oppressed and debasing the unrighteous and oppressors.”¹⁶⁴ This is the most basic foundation for the biblical justice to be practiced by the church. It gives the church its foundational mission, and is rooted in the character of God.

163. Ken Wytsma, *Pursuing Justice: The Call To Live And Die for Bigger Things* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 9.

164. Jeremiah K. Garrett, “Justice,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

Imago Dei

Biblical justice starts with the understanding of God’s original idea of shalom, and it also includes the biblical premise of *imago Dei*. According to Genesis 1:26, it is the pattern by which God created humans in his own image. Looking deeper at the meaning of the image of God, the preposition (,ג b) should be understood as the “*beth* of identity” which gives us a clearer understanding that humans are created as God’s imagers—they function *in the capacity of* God’s representatives. The image of God is not a quality within human beings; it is what humans *are*.¹⁶⁵ This view means that all human endeavor and enterprise has spiritual meaning, that work is a spiritual exercise. Vocation is worship, no matter how mundane. Any task performed to steward creation, to harness its power for God’s glory and the benefit of fellow imagers, and to foster the harmonious productivity of fellow imagers, is imaging God.¹⁶⁶ This is important to understand in the work of biblical justice because advocacy benefits all who are God’s image bearers. Thus, the biblical justice of Jesus was not retributive but restorative, honoring the *imago Dei*, the image bearers/all of humanity, and restoring shalom in individuals as well as in systems by identifying the obligations of a right relationship with God: to meet people’s needs and promote healing on earth as it is in heaven.

Another perspective on *imago Dei* is introduced by Jürgen Moltmann who argues that the Trinity in fellowship is a great example of living as the image of God. He states,

165. Michael S. Heiser, “Image of God,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software 9.

166. Heiser, “Image of God.”

Humanity is the epitome of God’s reflection. In the created order, humanity is patterned after God who is a society of three subjects or personalities who are united by mutual love but who also relate with creation independently of each other as well as in loving relationship with each of the divine subjects. In other words, human beings reflect the Trinitarian life of love and fellowship and this is the essence of what it means to be creatures in the image of God—displaying mutuality, interdependence, and inter-penetration. By contrast, solitariness, rugged individualism, characteristic of our modern society demonstrates traits that fall short of God’s original intention.¹⁶⁷

How one understands this concept has deep moral implications for how Christians feel about themselves, interact with others in society, and develop relationships. The importance of understanding *imago Dei* is foundational for developing a justice-oriented church that cares about others because, as Moltmann argues, when we understand how God meant for us to interrelate we honor each other, and work together to build a better world. Churches that see each other in this light seek to have God-honoring relationships. Churches that don’t, reflect American social values of individualism which promotes a “pick yourself up by your own bootstraps” philosophy, forgetting that many people were simply born into a world where they could not get boots.

Missio Dei

While the *imago Dei* refers to humans being made in the image of God, the *missio Dei* refers to God’s mission, and by extension those who study theology as expressing the mission of God. Both terms are important in the pursuit of justice. To be agents of

167. Isaiah Nengean, *The «Imago Dei» as the »Imago Trinitatis»: Jürgen Moltmann’s Doctrine of the Image of God* (New York: Peter Lang AG International Academic Publishers, 2013), accessed August 26, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.

individual and social transformation one must have an understanding of the biblical concepts of both the image of God and the mission of God. Without this understanding, there would not be a way to see when injustice is prevailing in the treatment of those who are image bearers of God or if the church is aligned with God's mission for the world.

Theologian Karl Barth's work states "that we are involved in God's mission and we should therefore reflect the call to justice and righteousness as part of the announcement of God's grace in offering salvation to all who repent." The term was actually coined by a German missiologist Karl Hartenstein at the 1952 conference of the International Missionary Council at which Barth was presenting on God's mission. It refers to the fact that "all mission is God's mission and thus the church is called by God to be an instrument in making the kingdom of God known. Thus we are to make known the whole gospel, in word and in deed."¹⁶⁸

Reflection on the theology of the *missio Dei* has existed for decades. However, getting the corporate church to adopt a theology of *missio Dei* has its own set of challenges, which are not as simple as one might think because of our humanity.¹⁶⁹ In essence, to be ready to talk about embracing and implementing *missio Dei*, a church and its leadership must question all that it currently is and is not doing, including its biases known and unknown, embedded theology, and the entire operation of its existence.

168. William A. Dryness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, eds., *Global Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), Logos Bible Software 9.

169. John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 76.

Whatever else churches do, Christians of Pentecostal faith, for example, must admit that the mission of any church is really a spiritual work, a work of God's Spirit.¹⁷⁰

Historically, the Western and Eastern wings of Christianity as well as every model of church and church leader has debated the *missio Dei* at length. There was a basic agreement that "Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God . . . in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity . . . as God the Father sending the son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded [to the] . . . Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world . . . God is a missionary God."¹⁷¹

The most well-known missional mandate is Matthew 28. Andrew Knowles interprets the "Go" commandment of Matthew 28:19 as the imperative to continue to do Christ's work. He states, "The disciples are to teach everyone to obey commands. The good news is to be expressed in good lives—lives which show truth, purity, and love."¹⁷² Dockery refers to verses 16–20 as an illustration of all the major themes of the Gospel, which are, "Christ's divine sovereignty and authority, the nature of discipleship, the universal scope of Christian faith, the importance of doing the will of God, and the promise of Christ's presence with His followers in everything they may experience."¹⁷³

170. Louis Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 1.

171. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 390.

172. Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 2001), 443.

173. David S. Dockery, ed., *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 567.

This is Jesus coming into the reality of his people for his people, in other words, incarnation. Orlando Costas maintains that the Incarnation had missiological implications for sharing the gospel in our world, “especially among its poverty-stricken, oppressed, and powerless majority.”¹⁷⁴ These implications are that Jesus becomes one of us, suffering alongside of us, identifying as poor, powerless and oppressed only to be rejected and dying a criminal’s death on a cross that was not even his to bear. Another missiological implication is that the world gets to know the truth identity of Jesus as witnessed in the New Testament versus an illusion or ideologized version of Christ. People get to experience the disenfranchised Christ. Costas also observes that contextualization has to be embraced as a “theological necessity.”¹⁷⁵ Jesus coming down from heaven, choosing to be one of the oppressed is how he wanted to live his humanity as part of history. As Costas puts it “The carpenter from Nazareth and the prophet from Galilee who suffered death on a cross and was raised from the dead by the Spirit. God is not absent from human history.”¹⁷⁶ When thinking of mission, “it is not possible to understand God or humankind without the mediation of the God-human Jesus Christ.”¹⁷⁷

The *missio Dei* of God is “to redeem, restore, and heal all humanity and creation.”¹⁷⁸ It is for this reason that the church exists. Thus David Bosch believes that

174. Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1982), 13.

175. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 12.

176 . Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 12.

177. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 12.

178. Hill, *Global Church*, 426.

“There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Costas stated, “the Christian mission is grounded in the mission of the triune God. There is no other mission than that which originates in the purpose and action of God in history.”¹⁸⁰ It is also important, therefore, especially for Pentecostals who believe in the power of the living Spirit not to forget that mission “is carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸¹ It is the Holy Spirit who is the mighty transformer. It is the Holy Spirit who drives the people of God to advocate for justice. It is the Holy Spirit God has sent to us to help advance His mission of righteousness and justice.

Yet, to be able to “redeem, restore, and heal all humanity” as Hill states, the *missio Dei* also confronts the corruption of power. Costas agrees when he states that confronting the corruption of power “was one reason why God’s Son went to the cross.” Jesus spoke out against the injustices he saw and fought against the invisible powers linked to principalities and powers of this earth (Eph 6:12). Costas continues, “Whatever else we may say about the cross, one reality stands out: it marked a decisive battle between Christ and these invisible corrupt powers.”¹⁸² Because Christ triumphed over the principalities and powers (Col. 2:15), the church need not be intimidated by them and

179. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389–390.

180. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 43.

181. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 43.

182. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 170.

should recognize that sharing the gospel and confronting the powers go hand in hand—as *missio Dei*. Costas explains it best when he states, “Any church, mission agency, or theological institution that claims the whole world as its mission field and wants to proclaim faithfully the whole gospel must make the kerygmatic encounter with the structures that dominate and oppress human life a fundamental component of its agenda. This is not an easy task.”¹⁸³ Costas challenges leaders committed to the work of the gospel to stand against injustice in all its various forms and to understand that there will always be a war inside of our heads and hearts to accommodate whatever is most popular in this day. Costas urges us to be true in our calling to confront the powers and proclaim the Lord’s liberating gospel. This is why planters need to know from the beginning what type of church they want to plant. This is also why these planters need to learn the difference between advocating for people through prayer versus through civic action and the protesting of unjust policies.

The *missio Dei* of God is about liberation. It is about setting captives free in all areas of life, personal and social. Costas states that we need “to take head-on oppressive structures like consumerism, technology, militarism, multinational capitalism, international communism, racism, and sexism,”¹⁸⁴ and to do that we need, “a spirituality of missional engagement.”¹⁸⁵

183. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 171.

184. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 170.

185. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 170.

If that is the mission of God, it is an all-inclusive mission. His mission embraces the haves and the have nots, the oppressed and the oppressor, the educated and the illiterate. The inclusiveness of *missio Dei* cannot be denied. It is the duty of every bearer of God's image—every Christian—to see all humans from God's point of view. Dario Lopez Rodriguez states that, according to the Gospel of Luke, “the God of life demands his disciples to put aside their theological, political, and cultural prejudices that objectify human beings.”¹⁸⁶ In this way, we work hand in hand with God on God's mission to take the “whole gospel to the whole world.”¹⁸⁷

Emergence of a Social Gospel: Its Parallels to Latino/a Social Activism

The so-called social gospel and the social gospel movement were inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus. Since its emergence in the late nineteenth century, the “social gospel” movement has been seen as something that liberal Protestants or theologically progressive Christians care about and in which they participate. It uses Christian principles as a framework or motivator to think about and improve all kinds of social problems, such as poverty, injustice, and so forth. Recent research describes the social gospel as follows:

A biblically based stance informed by the life of Jesus Christ; the importance of prophetic leadership that is genuinely concerned about the less fortunate; cognizance and knowledge about contemporary and chronic social problems, their points of origin, effects, and possible remedies; a connection between Christian

186. Rodriguez, *The Liberating Mission of Jesus*, 15.

187. Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 163.

ethics and social and political activism; and the desire and willingness to combat inequality and injustice through social reform.¹⁸⁸

In the second half of nineteenth century, the social gospel movement was particularly concerned with the societal ills of the time, such as abolishing child labor and long work hours, combating urban poverty, establishing a living wage, creating suitable housing for the poor, and advocating for educational equity and improved health systems for immigrants and the poor.¹⁸⁹

While the movement's genesis is linked to Protestants and Catholics, Jews later embraced it as well.¹⁹⁰ Evangelicals who accepted traditional Christian orthodoxy, the infallibility of the Bible, and individual conversion, rarely endorsed the social gospel. But that seems to be in label only because many Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and ministries actually lived it in praxis even if they did not understand or endorse the term. "Evangelistic social work was a regular practice throughout Puerto Rico and the United States, and no one thought twice about these actions, which were and still are often simply called "outreach"¹⁹¹ in many of these circles. It's actually quite amazing what

188. Sandra Barnes, "Black Megachurches: Social Gospel Usage and Community Empowerment," *Journal of African American Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 2011): 177–198, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-010-9148-8>.

189. Sandra Barnes, "Black Megachurches: Social Gospel Usage and Community Empowerment," *Journal of African American Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 2011): 177–198, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-010-9148-8>.

190. Gary Scott Smith, "The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911–12: New Perspectives on Evangelical Social Concern, Christianity and Progressivism," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 91–118, accessed November 18, 2018, EBSCOhost database.

191. Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 326.

many Hispanic church plants have done with limited education, funds, and time or even comprehension of this social gospel debate. A 2015 New Churches and Lifeway church planting study revealed that Hispanics and Black Americans were the people who were planting the most churches in the US.¹⁹² A 2019 Hispanic church planting report revealed that Hispanic church plants have been able to do more with far fewer resources than regular church plants led by White American church planters.¹⁹³

Hispanic Pentecostals have been a part of the struggle to improve social conditions too. Gastón Espinosa writes that, “Latino Pentecostals have been involved in faith-based social, civic, and political civic action throughout the twentieth century.”¹⁹⁴ They recognized that their personal mission along with the church’s mission is not only to evangelize and save souls but also to attempt to save communities by changing them a little at a time, in a variety of ways. For example, it was in the services at Azusa Street between 1906–1909 that people of different races were integrated, as documented by Adolfo C. Valdez who wrote “that about one hundred black, brown and white people would ascend to the Upper Room where they sought the baptism with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹⁵

192. Ed Stetzer, Micah Fries and Daniel Im, “The State of Church Planting in the U.S. (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2015), accessed October 19, 2019, <https://www.wesleyan.org/wp-content/uploads/Lifeway-2015-ChurchPlanting-Survey.pdf>

193. Hispanic Church Planting Report (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2019), accessed October 19, 2019, <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Hispanic-Church-Planting-CPLF-Report.pdf>

194. Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 322.

195. Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 23.

In the Azusa Street revival days of the early 1900s, people like Susie Villa Valdez prayed for and ministered to ex-convicts and prostitutes and took them to skid row missions when they needed food, shelter, or medical attention. Rev. Florence Crawford likewise worked with the police in the jails of Los Angeles in an attempt to rehabilitate prisoners and help them re-enter society.¹⁹⁶

Another example of Latino/a Pentecostal engagement in social action on the streets is the story of international inner-city phenomenon Victory Outreach, founded by Nuyorican Sonny Arguinzoni in 1967. Arguinzoni himself was a product of the evangelism efforts of the Pentecostal street preacher David Wilkerson. Victory Outreach has planted hundreds of churches in neighborhoods that were “underserved, poverty-stricken, drug and gang-infested”¹⁹⁷ in cities like Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. Remarkably, Victory Outreach trained some of the persons in such deprived neighborhoods to become pastors of these newly planted churches. But it all started with them helping thousands of drug addicts through the rehabilitation programs Victory Outreach launched. But they did more than that: By helping with rehabilitation and by offering job opportunities, Victory Outreach provided hope and a promise of a future very different from the bleak conditions in which members of such neighborhoods found themselves.

196. Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action*, 324.

197. Daniel Rodriguez, “Victory Outreach International: A Case Study in Holistic Hispanic Ministry,” *Apuntes* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 136-148, accessed November 18, 2018, EBSCOhost database.

Organizations such as Victory Outreach birthed a model of restoration and community engagement. In many cases, this also led some churches to adopting an ecclesiology driven by mission. This concept of “misión integral” was made popular by Ecuadorian evangelical theologian C. René Padilla. By “misión integral” he meant “the mission of the whole church to the whole of humanity in all its forms, personal, communal, social, economic, ecological, and political. Following its understanding of God’s purpose as revealed in Jesus Christ, it has a particular concern for the poor, the outcast and the marginalized people of the world.”¹⁹⁸

Such initiatives aligned with what was happening with the social gospel as it developed through the years. Social gospel and misión integral advocates have come to believe that the Christian Church has a responsibility not simply to preach the gospel but to improve the economic, political, social, and psychological well-being of the community in which it is based. After the ethnographic research study of sixteen Black megachurches which focused on whether and how a social gospel message influences the purposes and programs for these churches, evidence that supports the hypothesis of this dissertation. The study conducted by American educator and ordained Baptist minister Sandra Lynn Barnes, in black megachurches in Georgia, Illinois, Florida, Texas, California and New York supports that education of new planters and pastors in the US today must include understanding of the social gospel and its historical evolution along with the skills necessary to learn how to engage the powers in their communities, cities,

198. Esteban Voth, translator’s preface to *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation: An Ecclesiology for Integral Mission*, ed. Tetsunao Yamamori and C. René Padilla (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairós, 2004), 9.

states and if necessary, nation. While not all mega-churches are doing this, any church that truly want to have long term sustainable change in their communities are. In addition, as has been discussed with the example of Victory Outreach and other pioneering Hispanic efforts, a faith community can make a difference even if they are small and have limited resources, for example beginning as a modest outreach community empowerment program that eventually adds a church service component.

Advocates of the social gospel especially as it relates to the economic impact that programming can have on a community believe that the Christian Church's mission should include civic advocacy as part of its work for community transformation. Barnes argued, "the Christian Church is responsible for securing the spiritual well-being of society by proclaiming the Gospel message as well as safeguarding the economic, political, and social well-being of citizens." A church has to discern not that they will be justice-oriented but what kind of justice-oriented church they will be. Every church will require some type of program for social transformation to take place what they are not aware of most of the time, is the advocacy role they will also have to take part in. Barnes' study disclosed that most pastors had an economic versus political motivation. However, many times in urban communities these two factors go hand in hand. The need for advocacy is also determined by the community in which a new planter is choosing to plant themselves. "Structural issues lie at the root of reflective engagement with poverty. The prevalence of these issues shows how contexts in need of relief or development also need advocacy or policy work. Without the latter set of activities, the root causes of impoverishing situations remain unaddressed." It's not a question of can a church plant

do this, it's more of a question of priorities and whether they want to do it enough to follow through with all it will take. Especially, when there has been so much debate and division about churches that believe in empowering and transforming communities through the proclamation of the Jesus message and the initiation of justice-oriented programing.

This is something for planters to discern because many evangelicals believed then and now that evangelizing and saving souls is the primary mission of the church, and that social action, social justice, and social concern is outside of their primary scope. This difference in perspective of mission has created a great ideological gulf—between Republican and Democrat, Left and Right, Right and Wrong.

Much has happened and evolved in the world since the beginning of the social gospel movement, but what remains the same is the gulf. This project focuses on how the gospel can drive people to address and bridge the gulf of injustice, and specifically how some Pentecostal groups have addressed the issue of social transformation by embracing social justice advocacy.

Social Action in the Evangelical-Pentecostal Community

Can Pentecostalism in all of its varied expressions have a true impact on the myriad of problems in the world today? Researchers Donald Miller who is a Professor of Religion and Executive Director of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture along with his colleague Tetsunao Yamamori, President Emeritus of Food for the Hungry International and a Senior Fellow of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture say a

resounding yes. Yet they also suggest in their study on global Pentecostalism that took them to twenty different countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, that it is only a certain kind of Pentecostal that can do so because some Pentecostal theology can actually hinder social transformation, namely legalistic Pentecostal, apocalyptic Pentecostal, and prosperity gospel Pentecostal theologies. The rationale behind this disclaimer seems to make sense. The legalistic person can make an individual feel ashamed when they seek help, perhaps blaming their condition on sin in their life, or laziness. The apocalyptic person is concerned primarily with the “imminent return of Christ,” so they are content merely to patch over things that need long-term solutions, and social transformation is not something that happens overnight. Finally, the prosperity gospel adherent is so concerned with events like tent revivals, healing meetings, and other attractions to raise money that they have no time to deal with the practical social needs of their community. There are some prosperity gospel churches, however, that do have social ministries with the intent of helping their members get on their feet and maybe even start entrepreneurial things, but their primary motive is not social transformation—although that would be a byproduct of their effort—but to give more money to the church.¹⁹⁹

People live in a real world with real problems. They find it unhelpful to be given false hope and have their expectations heightened. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happens in many such church communities. Two things end up happening with people

199. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, 31–32.

that have experienced these types of faith communities: they either become de-churched, meaning that they no longer find it important to go to church, or they find their way through trial and error to a more Progressive Pentecostal church community that is actively preaching about a Christian's responsibility to address social needs in their communities and actually have programs that meet those needs.

Latinos/as, in particular, who care about issues related to justice, and have not found the right faith community, tend to occupy a "spiritual borderland."²⁰⁰ As Chao Romero points out, "we are told those are political issues which are separate from faith. As a result, we often walk away from church and formal religious institutions. We may cling tenuously to a personal faith, but our activism becomes divorced from institutional Christianity."²⁰¹ Some might think that Adam Gustine could be slightly exaggerating when he refers to justice-seeking evangelicals as those who see themselves as "sidelined people," versus other evangelicals who do not see justice as an important message of the Bible. These justice-seeking evangelicals "have a passion to seek the shalom of God in the world and have found that their local congregation is indifferent or antagonistic to that desire."²⁰² But many of such justice-oriented evangelicals have experienced

200. The concept of "in between," "borderlands" identity in Chicana/o Studies comes first from the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa in her famous book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012) and Miguel A. De La Torre and Gastón Espinosa's co-edited book *Rethinking Latino (a) Religion and Identity* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2006).

201. Roberto Chao Romero, "The Brown Church: Towards a Latina/o Christian Social Justice History and Identity" (Unpublished book manuscript, 2018), 12.

202. Adam L. Gustine, *Becoming a Just Church: Cultivating Communities of God's Shalom* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 11.

“displacement from congregational life.”²⁰³ Instead, they have gravitated to para-church organizations like World Vision, Christian Community Development Association, Sojourners, and Evangelicals for Social Action as a form of church where they find a safe and supportive community. This shift is evidence of a “severe deficiency of our local, embodied ecclesiology related to justice.”²⁰⁴ That deficiency also tends to result in loneliness. Miller and Yamamori point out there is still scant research on the number of people dropping out of local communities who do not share this desire for justice for self and others.

To counter this, Miller and Yamamori helpfully identify three ways that Pentecostalism can be an agent of social transformation for individuals and, in turn, communities. First, religion can dull the pain of injustice. This could be particularly attractive to people on the margins who see no way out of the realities they face every day. Working over 40-hours in a sweat shop and still not making ends meet for hungry children and spouse at home, pales in comparison to focusing on a promised heaven with streets of gold and a mansion with your name on it. Yet, Miller and Yamamori interviewed a priest who noted that it is not good to be too numb to that pain, because people that do not feel pain have no reason to fight to stop the suffering. This particular priest had been involved with the charismatic renewal movement but eventually left because he felt the religion was “incapable of changing the caste system. He instead

203. Gustine, *Becoming a Just Church*, 12.

204. Gustine, *Becoming a Just Church*, 12.

turned to political organizing as a better means for people to change their life circumstances.”²⁰⁵

Second, Pentecostalism incrementally improves the social welfare of some people. It causes a “social uplift” that gives Pentecostals an advantage over their neighbors because of their moral beliefs against societal evils, which included alcohol, drugs, gambling, and sexual promiscuity. Essentially, religion helped people become physically and even mentally healthier because their mindset changed. They focused on God in heaven instead of their problems on earth. In addition, the church family provided a supportive network in times of both hardship and celebration.

Third and finally, Pentecostalism, when practiced properly, focuses on human worth and by extension human rights since its biblical teaching highlights that everyone is made in the image of God and is endowed with equal value.

In and of themselves these theological views have significant implications in the world of politics and community transformation. However, Miller and Yamamori also noted that these were indirect results of Pentecostalism, it not being Pentecostalism’s goal to have these positive effects on its people. However, those who practice a Progressive Pentecostalism feel that everything they undertake to help people have a better life is a mandate of God, and thus is a direct result of their efforts. Progressive Pentecostals see social activism as core to their very identity as Christians. To them, “to simply focus on

205. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, 32.

inward purity and proselytizing the unconverted is... a truncated version of the Christian gospel.”²⁰⁶

Yet one factor is still missing in Progressive Evangelical movements—that of a Spirit-empowered praxis. Any evangelical can practice progressive Christianity, but only a Progressive Pentecostal realizes that being empowered by the Spirit of God is what gives their praxis life and the power for follow-through amid the challenges.

Miller and Yamamori mention in their book that the kinds of Progressive Pentecostals they interviewed did not consider themselves to be political and were not trying to change policy or overhaul systems.²⁰⁷ Hispanic Pentecostal theologian Samuel Solivan said that was possible because of orthopathos.²⁰⁸ He argued for an interlocutor between orthopraxy (right activity) and orthodoxy (right doctrine), which he called “orthopathos.” Solivan described orthopathos as “the proper liberating appropriation of suffering (pathos) to encourage living as loving subjects inspired by the Holy Spirit” and “the holistic empowerment of the Holy Spirit in one’s life that leads to the transformation of pathos, suffering, and alienation.”²⁰⁹ Luis Enrique Benavides interprets Solivan’s work on orthopathos as “the liberation from suffering inspired and transformed by the Holy Spirit and made possible through the work of Jesus Christ without suspending the human

206. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, 34.

207. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 4.

208. Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 70–71.

209. Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation*, 70–71.

systems of oppression.”²¹⁰ Both Solivan and Benavides, therefore, see the connection between Pentecostal experience and attention to human suffering in the social realm.

Pentecostal churches have historically not always been known for their political engagement and civic activism. They reasoned that since the world is corrupt and Jesus is coming back soon, salvation of human souls is of the utmost urgency. While William Seymour and most of his followers during the Azusa Street Revival affirmed this back in the early 1900s, they placed a premium on evangelism and conversion. Pentecostals who have evolved and adjusted to the world as it is now have a praxis of both/and not either/or. As we have seen in this section, Pentecostal pastors and activists like Forbes, Rivera, Rios, and most recently Miller and Yamamori, have called such religious leaders “Progressive Pentecostals” and have suggested that they represent the “maturation of the Pentecostal movement.”²¹¹

Advocating for Justice

This researcher advocates for a return to a partnership between evangelization and justice, and between spirituality and civic action because it is the heart of the gospel message. Specifically, this dissertation argues that churches who desire to help bring long-term sustainable change in communities with a predominance of the urban poor would do well to be trained in civic advocacy. It is not a question of *whether* Christians

210. Luis Enrique Benavides, *Latino Christianity: History, Ministry and Theology: The New England United Methodist Situation* (Sandy, UT: Aardvark Global Publishing, 2005), 303.

211. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 127.

should get involved in issues that impact the people being served in a church community, but of when and how. The authors of *Advocating for Justice* state,

Evangelical Christians who come face to face with such injustices are forced into prayerful decisions: Is God calling us to become involved in the often-risky business of “advocacy”? Ought we to engage the power of the government, whether through the police, the courts, the bureaucracy, or the legislature, to right these wrongs? If so, how can we approach advocacy in ways that glorify God? Far too often, evangelicals do not know how to answer these questions. As a result, we either do nothing, thus committing the sins of omission, or we do things that are neither effective nor God honoring.²¹²

Training church planters to understand advocacy and justice from a biblical and contextual perspective gives them the necessary biblical backdrop (the “why”) to make a decision on the type of church they seek to plant. It makes them more informed on how they how they can act on behalf of those seeking justice and be able to see the power of civic engagement for the purposes of justice. Nathan Todd, an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois and Anne K. Rufa, a clinical psychologist have done extensive research on faith and social justice and have also pointed out that there is little research on faith and civic engagement, specifically from a church perspective, and thus a gap in research, on how people of faith understand, define, and work for justice.²¹³ This project seeks to address two things learned from their research: First, to understand how faith leaders (particularly those seeking to plant churches) learn about justice; and second, to provide these leaders with a preliminary learning experience to help launch

212. Stephen Offutt et al., *Advocating for Justice: An Evangelical Vision for Transforming Systems and Structures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 4.

213. Todd and Rufa, “Social Justice and Religious Participation,” 316.

justice-oriented church plants with an understanding and definition of advocacy and justice so they can be credible witnesses. For Gustavo Gutiérrez, that means that they will understand the mission of the church “as the community of Jesus’s disciples,”²¹⁴ to communicate and bear witness to the total liberation of the human being. because the church’s mission is “to proclaim an integral liberation, because nothing is left untouched by the saving work of Christ.”²¹⁵

Conclusion: God Will Meet Us at the Margins

Christianity is about praxis not just belief, praxis aligned with the personhood and ministry of Jesus. Hispanic Progressive Pentecostals strive for a Jesus-centered, practiced-based Christianity. Progressive Pentecostals’ social ethic is based on the conviction that one cannot know God without understanding his heart for justice. In the words of Chris Marshall, “Our knowledge of justice springs ultimately from our knowledge of God. There can be no true knowledge of God without an appreciation of God’s own unfailing dedication to justice. Those who bear God’s image must also be agents of justice.”²¹⁶ While I acknowledge that all theology is contextual theology and early theological and ethical opinions on justice are viewed from a particular cultural lens, I also maintain that there has to be intentionality about understanding life at the

214. Gutiérrez and Nickoloff, *Essential Writings*, 259–61; Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 141.

215. Gutiérrez and Nickoloff, *Essential Writings*, 141.

216. Chris Marshall, *Little Book of Biblical Justice: A Fresh Approach to the Bible’s Teachings on Justice* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005), 25.

intersections because building relationships and alliances across categories is essential in the fight for justice.

Jesus's proclamation of his Father's kingdom directly affected what was going on around him politically, socially, and relationally. He was critical of the injustices he saw and called for mass repentance. Luke 6:40 stated that "the student is not above the teacher." Today, anyone who counters injustice should expect to receive the same harsh welcome Jesus did—and perhaps even death. Jesus challenged the self-righteous practices of the religious leaders of his day and he was ostracized and killed because of it. He modeled a different life for his followers then and now.

As Christians, the Lord has told us what is good, and what he requires of us. He requires us "to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God."²¹⁷ To do what is just means initiating or joining on community causes that help the widow, the poor, the orphan, and the immigrant, even if the other part of the evangelical community pejoratively labels those who give themselves to such causes "liberals," or worse. Justice education is crucial to instituting a new era and mobilizing new Progressive Pentecostals who are determined to set the captives free, not only through the use of prayer, but also by using their prophetic voice and actions as they more fully embrace the empowerment of the Spirit.

Progressive Pentecostals must continue to fight for justice and the long-term changes their communities need with love and through transformational advocacy that is

217. Mic. 6:7–9 GNT

empowered by the Spirit. There is a biblical precedent for being justice-oriented people, and God himself is a God of justice. Building justice-oriented churches led by people who understand the need for education on justice and advocacy takes intentionality. With due preparation, congregations can anticipate what they will encounter and can be ready to work for the good of their neighbors. With love and the necessary skills, justice can roll down like waters.²¹⁸ The next chapter shows how the Hispanic community has been actively involved in meeting the needs of their community, empowered by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Members of that community advocated for those who were marginalized, and when necessary made the streets their home. They did not fear the margins, but found God there.

218. Amos 5:25 ESV

Chapter Three

Hispanics, Progressive Pentecostalism, Activism, and the Spirit

This chapter explains some of the key differences in the Hispanic population in an attempt to help all those with a commitment to work with and for this population around the United States. It offers a brief history of civic activism among the Hispanic Pentecostal community, and suggests why, despite this history, there is still a need for intentional training in advocacy skills in this community.

Hispanics in General

While the United States is heading toward a time where there will be “no clear ethnic majority,”²¹⁹ Currently Hispanics are the nation’s largest community of color at 25 percent of the population, followed by African Americans at 12.7 percent. The U.S. Hispanic population reached 59.9 million in 2018 yet by the year 2050, the Hispanic population is expected to exceed 100 million individuals.²²⁰ Hispanics are not a homogenous groups. Among the many subgroups included in this term are Mexicans, Hondurans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Cubans, Chileans, Dominicans, Colombians,

219. Center for American Progress. August 2015. *Demographic Growth of People of Color*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress accessed February 22, 2018, <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/05075256/PeopleOfColor-Democracy-FS.pdf>.

220. United States Census, August 20, 2019. Hispanic Heritage Month accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2019/hispanic-heritage-month.html>

Argentinians, Puerto Ricans, Venezuelans, Ecuadorians, Bolivians, Peruvians, Panamanians, Costa Ricans, and Nicaraguans.²²¹ Each national community has its own ethnic, political, racial, socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.²²²

A article from 2005 found that the bulk of the US Hispanic population settled in larger metropolitan areas in what are known as gateway cities including Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and Chicago.²²³ However, a 2016 Pew Research Center study found that from the 1990s onward the Hispanic community was bypassing these traditional gateway cities in search of jobs and affordable housing. Now their destinations are much more varied. One can find large Hispanic communities in North Carolina (particularly Charlotte), New Orleans, and even what is known as the Black Mecca, Atlanta, Georgia. A surprising fact is that although North Dakota and Utah have long had mostly white populations, these states have been attracting a large number of Latinos due to an oil boom that brought many jobs with it.²²⁴

Religiously, the Hispanic population is also quite diverse. There are Catholics, Protestants, Muslim, Buddhists, Santeros (worship of saints), Curanderos (a traditional Native healer, a shaman who use herbs and spiritualism), along with agnostics and

221. Havidán Rodríguez, Rogelio Saénz, and Cecilia Menivar, eds., *Latinos/as in the United States: Changing the Face of America* (New York: Springer, 2008), 10.

222. Jorge. J. E. Gracia and Pablo de Grief (eds.), *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States: Ethnicity, Race and Rights* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

223. Hugo Martin, "Top 10 Cities for Hispanics to Live In: Where Latinos Love To Live, Work And Play." *Hispanic*, 08, 16–18, 2005. 20-22, accessed April 18, 2018, ProQuest Database.

224. Renee Stepler and Mark Hugo Lopez, "U.S. Latino Population Growth and Dispersion Has Slowed Since Onset of the Great Recession," Pew Research Center (Hispanic Trends), September 8, 2016, accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/09/08/latino-population-growth-and-dispersion-has-slowed-since-the-onset-of-the-great-recession/>.

atheists. Yet, for the most part, approximately 93 percent of the Hispanic community self-identify as Christian.²²⁵ Of this Hispanic group that self-identifies as Christian, more than “one million [persons] self-identify with the Assemblies of God (AG) across the United States and Puerto Rico, 700,000 plus of whom are noted in AG statistical analyses. The rest are Latinos who do not regularly attend church for various reasons, but who still self-identify with the AG.”²²⁶ In addition, Pentecostals make up approximately 64 percent of all US Latino Protestants and 65 percent of the US Latino Protestant electorate.

Politically, geographically, and educationally, Aaron Bell notes that the Hispanic electorate as a whole is changing significantly:

The potential Latino electorate has increasingly taken on the characteristics of the second- and third-generation immigrants filling its ranks. New voters are US-born, US-educated, and more fluent in English than the generations who preceded them, and their interests, political awareness, and sense of civic responsibility often diverge from those of their elders. They are increasingly taking up residence outside of the geographically-narrow enclaves of their parents and grandparents, and while Latino communities are not yet pervasive throughout the United States, their political influence is slowly extending across the nation.²²⁷

Educationally, 11.4 million Latino students were enrolled in public schools in 2011. It is expected that by the 2022–2023 school year, 30 percent of all US public school students will be Latino. Researchers and educators alike assert that the success of Latino students

225. Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 4. Among those designated as “Christian,” Espinosa included people with a Christian tradition, movement, or experience such as being born again, Pentecostal/Charismatic, and/or independent/nondenominational Christian.

226. Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 3.

227. Aaron T. Bell, “Diversity and Potential: The Latino Electorate in The 2016 Elections.” *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* 8, no. 2: 2016.243–262, accessed April 27, 2018, ProQuest Database.

is critical to the success of our nation as a whole.²²⁸ While more Latinos are attending college, there are still large bachelor's degree attainment gaps. In 2013, only 16 percent of Latinos ages 25 to 29 held at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 40 percent of white young adults.²²⁹ The percentage increased slightly during the 2014–2015 academic year, with a total of 22 percent of Latinos 25 and older earning an Associate's degree or higher.²³⁰

This enormous shift in the Hispanic population suggests is ushering in of what David Carrasco's coins the "the Brown Millennium"²³¹ an era in which Hispanics "will profoundly shape the spirit, ethos, and cultural complexion of American religion, politics and society."²³² Espinosa suggests that members of the Latino Assembly of God "may be one of the movements in the vanguard of [this] browning of American Evangelicalism and Christianity,"²³³ and therefore of this Brown Millennium.

228. A. P. McGlynn, "Latino college-going & graduation rates moving up but gaps remain," *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, 24 (Sept 08, 2014): 18–20, accessed April 17, 2018, ProQuest Database.

229. Miriam Rinn, "Graduate Education: Maintaining Equal Access to Graduate School." *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education* (June 27, 1997): 8, accessed April 17, 2018, ProQuest Database.

230. Excelencia in Education "Latino College Completion: United States" Handout, 2014–2015 enrollment and completions data, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, accessed April 28, 2018, https://www.edexcelencia.org/sites/default/files/LCCStateStats/Exc-2018-50StateFS-USA-04_0.pdf.

231. David Carrasco as cited in Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 5.

232. David Carrasco as cited in Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 5.

233. Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 5.

That justice has become an important concern for Hispanics is hardly surprising. Like the Black American community, they have been the victims of racism expressed in a host of ways, from housing to education, access to good housing and to good food and medical attention. Yet people of faith in both communities have not always felt a sense of obligation about becoming engaged civically, perhaps partly because they do not believe their voices will be heard. Various scholars²³⁴ have concluded that oftentimes religion can act as an opiate, a distraction to the poor, discouraging them from participation in anything political. Miller and Yamamori suggest that religion can dull the pain of injustice,²³⁵ and thus Pentecostals may not feel the urgency to get involved in changing their unjust reality. Robert Lane concludes that religion offered urban blacks and newly arrived immigrants an “otherworldly solace for temporal ills,” which led to civic indifference.²³⁶ But need it be so? Could religion not also stimulate participation, as it did in the civil rights era?

Indeed, there have been people in both communities of color that decided working for social transformation meant getting involved in the streets. Espinosa writes, “Contrary to popular perception, Latino Pentecostals have been involved in faith-based social, civic,

234. See Ana L. De La O, Jonathan A. Rodden, “Does Religion Distract the Poor? Income and Issue Voting Around the World,” *Journal of Comparative Political Studies* 41, 4-5, (April 1, 2008): 437–476, accessed August 30, 2019, <https://doi-org.seu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0010414007313114>; see also Gwyneth McLendon and Rachel Beatty Riedl, “Religion as a Stimulant of Political Participation: Experimental Evidence from Nairobi, Kenya,” *The Journal of Politics*, 77, no. 4 (August 18, 2015), accessed August 30, 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/682717>.

235. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 32.

236. Robert E. Lane, *Political Life: Why People Get Involved in Politics* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), 250–55.

and political civic action throughout the twentieth century. Although their work is not framed in terms of the Social Gospel or Liberation Theology movements because such movements are not Christ-centered enough for them, Latino Assemblies of God leaders and laity regularly engage in social, civic, and political action and acts of mercy.”²³⁷

Espinosa advocates for blending the Pentecostal distinctives of the power of the cross, supernatural healing, and God’s grace:

While traditional Evangelical and liberal Protestant churches have split evangelism and social justice into two different types of ministry, Latino Pentecostals blend them together in evangelistic social work and outreach. This approach seeks to use social action, civic engagement, political participation, and acts of mercy as vehicles through which to demonstrate and incarnationalize the love and saving grace of Jesus Christ to a broken and suffering world. ...Latino AG leaders ...call this blending Jesus Christ’s “agenda of righteousness and justice,” which combines Billy Graham’s vertical reconciling message of salvation and hope in Jesus Christ with Martin Luther King Jr.’s horizontal prophetic focus on civil rights and social justice.²³⁸

The Hispanic Pentecostal community may not understand the theological terms for what they do but they are nonetheless aligned to the *missio Dei* because they have shown through history that they will do whatever is necessary to bring people to a knowledge of God as a means of bringing salvation to a world. This is *la causa* (the cause) that drives most of its members today. They embody what Michael Gorman suggests is, “The mode by which salvation is conveyed to the world is the preaching of

237. David Carrasco as cited in Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 322.

238. Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 322. For more insight on this, see Samuel Rodriguez, *The Lamb’s Agenda: Why Jesus Is Calling You to a Life of Righteousness and Justice* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2013).

this good news both in word and in deed.”²³⁹ A merge of what Black and Hispanic historical activism and the Bible looks like is illustrated beautifully by Hispanic Assembly of God pastor Samuel Rodriguez,

The cross is both vertical and horizontal, redemption and relationship, holiness and humility, covenant and community, kingdom and society, righteousness and justice, salvation and transformation, ethos and pathos; it is John 3: 16 and Luke 4, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, Billy Graham and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., faith and public policy, imago Dei and habitus Christus, prayers and activism, sanctification and service, the New Jerusalem and Washington DC.²⁴⁰

The Gospel of Deeds, or as Rodriguez states, the horizontal, is what some Progressive Hispanic Pentecostals feel some White Evangelicals dismiss. It is one thing to communicate biblical justice from the pulpit and quite another actually to live it out. This is what some younger Hispanics in our day are calling churches to do. Second and third generation leaders want to see more demonstration along with a church’s proclamation of the gospel message. These younger Hispanics want to see what Gorman states the church should be, “... a living exegesis of the gospel of God. The church performs the gospel as a living commentary on it...it lives the story, embodies the story, tells the story.”²⁴¹ But sometimes, without much fan fare, it is our “abuelas” who have stories to tell and a lived theology to express as I argue in what follows.

239. Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 23.

240. Samuel Rodriguez, *The Lamb’s Agenda: Why Jesus Is Calling You to a Life of Righteousness and Justice* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2013). Kindle, 2.

241. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 43.

Abuelita Theology

Finding stories that demonstrate the successful merger of faith and politics is often difficult, because other than through the church, most second- and third-generation Hispanics learn about faith (and politics) through “Abuelita Theology”—the theology (and politics) that grandmothers pass on within their families.²⁴² Abuelitas often say that anything that diverts your attention away “from God” is not “of God.” This reliance on Abuela theology is most often seen in the Catholic tradition. However, scholars such as Selina Stone, Nathan Todd, and Anne Rufa have found that some second and third generation Hispanics form most of their opinions on citizenship, political engagement, and justice from their local congregation and more specifically from their pastor.²⁴³ Thus if a family worships together in the same church, they are more likely to become civically engaged together, especially if they are immigrants. It’s been noted that “in evangelical Protestant homes, it is the interaction between the entire family unit that is seen in most Hispanic immigrant households where there have been higher levels of civic engagement.²⁴⁴ If a church shares the gospel message from a perspective of justice, it is most likely forming a Progressive Pentecostal.

242. For more on abuelita theology, see Mario T. García, *The Gospel of César Chávez: My Faith in Action* (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 2007), 25.

243. Todd See Selina Stone, “Pentecostal Power: discipleship as political engagement,” in *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* (2018): 38:1, 24–38, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2018.1434727> and Nathan Rand Anne K. Rufa, “Social Justice and Religious Participation: A Qualitative Investigation of Christian Perspectives,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 51, no. 3–4 (2013): 315–331, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-012-9552-4>.

244. See Holley A. Wilkin, Vikki S. Katz, and Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach, “The Role of Family Interaction in New Immigrant Latinos’ Civic Engagement,” *Journal of Communication* 59 (2009): 387–406, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01421.x>.

Progressive Pentecostals

Pentecostal churches all over the world have been active in various forms of social action and community transformation, even though, as Shane Clifton has pointed out, they may do it with an evangelistic agenda. He states, “Pentecostals still tend to assume that the purpose of social action lies in its service to the task of evangelism. Social action is affirmed as a means of pre-evangelism, a method of selling the ministry of the church to individuals and society as a whole, rather than something intimately connected to the gospel.”²⁴⁵

Many Pentecostals have been unsure of what to call themselves or how to name their actions when they feel a mandate from God to become involved in societal problems. Moreover, Clifton argues, they have not articulated a theology for political involvement to help Pentecostals as a whole dismiss their suspicions and embrace his assertion that the “mission of the church includes a public dimension.”²⁴⁶ However, the research of Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori shows that there are some Pentecostals who have embraced a holistic understanding of mission and ministry.²⁴⁷ These authors use the term “Progressive Pentecostal” to describe such believers in their 2007 book *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. I have also employed the term in my own work: “Many black American Pentecostals, including

245. Shane Clifton, “Pentecostals and Politics,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10, no. 2 (2007): 229–244, accessed August 30, 2019, EBSCOhost Database.

246. Clifton, “Pentecostals and Politics,” 232–233.

247. Clifton, “Pentecostals and Politics,” 234.

Pastor James Forbes of New York City's Riverside Church, call their ministry style "progressive Pentecostalism."²⁴⁸ I referenced Forbes' description in his 1989 book, *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*, in which he stated that Progressive Pentecostals were people with "a strong emphasis on spirit, and a deep commitment to transformative social action."²⁴⁹ Even before that, Raymond Rivera alluded to this progressive Pentecostalism when he wrote,

The indigenous Pentecostal experience, while emphasizing the spiritual dimension, has evolved as a virtual "theology of survival" for the downtrodden and hopeless. In this sense, Pentecostalism has carried with it significant social and political ramifications that define the full meaning of the religious experience among people whose physical existence and personal development depend directly on the lives in the church community. The influence of the Pentecostal church in the urban Hispanic community demonstrates clearly the sociopolitical relevance of the indigenous Pentecostalism.²⁵⁰

However, Miller and Yamamori note that the Progressive Pentecostalism they witnessed while writing their book is "with a few exceptions, relatively nonpolitical. Progressive Pentecostals are not trying to reform social structures or challenge government policies so much as they are attempting to build from the ground up an alternative social reality."²⁵¹ Nonetheless, alternative social realities come with some kind

248. Elizabeth Ríos, "The Ladies are Warriors: Latina Pentecostalism and Faith-Based Activism in New York City" in *Hispanic Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, eds. Gastón Espinosa et al., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 197.

249. James Forbes, *The Holy Spirit and Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 15.

250. Raymond Rivera, "The Political and Social Ramifications of Indigenous Pentecostalism," in *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology on the Hispanic Church in the United States*, ed. Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 339.

251. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, 4.

of political consequences. Raymond Rivera argues that “The true role of the Pentecostal church is continuing at a community level, whether consciously or unconsciously, where thousands of once-alienated individuals are gaining the strength and confidence that will enable them to confront a system that has long oppressed and divided them.”²⁵²

These Pentecostals, while not necessarily involved in politics and advocacy, were taking the time to teach their members that they have rights regardless of their socioeconomic status, that like all people, they were created in the image of God, and thus they are all equal and worthy of dignity.

While there are a number of myths and stereotypes concerning Pentecostals—for instance, that they are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good—scholars like Miller, Yamamori, Espinosa and Clifton challenge that thinking. Clifton states, “Pentecostals have started to appreciate that the proclamation of a ‘full gospel’ includes not only evangelism (as traditionally understood) but also a social dimension, there has been an increasing desire for the movement as a whole, and for individual members in their own right, to achieve political influence.”²⁵³ In addition, Espinosa documents that Latino Evangelicals, in particular, blended the work of evangelism and social work as early as 1906.²⁵⁴ Miller and Yamamori share that unlike the older generation of Pentecostals who focused their attention on personal purity, Progressive Pentecostals

252. Rivera, “The Political and Social Ramifications of Indigenous Pentecostalism,” 340.

253. Clifton, “Pentecostals and Politics,” 229.

254. Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 324.

model their words and deeds after Jesus, “who constantly blurred the line between the sacred and profane worlds, mixing with sinners and those in need as much, or more, than he did with religious leaders and those concerned about their external righteousness.”²⁵⁵

Historically, there may have been some truth to the stereotypes, but Pentecostals have been changing and now are more socially concerned, a concern articulated in Padilla’s notion of Integral Mission or *misión integral*. This term was first introduced to the larger world stage at the Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, which signaled to those in attendance “both the rise of leadership from the Global South and a wider turn toward holistic mission within the global Protestant evangelical community.”²⁵⁶ This articulated a synthesis of salvation and the pursuit of justice. Miller and Yamamori believe this is the future for Pentecostals who embrace the holistic understanding of what they have read in scripture. They state, “Unlike the social gospel tradition of the mainline churches, this movement seeks a balanced approach to evangelism and social action that is modeled after Jesus’ example of not only preaching about the coming kingdom of God but also ministering to the physical needs of the people he encountered.”²⁵⁷ Miller and Yamamori believe this social action mindset in word and deed will reshape global Christianity.

255. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 59.

256. David C. Kirkpatrick, “Integral Mission and the Reshaping of Global Evangelicalism” (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2015), 4.

257. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 212.

Hispanics and Civic Activism

There are some scholars who argue that the radical evangelical movement with a strong focus on socio-political engagement, even amongst Pentecostals, was ushered in by theologians such as Samuel Escobar, C. René Padilla, and Orlando Costas, who are also known as peace and justice Evangelicals. Others like Juan Francisco Martínez believe it was prompted by the increasing numbers of young US-born population of Hispanics in Latino churches who were questioning the way ministry was being done.²⁵⁸ Whoever or whatever is behind it, a new progressive Pentecostalism that meets the needs of the whole person is arising.

While they would not call themselves Progressive Pentecostals or anything but servants of the Lord, Hispanic women like Aimee Cortese, Mama Leo, Ana Villafañe, Rosa Caraballo, and Iris Sánchez are also driving faith-based civic activism, in the belief that it is a God-given mandate, such as in Joel 2:28. “They see it as a call to service where only God’s approval is needed. This call sets them free to do Christian work, globally and locally—in the church and outside of it.”²⁵⁹ In addition to feeling called, these women were committed to urban social transformation because they felt that the best way to practice the commands of the scriptures was to have both a vertical focus exemplifying the characteristics of Jesus and a horizontal focus of modeling the ministry that Jesus himself said was his mission, as recorded in Luke 4:18–19.

258. Juan Francisco Martínez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States* ((Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2018), 141–42.

259. Ríos, “The Ladies are Warriors,” 197.

Prior to 1975, it was harder to find information on Hispanic civic activism and how religion played a part in it, since few books and articles had been published on this topic. As Gastón Espinosa shares in the introductory chapter of *Hispanic Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, though there is plenty of scholarship on African Americans and social activism, very little had been written about the Hispanic faith community and their involvement in it.²⁶⁰ Yet Espinosa's book suggests that is not because of a lack of Hispanic faith community involvement; on the contrary, he notes that the Hispanic community has "served as the ideological glue for some of the most important struggles in the Hispanic community over the past 150 years,"²⁶¹ and that there has always been a "de facto tradition of Latino political and social action"²⁶² in the Hispanic community.

Scholars like Eldin Villafaña, Gastón Espinosa, and others suggest that the Pentecostal experience, and specifically the belief in the activity and active role of the Spirit of God in the world, sets ablaze not only hearts for God but also hearts for social action and community transformation. Indeed, what scholar Roberto Chao Romero calls "the Brown Church" has been very active in working to restore justice and goodness to the world for the past five hundred years, going all the way back to Bartolomé de las Casas in his (eventual_ defense of Native Americans against the rapacious depredations

260. Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, "Introduction: US Hispanic Religions and Faith-Based Political, Civic, and Social Action," in *Hispanic Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, eds. Gastón Espinosa et al., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

261. Espinosa, *Hispanic Religions and Civic Activism*, 5.

262. Espinosa, *Hispanic Religions and Civic Activism*, 278.

of the Spanish colonists. The Brown Church has challenged the evils of Manifest Destiny, and “the iconic civil rights movement of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez, to [participating in] the sanctuary movement of the 1980s, and [in] the contemporary immigration reform movement.”²⁶³

Survival was just as important to brown people as was their faith. Interestingly enough, it was their faith that many times informed their decisions to rise up against the Anglo-dominated system of colonialism and fight for justice, for themselves and for others. As Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera elaborates,

The indigenous Pentecostal experience, while emphasizing the spiritual dimension, has evolved as a virtual “theology of survival” for the downtrodden and hopeless. In this sense, Pentecostalism has carried with it significant social and political ramifications that define the full meaning of the religious experience among people whose physical existence and personal development depend directly on their lives in the church community. The influence of the Pentecostal church in the urban Hispanic community demonstrates clearly the sociopolitical relevance of indigenous Pentecostalism.²⁶⁴

On the ground, Pentecostal churches are trying to help their congregation thrive in the midst of difficult situations. Situations that mostly impact the urban poor. Many of the

263. Roberto Chao Romero, “The Brown Church: Towards a Latina/o Christian Social Justice History and Identity” (CA: Unpublished book manuscript, 2018), 19. For evidence of the struggles for religious, political, civic, and social justice see Moises Sandoval, *Fronteras: A History of the American Church in the USA since 1513* (San Antonio, TX: The Mexican American Cultural Center, 1983), 470 pages. A shorter version of this book was released later as Moises Sandoval, *On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (Ossining, NY: Orbis Books, (1990), 2006) 188 pages. For primary source documentation of these struggles, see Antonio M. Stevens- Arroyo, ed., *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology of the Hispanic Church in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), 379 pages and Timothy Matovina and Gerald Poyo, eds., *Presente! U.S. Latino Catholics from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 304 pages.

264. Raymond Rivera, “The Political and Social Ramifications of Indigenous Pentecostalism,” in *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology on the Hispanic Church in the United States*, ed. Antonio M. Stevens Arroyo (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980, 339.

pastors of these churches are in the same situations themselves. Since church planting associations are intentionally recruiting church planters to plant churches that are located in communities where there are a large number of Hispanics with high levels of poverty and other poverty-related problems, it is imperative to train these planters. Train them not only to understand the population but be able to use the various civic skills and be able to discern what civic engagement opportunities might be beneficial to engage in that will help their people. In addition, this has the potential to attract justice-oriented younger people to their church and more importantly help them facilitate long-term change in these communities. The challenge is helping pastors see these skills not only as biblical but as part of the legacy that Hispanic pastors have bequeathed to future generations, albeit without labeling that legacy. Today we do have an identifier for such ministry: Justice and Civic Advocacy. When churches identify from the start as justice-oriented, they will also need a community of like-minded people to journey with.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, justice oriented-Evangelicals see themselves as occupying a “spiritual borderland.”²⁶⁵ It is an incredibly lonely experience when your beliefs drives your desire for justice not only for others, but perhaps even for yourself, and you are not understood, welcomed, or embraced.

Unfortunately, as Miller and Yamamori point out, there is still scant research on the number of people dropping out of Pentecostal prosperity gospel churches to join more

265. The concept of “in between,” “borderlands” identity in Chicana/o Studies through the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa in her famous book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012) and Miguel A. De La Torre and Gastón Espinosa’s co-edited book *Rethinking Latino (a) Religion and Identity* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2006).

justice-oriented Progressive Pentecostal type churches. However, Miller and Yamamori do share that sometimes these two type of churches have overlaps and people should not “draw too rigid a line between churches promoting the Prosperity Gospel and those that fit our definition of Progressive Pentecostalism”²⁶⁶ While this is true that rigidity might not serve anyone well, it is important to see the motivation behind a service. Developing a pantry to get people into the church so that the church’s budget can grow is very different from giving people the sustenance they need for survival with no agenda.

Those who practice a Progressive Pentecostalism feel that everything they undertake to help people have a better life is a mandate of God, and thus is a direct result of their efforts. Progressive Pentecostals see social activism, in whatever form it takes, as core to their very identity as Christians. To them, “to simply focus on inward purity and proselytizing the unconverted is...a truncated version of the Christian gospel.”²⁶⁷ Clifton believes if Pentecostal eschatological theology could be understood in terms of “transformation and fulfilment and not in terms of end-times cessation of creation”²⁶⁸ that would be a major motivating force for more Pentecostals to get on board with the social justice mindset of civic activism.

Yet one factor that is not fully seen in the Progressive Evangelical movement is an intentional, undeviating Spirit-empowered praxis. Any evangelical can practice progressive Christianity and they do, but only a Progressive Pentecostal depends on the

266. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 32.

267. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 34.

268. Clifton, “Pentecostals and Politics,” 236.

Spirit of God in totality. First, to rely on the Spirit to help discern what and how they should be involved in in regards to engaging the powers in the community through social action. Second, to ask for the power and strength that only the Spirit of God can provide to endure and have the follow-through to stay the course. Lastly, to remember that it is only the Spirit of God that draws men unto him, that reveals truth and convicts the heart (Jn 6:44; 16:8, 13).

Spirit-Empowered Praxis

The work of Miller and Yamamori, Beckley, and others has shown that many Pentecostals of the Global North and South have fought and continue to fight for justice through Christian civic engagement and transformation. The work of Gastón Espinosa and Roberto Chao Romero documents that Latino/a Pentecostals have been involved in social action for hundreds of years. While some of them are considered more liberal and others more conservative, committing to fight to promote Judeo-Christian values is just the first step. Action follows commitment, and a Spirit-empowered praxis is required to move forward as the work of justice is done.

Churches that are involved in justice work must depend on the Spirit of the living God. Who better than Pentecostals to have this element front and center in their justice-oriented work within the church? Indeed, “Mission without spirituality cannot survive any more than combustion without oxygen.”²⁶⁹ A Christian’s spirituality comes from

269. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 172.

their relationship with God, which compels them to seek justice. It is the Spirit of God that “energizes the church to be defenders of human dignity.”²⁷⁰ Ivan Satyavrata shares his thoughts on the importance of embracing the Spirit:

The Holy Spirit played a crucial role in every aspect of the kingdom mission of Jesus. At Pentecost, the Spirit came on the early church in power so Jesus’s mission could be advanced and completed. There is thus an indissoluble relationship between Pentecost and the missionary witness of the church. The witness of the church began at Pentecost, and in the power of the Pentecostal Spirit this witness continues to be carried forward . . . The Holy Spirit’s role is thus indispensable to the church’s missionary enterprise.²⁷¹

As the Pentecostal church continues to grow around the world, the Western church will have to start taking note of it and how it depends on the Spirit. Graham Hill notes that to date, “Western missional conversation hasn’t prioritized pneumatology. It has not paid enough attention to the role of the Spirit’s empowering presence and gifts in mission. Mission theology needs to reclaim the role of the Spirit.”²⁷² Some Hispanic Pentecostals fear that getting involved in activism will require them to neglect the role of the Spirit but this is an unnecessary fear. The Spirit is what makes the Hispanic Pentecostal justice-oriented church that much more powerful than others who do not rely on the Spirit for guidance, direction, and strength.

Everything that a justice-oriented church needs to respond to the cries of the

270. Darío López Rodríguez, “The God of Life and the Spirit of Life: The Social and Political Dimension of Life in the Spirit,” *Studies in World Christianity* 17, no .1 (2011): 1–11, accessed September 4, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2011.0002>.

271. Ivan Satyavrata, quoted in Graham Hill, *Global Church: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 119.

272. Graham Hill, *Global Church: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 123.

poor and powerless, those oppressed and depressed by the situations they find themselves in, needs the merging of Spirit and civic action. While this project is calling for civic activism in the church, advocating for new policies or new legislation are only part of the equation that leads to social transformation, policies alone will not transform people. Personal transformation comes through a relationship with God, prayer, and the power of the Spirit. This is why we need both the Spirit and civic action. We need prayer for guidance on strategies in our communities and personal life, but we also need the power of the Spirit when we seek the miraculous, even the miraculous in changing unjust policies. After all, what we need comes from above, “Not by a force, nor by power, But—by My Spirit, said Jehovah of Hosts.”²⁷³

In his book, *Salt, Light, and a City*, Hill makes a case for revisiting the connection between Spirit and mission.

A missional understanding of the church requires a deep commitment to the Spirit. A missional view of the church is only as good as the theology of the Spirit. The church needs a missional pneumatology and a pneumatological mission. The Spirit is essential to the being of the church. The church is and is visible because God the Holy Spirit is and acts.²⁷⁴

Eldin Villafañe likewise argues for a “pneumatological paradigm”²⁷⁵ that helps

273. Zech. 4:6 YLT.

274. Graham Hill, *Salt, Light, and a City, Second Edition: Ecclesiology for the Global Missional Community: Volume 1, Western Voices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 239–40. Kindle.

275. Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI. Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 163.

individuals merge the power of the Spirit with a social spirituality. If Progressive Pentecostals and Hispanic Progressive Pentecostals in particular are truly to be in the transformation business, they simply cannot ignore the Spirit of God. In the Hispanic community, as in most Pentecostal churches, the Spirit is important in *el culto* (the worship service) and it must be equally important when those worshippers set out to join God in his work in the world. After all, as Villafañe states, “the nearness of God in the Spirit in Pentecostalism—as manifested in the ‘glossolaic’ gifts and other ministries resulted in a rich and vibrant spirituality, Pentecostalism’s most significant contribution.”²⁷⁶ It is the Spirit of God that helps Pentecostals take its power to the streets, and it is this Spirit power that ultimately initiates social transformation.

Villafañe argues,

Spirituality, understood as a way of responding to God, a style of living the life of the Holy Spirit, needs a broader social dimension. Ultimately, it is to understand that every spirituality is social, and that every spirituality should cohere with a proper anthropological, biblical, and theological understanding of spiritual living. A spirituality, if it is to be authentic and relevant, should correlate with all of life; for after all the Spirit of the Lord, who leads and empowers, must lead and empower all areas of our life.²⁷⁷

The Spirit’s work is to give those who embrace him what they need to do the will of the Father. Without his presence, the church is missing a big part of what would energize them for purpose and prepare them for impact. Hans Küng says,

If there is no Spirit, it does not mean that the community lacks its

276. Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 164–65.

277. Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 165.

missionary commission, but that there is no community at all . . . The church is filled and vivified, sustained and guided by his Spirit, the power and strength of God. The church owes to the Spirit its origin, existence, and continued life, and in this sense the church is a *creation of the Spirit*.²⁷⁸

As Hispanic Progressive Pentecostals continue to do the work of social transformation, they will do well not to limit, negate or ignore the Spirit's work by focusing only on social services or simply on the work they can do alone without the Spirit. Villafaña advocates for a spirituality that has both a vertical and horizontal focus driven by the love that only the Holy Spirit can give.²⁷⁹ To explain the need for the Spirit of God so necessary as we do this work of justice, Villafaña refers to the work of theologian David Wells. Wells states,

Augustine frequently identified the Holy Spirit with love. This enabled him to see the Spirit as being both the means and the aim of our salvation. The Spirit is the means because he is the one who pours divine love into the hearts of sinful men and women, love that enables them to reach the goal of loving God. Accordingly, Augustine defined grace as the infusion of love into human hearts by the Holy Spirit. . . . Because of this infusion of love, sinners are transformed and enables to become just by becoming lovers of God and their fellow human beings.²⁸⁰

For the love that initiates all actions for justice, people need a Spirit-empowered praxis. It is needed as well to preach, to take the gospel to the whole world, and also to confront the powers of the world in the authority and power of

278. Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1968), 165, 172, quoted in Graham Hill, *Global Church: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 124.

279. Villafaña, *The Liberating Spirit*, 167.

280. David F. Wells, *God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 37.

the name of Jesus. For it is through the power of the Spirit that we are able to love God and others, and it is through the Spirit that we are liberated and can also liberate others. Samuel Solivan concludes,

Our identity as a people, as Hispanics, as Latina and Latino Americans, is made possible and further empowered by the transforming and liberating work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit as the giver of faith, hope, and love makes it possible for us not only to overcome the oppressive forces that seek to dehumanize us; the Spirit makes it possible for us to liberate our oppressors because we can overcome the sinful tendency to oppress others.²⁸¹

Contemporary Faith-Rooted Thought Leaders and Practitioners of Justice

Influenced by a mix of inspiring early leaders in the Pentecostal movement like Sonny Arguinzoni, Mama Leo, Susie Valdez, Jesse Miranda, and a variety of others,²⁸² Hispanic Progressive Pentecostals have been doing the work of justice. They have been doing it mostly without certainty about where they belong or what they should call themselves. Many did not even know that there was a label attached to evangelicals who cared about social justice issues. Many would probably not even take on the label now because of all the baggage that comes with it. Nevertheless, they have all made a serious impact in their regions and many of them are known nationally.

While there is some available research on Progressive evangelicals, an internet

281. Samuel Solivan, "The Holy Spirit—Personalization and the Affirmation of Diversity, A Pentecostal Hispanic Perspective," in *Teología en Conjunto: A Collaborative Hispanic Protestant Theology*, ed. José David Rodríguez, Loida I. Martell-Otero (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 63.

282. For more extensive information on these and other prominent Hispanic leaders, see Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

search using the term “Progressive Pentecostals” turns up little. “Latino Progressive Pentecostals” yields even less. However, soon that will change, because they surely exist. More people around the globe and in the United States identify with this group, even though the language is still catching up with the reality on the ground. Progressive Pentecostals do exist and, as Espinosa, Miller, and Yamamori have concluded, they are very much involved in social transformation and more recently, in civic political engagement.

Today, while there are many gifted, talented, and respected justice-oriented evangelical Hispanic leaders, there are a few who have been fighting for justice on various levels for many years and may not be as widely known as the go-to Assembly of God Latino Pentecostal Pastors, the recently deceased Rev. Jesse Miranda who was the most prominent Hispanic leader of our time, and Rev. Samuel Rodriguez.²⁸³ These other lesser known leaders include New York-based Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera, Central Florida-based Dr. Gabriel Salguero, Chicago-based Rev. Sandra Maria Van Opstal, and California-based Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra and Rev. Dr. Roberto Chao Romero.

The elder statesman, Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera, born on December 6, 1946 in Spanish Harlem, NY was heavily influenced by the work of Hispanic urban missiologist, theologian, pastor and practitioner Orlando Costas, Hispanic theologians Justo Gonzalez, Eldin Villafañe, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Black theologian James

283. See more information on these two Hispanic leaders in Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action*, 322–60.

Cone. Rivera's life's work is a culmination of synthesizing and integrating the work of those who have influenced him and integrating their ideas into praxis. Since 1964, he has served in a variety of positions, including Pentecostal and Reformed Church of America (RCA) pastor, denominational executive in the RCA, and nonprofit founder and community activist. In 1992, he started the Latino Pastoral Action Center (LPAC) as a division of New York City's oldest and largest social service agency, The New York City Mission Society. The LPAC is known to many around the country as a great model of holistic ministry that carries out a number of programs in the local community. It eventually became a city-wide ministry, and has since trained pastors and practitioners around the country in Rivera's understanding of holistic ministry and what he eventually developed into the Four Principles of Holistic Ministry (liberation, healing, community, and transformation), which he says represents the stages of an individual's walk with Christ, and facilitates "spiritual and moral change which in turn leads to socio- political and economic change."²⁸⁴

Rivera's greatest contribution to faith-based social change history might be his captivity theology explained in his book²⁸⁵ and all the holistic ministry programs that and continue to serve people in the forty-thousand-square-foot building sold to them by the New York City Mission Society for one dollar. These include LPAC's most recent programmatic additions—the Family Life Academy charter schools—

284. Raymond Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 20.

285. Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 20.

which have since expanded to other buildings in the Bronx.

Rivera is also a great model for how clergy people can work with people in every part of their city (government, nonprofits, businesses) to bring about social transformation. Rivera believed heavily in such alliances:

Very early in my ministry, I learned that Christians were not the only ones confronting the powers around Kingdom-related issues. In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus’s parable illustrates the point of unconsciously “working for the Kingdom.” Those who were on the right of the king asked him where he was when they served the needy. His response? “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” They were serving God without knowing [it]. To God, doing ministry to the “least of these” is directly serving him. In some way, and it is a mystery, he incarnates himself in the suffering of the people. This passage of Scripture led me to connect with those community groups that I discerned were directly serving people without a full understanding that they were serving the King himself.²⁸⁶

Rivera has now left the reins of his organization to his daughter Susana Rivera Leon, who functions as the CEO of the organization and board chair person of their charter schools.²⁸⁷

Gen X pastor, Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero was born and raised in New Jersey. He and his wife, Rev. Jeanette Salguero served as co pastors of the Lamb’s Church of the Nazarene on the Lower East Side of New York City for eleven years from 2005 until 2016. In late 2016, he received a call from Rev. Dr. Nino Gonzalez, Superintendent of the Florida Multicultural District of the Assemblies of God and the

286. Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 86–87.

287. For more information on Dr. Rivera and the Latino Pastoral Action Center, visit www.lpacny.com.

senior pastor of Calvario City Church in the center of the city of Orlando, which happened to be one of the poorest economic parts of the city. Gonzalez asked the Salgueros to come on staff. Given the frail health of his mother-in-law, who lived in Orlando, Salguero prayed and finally accepted the offer. He and his wife now serve as Associate Senior Pastors of the Calvario City Church and are in the midst of a pastoral transition plan. Gabriel serves on the boards of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and Latin American Evangelical Alliance (AEL). He formerly served as a member of the White-House Faith-based Advisory Council under Obama. Jeanette serves as the North American Women's Commissioner to the World Evangelical Alliance.

While their contributions are many, their greatest in the work of social justice and the progress of all people—but particularly Hispanic evangelicals—is the formation of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC). NaLEC is a coalition of Hispanic evangelical congregations committed to Gospel-centered and common good public advocacy. Its website describes the organization's mission as follows:

The National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC) seeks to respond to a real need for Latino and Latina Evangelical voices committed to the common good and justice in the public sphere. A national coalition with the objective of educating from a common good Latino-Evangelical perspective in the public sphere may increase the probability of the enactment for just legislations. We seek to do this by promoting and amplifying the voices of this growing constituency. The aim is to both provide alternative voices to the existing partisan voices and to create national awareness about the growing number of Latino Evangelicals who are not captive to partisan politics. The NaLEC initiatives can provide a platform for this growing and often unheard demographic.²⁸⁸

288. For more on the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, see <http://nalec.org/about-us>.

The NaLEC works on a number of campaigns that deal with poverty, immigration, education, climate change, health care, and criminal justice reform. In the last year, it has added a leadership and church planting development focus from a Hispanic perspective, helping Hispanic church planters. These campaigns align with what this project calls for, because this organization is modeling and training Christians how to advocate. They believe it to be a Christian responsibility to advocate for the needs of the people we are called to serve, and such advocacy often has a community and public policy dimension. What has been deeply appreciated by many is that the leaders of NaLEC have worked hard not to align themselves too deeply with any political party as they do this work of justice among the growing number of Hispanic evangelicals in various denominational branches.

Before NaLEC, other organizations have done similar thing, among them the Alianza de Ministerios Evangelicos Nacionales (AMEN), founded in 1992 by Jesse Miranda, which was a multi-denominational association of Hispanic Protestant lay and clergy leaders in the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Mexico. This association included twenty-seven denominations and seventy-seven ministries. It eventually merged in 2001 with the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) started by Samuel Rodriguez.²⁸⁹ Its website claims the organization exists to unify, serve, and represent the Hispanic Evangelical Community with the divine

289. See more information on these two Hispanic leaders in Espinosa and the history of their organizations in *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action*.

(vertical) and human (horizontal) elements of the Christian message via the seven Directives of Life: Family, Great Commission, Education, Justice, Stewardship and Youth.

However, many Evangelical leaders consider the NHCLC to be more aligned with the Republican Party, while the NaLEC, although invited to do the invocations at both the 2012 and 2016 Democratic conventions, has not been viewed as tightly aligned with any party and for the most part has managed to stay neutral and works hard to stay that way, although for some it is never quite neutral enough. These distinctions and neutralities are important. For to be an effective witness and advocate for the people you serve, you have to be credible. Aligning too closely to one party, nullifies your credibility. Shane Clifton puts it this way:

The church should avoid establishing Christian political parties, as well as making the claim, either directly or indirectly, that one or another political party (Liberal, Labor, Republican, or Democratic) should be supported by Christian people. Christians should not vote for or support political candidates just because they are Christian (or vice versa). In each case what happens is that the policies of those parties and candidates are given a religious status that they do not deserve. This not only undermines the right of Christian people to come to their own conclusions and to disagree on political and economic matters but, potentially, it brings the gospel itself into disrepute as non-Christians dismiss the God who is supposedly behind these political ideologies (think of Christian political support for the war in Iraq, for policies that increase the wealth of corporations at the cost of workers, for carelessness about the environment, for the incarceration of refugees)—and who can blame them!²⁹⁰

Chicago-based Rev. Sandra Maria Van Opstal is a pastor, activist and liturgist.

290. Clifton, “Pentecostals and Politics,” 239.

She currently serves as preaching pastor at Grace and Peace Church. Sandra believes: “my proximity as a pastor leads me to advocacy and activism locally and nationally. Speaking truth to power influences the spaces of prophetic imagination that I seek to develop.”²⁹¹ Prior to serving in her pastoral role, she served for fifteen years at Intersity Christian Fellowship, where she mobilized thousands of college students for God’s mission of reconciliation and justice in the world. Sandra’s influence extends to many others, thanks to her leadership and her preaching on topics such as worship and formation, justice, racial identity and reconciliation, and global mission. She has been a featured speaker at Wheaton College, North Park University, the Justice Conference, Evangelical Covenant conferences, Willow Creek Association conferences, and various churches. She serves as a board member for Evangelicals for Justice and the Christian Community Development Association, and speaks frequently on decolonizing worship in her travels in the global north and south. She has a passion for going beyond the traditional worship experience and conversation that she states is more about “hospitality than solidarity.” She is known as an innovative worship leader, crafting worship that embodies the global, multiethnic body of Christ. She was one of the contributors for the book *Still Evangelical?*, and has authored three of her own books: *God’s Graffiti Devotional*, *The Mission of Worship*, and *The Next Worship*. She is helping Hispanic evangelicals see beyond themselves, but more importantly, she is teaching church pastors, leaders, and congregation members of all races that beyond singing lyrics in a particular language, worship can model reconciliation and prophetic

291. Sandra Van Opstal, email message to author, June 13, 2019.

justice.²⁹² Most recently, Sandra co-founded and became Executive Director of Chasing Justice with the hope of training others to become urban activists fueled by worship to impact the world.

Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra is known as *La Madriña* (The Godmother) of the church-mobilization and faith-rooted community-organizing world. She is a Lutheran evangélica pastor in the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA, with over thirty-five years of experience in community ministry, congregational organization, and legislative advocacy, one of the few pioneers in this area for the Hispanic Evangelical community. She has had widespread influence in her teaching roles at New York Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies and Centro Latino, Eastern University, Universidad Teológica de la Iglesia Apostólica, Haiti Partners Interseminary, Duke Divinity Summer School Intensives, Vanguard University, and Biola University, to name a few. Salvatierra has had various experiences that make her a pioneer in the discussion of the role of the church and civic advocacy that has informed the practice of many that have come after her.

However, perhaps one of her greatest contributions to this movement is her faith-rooted community organizing framework that draws from many sectors in the movements effecting social justice.²⁹³ Most of her thinking on this subject she

292. To learn more about Sandra Maria Van Opstal, visit <http://www.sandravanopstal.com>.

293. To learn more about Alexia Salvatierra, visit her website at <http://www.alexiasalvatierra.com>.

documents in her book, where she shares various models that began and still are creating this movement of Christians concerned with justice and advocacy.²⁹⁴

Salvatierra believes strongly that “transforming a community requires more than neighborhood development; it demands courageous organizing and persistent strategic advocacy.”²⁹⁵ Dr. Salvatierra recently received her Doctor of Missiology from Fuller Theological Seminary. Her dissertation entitled “Equipping Hispanic Immigrant Pastors for Holistic Mission” will most likely serve as another training manual for those supporting training pastors in this new pastoral toolbox skill of advocacy.

Lastly, Dr. Roberto Chao Romero is a mixed-race (Mexican/Chinese) *evangélico*, lawyer, on-the-ground practitioner, and academic. He pastors activists through his non-traditional faith community known as Jesus for Revolutionaries in California, which grew out of his book of the same name. This community is known for having worship services and attending marches. They confront and discuss issues that deal with race, justice, and Christianity from an activist’s perspective. Jesus for Revolutionaries mostly attracts Christian students who believe their responsibility is to advocate for the least of these. Dr. Romero is also an associate professor of Chicana/o Studies and Asian American Studies at UCLA. While Chao Romero has trained many next-generation activists and some have asked him to grow his network outside of California, perhaps his greatest contribution is still to come. For example, while there

294. See Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel, *Faith-rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014).

295. Salvatierra and Heltzel, *Faith-rooted Organizing*, 8.

are now more resources than ever being shared about the Latino/a church from various perspectives, there are still not enough, especially resources that speak to the popular audience versus the academic one. Romero's much anticipated forthcoming book, *The Brown Church: Toward a Latina/o Christian Social Justice History and Identity*, is likely to empower and mobilize the Brown church like never before, once it is widely available.²⁹⁶ At present, the researcher along with Dr. Romero is planning a Brown Church Conference for the summer of 2020 in a few select cities with partners from many of the organizations mentioned in this paper and others that are not. It is expected that this inter-denominational event will bring together academics, practitioners, and believers of different generations.

These Hispanics are just a short list of examples of men and women who see justice, spirituality, evangelism, intertwined with praxis for change in communities. They have practiced social justice advocacy themselves and have been training others to do the same. They are just a few of the Hispanics who have taken the Spirit beyond the walls of the church and have taken this discussion on advocacy and the importance of the Brown church to a national level and are honored for their roles in doing so. For these Hispanics, religion was not an opiate that put them to sleep or kept them looking inwardly and otherworldly but a stimulant to progressively engage in this world and for this world by cultivating shalom in their communities.

These individuals have all helped to decrease the gap in literature for/about

296. To learn more about Roberto Chao Romero, visit www.robertchaoromero.com. His book is due out in 2020.

Hispanics/as mentioned by Espinosa, but have also provided a way to educate the up-and-coming pastors, activists, and advocates, the rising Mama Leos and Dr. Ray Riveras, while also building alliances with the emerging Dr. Kings, all pastors and ministers with a heart to be a part of or establish just churches right from the start. The Brown church is closer to having more church planters and pastors who will rise above simple rhetoric and emulate the words and deeds of Jesus. They will go out not only speaking the language of love and justice but living it.

Chapter 4: The Project Narrative

The world needs churches that go beyond rhetoric. It needs churches that right from the start combine evangelization and justice, and spirituality and civic action. This is the heart of the gospel that is meant to be good news to everyone. Churches that are well-rounded and justice-oriented tend to effect more long-term sustainable change in their communities compared to churches that focus solely on evangelism. The challenge has been that planters have not felt adequately prepared to address these issues both from a biblical perspective and from a historical perspective (where the complicity of the church in racism for example is taught), so they tend to avoid it all together. The aim of this project is to create a seminar titled “Right from the Start: Developing Civically-Engaged, Justice-Oriented Churches” to address this challenge.

The seminar was open to former and present planters from Plant4Harvest as well as planters from various other church planting associations. Sixty people were invited, but I expect only about thirty to agree to participate in the training. Hispanics were the pre-dominant group targeted for this training, but non-Hispanics were allowed to join if their interest was to work with or alongside Hispanic church planters or the Hispanic community more broadly. Most of the invitees had done a pre-seminar questionnaire via Survey Monkey. New invitees were also sent the link to take part in the survey before the actual seminar. The seminar was planned for a Miami, Florida venue where there are the largest number of Plant4Harvest members and church planting association affiliates. Participants were able to choose their own seating arrangements as most came with friends and associates from their own organizations or church planting teams.

Research Design

The proposed study is broadly quantitative and more specifically represents a quasi-experimental, within-subjects (where all participants are exposed to the same treatment, in this case, training), repeated measures research design. Within the overarching framework of an action research, a quasi-experimental, within-subjects, repeated measures design were employed for empirical purposes. The impact of the study's instructional intervention variable was measured in a pre/ post-test fashion.

One benefit of using a repeated-measures design and using the same participants for both pre- and post-test conditions of the study is that the researcher has the option to exclude the effects of individual differences (to reduce error variances) that could occur if two groups of different people were used. Individual variables such as IQ, ability, age, and other important variables remain the same in repeated-measures, as it is the same person taking part in each condition.²⁹⁷ A second benefit of using a repeated-measures design has to do with statistical power. Unlike between-subjects research designs, repeated-measures designs require fewer participants yet produce great statistical power because of their ability to control for factors that cause variability between subjects.²⁹⁸

297. Andy Field, *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS, 5th ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2019).

298. Dennis Howitt and Duncan Cramer, *Introduction to Research Methods in Psychology, 3rd ed.* (Essex, UK: Pearson Education Unlimited, 2011).

Study Sample

The proposed study's sample represented a non-probability approach to sample selection, with a desired participation rate established at thirty. The specific non-probability sampling approach is both convenient and purposive. Prospective study participants were defined as church planters, pastors and current practitioners of justice education from Southern region of the United States. Essential demographic identifying information ascertained on study participants will be used for eventual between-subjects analytic purposes in addressing the proposed study's research questions. Demographic information included on the proposed study's research instrument include gender, ethnicity, marital status, tenure in ministry, city of residence, and level of justice education.

Instrumentation

The proposed study's research instrument was researcher-developed, thereby requiring succinct validation procedures. The instrument validation process for the proposed study was conducted in two distinct phases: an *a priori* content validity judgment phase and an *a posteriori* statistical analysis phase. In the first phase, an exploratory survey was administered to participants considered to be a pilot sample of the phase in an effort to elicit perceptions of elements central to the proposed study's topic. Follow-up interviews with a panel of four subject matter experts (SMEs) on the study's topic was then conducted. The SMEs evaluated the exploratory survey results of the pilot sample of participants and provided a list of agreed-upon themes that will subsequently

provide the foundation of research instrument formation. The SMEs were also asked to provide recommendations on what they view as essential in preliminary justice education.

Internal reliability of participant response to the proposed study's research instrument was conducted using the Cronbach's alpha (α) test statistic. Values at or above .70 were considered adequate for validation purposes. However, a value of .80 or above was sought for the proposed study. An F test was conducted for the purpose of evaluating the statistical significance of finding for the internal reliability of study participant response to research instrument items. The probability level of $p < .05$ represents the threshold value for statistical significance of finding.

The research instrument was represented in Likert-scale fashion, featuring an ordinal progression in level of agreement. The proposed study's research instrument is anticipated to be comprised of twenty totwenty-five² survey items in total. The following represents the scaling for the proposed research instrument:

5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Procedures

The proposed study was conducted in three distinct phases:

Phase I: Administration of the research instrument (pre-test) to study participants.

Phase II: A one-day, four-hour training session for study participants.

Phase III: Administration of the research instrument (post-test) to study participants.

Study data from the pre-test and post-test phases were collected and recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. Once study data were successfully recorded and coded in Xxcel spreadsheet format, study data were exported to the IBM SPSS (25) analytics platform for analysis, interpretation, and reporting.

Data Analysis

Prior to the analysis of the proposed study's research questions, preliminary analyses was conducted. Specifically, missing data and essential demographic information were supplied. Missing data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques and frequency counts and percentages were used for illustrative and comparative purposes. The randomness of missing data was assessed using the Little's MCAR test statistic. An MCAR value of $p > .05$ was considered indicative of sufficient randomness of missing data.

The study's essential data arrays were evaluated for missing data in two distinct stages. In the initial stage, data arrays were analyzed for omnibus missing data points and randomness of missing data through an initial screening process. Schafer's assertion of 5 percent or less as being inconsequential will guide the handling of the issue of missing data in the study,²⁹⁹ because the proportion of missing data is directly related to the quality of statistical inferences. In addition, there is no consensus in the professional

299. J.L. Schafer, "Multiple Imputation: A Primer." *Statistical Methods in Medical Research* 8, no. 1 (March 1999): 3–15, accessed February 1, 2019, doi:10.1191/096228099671525676.

literature as to an established cutoff regarding an acceptable percentage of missing data in a data set for statistical inference.

In the second phase of the missing data analytics, a decision regarding the extent of missing data was made regarding whether to forego formal imputation procedures in favor of follow-up screening for patterns of missing data per study participant. The proposed study's essential demographic information were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts and percentages represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques to be used for illustrative and comparative purposes.

Research Questions

The central question that will drive this study is: What training can best prepare church planting pastors to be activists and advocates to accomplish long term social change in their communities? In addition, several subsidiary questions helped design this research study.

Research Question 1: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how study participants felt about their ability to equip others to become advocates and activists?

Research Question 2: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how confident study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership teams?

Research Question 3: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how competent study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership teams?

Research Question 4: Which element of social justice advocacy reflected the greatest degree of impact from the targeted training session?

Analyses by Research Question

The study's proposed research questions were addressed broadly using a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts, measures of central tendency (mean scores), and variability (standard deviation), represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques used in addressing the proposed study's research questions. The statistical significance of finding in the within-subjects elements of the proposed study's first four research questions were addressed using the *t* test of dependent means test statistic. In the event that the difference in mean scores between the pre-test and post-test conditions of the study violated the assumption of normality, the non-parametric alternative to the *t* test of dependent means, the Wilcoxon sign-rank test, were used. The alpha level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding. Cohen's *d* was used to assess the magnitude of effect (effect size). Cohen's parameters of interpretation of effect sizes were employed for comparative purposes.

In the second portion of Research Questions 1 through 4, the between-subject comparisons, the *t* test of independent means and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to assess the statistical significance of difference in means scores between the two or more groups being measured. The alpha level of $p < .05$ will represent the threshold for statistical significance of finding. The assumptions of "normality" and "homogeneity of variances" were assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test

and the Levene test respectively. Values of $p > .05$ were considered indicative of both assumptions having been satisfied. Cohen's d was used to assess the magnitude of effect in the respective comparisons. Cohen's parameters of interpretation of effect sizes were employed for illustrative purposes.

Seminar Design

The pre-project survey results established that most of the church planters and pastors did not know the difference between civic engagement and political campaigning. Some believed that using their voice to advocate to those with power on behalf of those who do not have power puts their non-profit status in jeopardy. Some still carry the notion that a leader must choose to win souls either through evangelization or through fighting for justice—in short, the either/or predicament when it should be both/and. Other misconceptions along with lack of justice education has kept many of these leaders out of advocacy. In order to help planters in this area, the seminar was designed to give these leaders the information and biblical underpinning to understand that advocacy is biblical and also to be given examples of how a community that would later be labeled Hispanics have been involved in social transformation in various ways for hundreds of years. The seminar was designed to convey four hours of information with time for discussion at the end of the even. It covered the following topics: ministering in a captive world, how justice is biblical, what walking with people looks like from an advocacy prospective, and the nature of faith-rooted organizing and advocacy.

The title of the seminar was: Right for the Start: Developing Civically-Engaged, Justice-Oriented Churches. The seminar was described as focused on helping participants develop a biblical framework for getting involved in their community to confront and speak truth to power through civic advocacy to impact change through policy and community awareness. Using scripture from both the Old and New Testaments, along with contemporary urban ministry practitioner literatures, the four-session seminar emphasized an ecclesiology for ministering in a captive world, advocating for justice, and using faith-rooted organizing and advocacy practices to restore shalom and work for the common good and in their communities. The seminar emphasized that justice is integral to who God is and is fundamental to God's mission (*missio Dei*). In this introductory seminar geared to church planters and pastors, we explored what the biblical and theological foundations are for justice and civic advocacy using a justice-from-below lens. Students were able to develop or add to their theological framework on justice so they can create a just church from the start while also learning how to disciple people to understand how to live out a practice-based faith not just a belief-based one.

The seminar was divided into the following four parts:

Session 1: Ministering in a Captive World

Session 2: Justice is Biblical

Session 3: Walking with the People-Planters in an Ecosystem

Session 4: Faith-rooted Organizing & Advocacy

Close: Discussion & Post-Project Survey

The learning outcomes and competencies expected for participants were that by the end of the seminar they would be able to:

1. Identify and describe what barriers keep planters and pastors from being advocates for social justice.
2. Construct a theological framework for a civically-engaged, justice-oriented church.
3. Understand biblical conceptions of justice and advocacy of the marginalized, measured by pre- and post-project survey responses.
4. Understand the Bible's expectations of believers to advocate against injustice for their neighbors, especially the most marginalized.
5. Be able to discuss and form strategies for future transformational advocacy practice.

Session 1

The title of this session was *Ministering in a Captive World* and the purpose of this session was to help the participant understand what God means by shalom and the original intent for humanity. Scripture was reviewed to provide a biblical framework for understanding the ministerial role in a captive world; it emphasized that everyone lives in the wreckage of sin.³⁰⁰ The goal was to re-visit the narrative with new lenses and help participants understand the Creation story from a justice perspective, because God, from the beginning, provided the perfect example for humankind to work, serve, and love in a

300. Raymond Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 10–12.

godly way. The concepts of a “thick versus thin”³⁰¹ reading of the Bible, as well as what it means to minister in a captive world were explored. This session reminded everyone that there was a time when people did not have to pick evangelism over the “social gospel” but did both. Real life examples of people of faith who did ministry in a situation of captivity were explored. In addition, historical and contemporary examples of Progressive Pentecostals who have impacted their cities to bring about social transformation and communities of shalom were introduced.

Finally, this session discussed the five faces of oppression³⁰² as some examples of captivity in this world so participants could learn to recognize it as they minister in today’s society. The five faces of oppression are: Exploitation, Marginalization, Powerlessness, Cultural Imperialism, and Violence. This session laid the foundation for the rest of the seminar.

Session 2

The title of Session 2 was *Justice is Biblical* and the purpose of this session was to remind participants that justice is a big part of what God wants to see in the world. The perspective of Session 2 was how justice is biblical for the individual believer and how that extends to their faith practice.

301. Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011) 39, Kindle.

302. Iris Young, “Five Faces of Oppression,” in *Oppression, Privilege and Resistance: Theoretical Perspectives on Racism, Sexism and Heterosexism*, ed. Lisa Heldke and Peg O’Connor (New York: McGraw Hill, 1990), 37.

Session 2 opened with a Youtube video that focused on the centrality of justice and Jesus. It revisited the fact that what Jesus himself stated in his first sermon was the mission for which he came, as detailed in Luke 4:18–19.

Furthermore, it included conversation on the various kind of injustices seen in both the New and Old Testaments. Specifically, select scripture was presented canonically. Progressive Pentecostals believe in programs that address needs in their community and have often developed them even without knowledge or labels. However, what has been missing is the Pentecostal social ethic that marries that work with the principle of justice and a believer's (and thus the church's) responsibility to the poor.

Moreover, we discussed discourse around the ideas of salt, light, and deeds as it relates to the public witness of the church and its role as a prophetic alternative community. Participants were also introduced to Adam Gustine and his call to cultivate an imagination of exile, in which the church understands that it is not called to integrate but to “cultivate a way of life distinct from the way of life that surrounds it.”³⁰³ The people who make up the church are not just countercultural, they are foreign. They practice a faith that stands up for justice because they are cultivating a way of life that is centered on the kingdom praxis of Jesus. Thus their way of life is not rooted in America first, but in Kingdom first. Lastly, the Five Faces of Oppression were presented so participants know how to recognize them in everyday life.

303. Adam L. Gustine, *Becoming a Just Church: Cultivating Communities of God's Shalom*. (Downers Grove, ILL: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 42.

Session 3

The title of session 3 was *Walk with the People – Planters in an Ecosystem*.

Thanks to sessions 1 and 2, planters/attendees now have a preliminary understanding that we live in a situation of captivity due to the wreckage of sin in the world and that justice is indeed biblical. With this background, session 3 now prepared the planters to understand that when they arrive on the scene in any community to which they have been called to, they enter a narrative ecology; they must understand the stories that were there before they got there and how their presence in the life of that community and the people of that community will then become part of this ecosystem. Planters were urged to get to know the very complex identities of the particular Hispanic community to which they have been called, and how they will now attempt to co-author a new reality with whomever they find there. Since Hispanics have various levels of identification, the session went through the seven identities as described by Juan Francisco Martinez.³⁰⁴ The importance of honoring stories of self and the community in which they arrive to do the church planting was also emphasized.³⁰⁵ The researcher shared her own story and those of some historic Hispanic churches still in existence that started with an intention of being holistic. This information is important because Hispanics are not a monolith and understanding the various identities and subcultures is helpful to planting successfully.

304. Juan Francisco Martínez, *Walk with the People: Latino Ministry in the U.S.* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2016), 4–8.

305. Kate C. McLean, *The Co-Authored Self: Family Stories and the Construction of Personal Identity* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Session 4

The title of session 4 was *Faith-rooted Organizing and Advocacy*. This final session helped planters envision a just church's response to the issues they face in the world through the skills of faith-rooted organizing and advocacy. In this session, discussion centered around: prophetic advocacy as a civic engagement tool from a biblical perspective; an exploration of the various motivations behind advocacy, and an introduction to Raymond Rivera's "confront and engage" model of advocacy in a captive world.

Pedagogy

Three pedagogies were incorporated in this project. The foundational pedagogy is a pedagogy of hope. Richard Van Heertum notes that while critique is necessary as a point of reference when radical changes are needed, on its own critique does not instill a desire to create a revolution with the belief that a better world is possible. Van Heertum argues for a reinvigorating pedagogy of hope that goes beyond teaching solely about what is wrong but making sure that the discourse also shares how things can be made right.³⁰⁶ "Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness" goes the Chinese proverb,

306. Richard Van Heertum, "Marcuse, Bloch and Freire: Reinvigorating a Pedagogy of Hope." *Policy Futures in Education* 4, no. 1 (March 2006): 45–51, accessed September 2, 2019, doi:10.2304/pfie.2006.4.1.45.

and that is the framework by which this seminar was approached. Heertum states, “teachers need to do more than awaken students to the surrounding world; they need to simultaneously give them the faith and strength to work to transform the world.”³⁰⁷ Heertum refers to Pablo Freire and his belief that we live in a world that is not finished and no one has to accept it as it is and as if that is how it will always be.

In addition, a hybrid/blended method that incorporates the Authority (lecture style) and the Delegator (group style) were used. The rationale for this is that using the Authority/lecture style is more accepted in higher education with adults and more suitable when participants need to take notes and absorb information quickly, while the Delegator/ group style is used more to promote self-learning and to help students learn from each other. This creates a little more excitement and promotes exploration of the subject being taught. Participants were given a handout so they could follow along and engage more as the presenter spoke, rather than spending so much time taking notes. The handout also had a list of faith-rooted justice organizations they could use as resources.

As a token of appreciation, participants received a justice devotional³⁰⁸ once they completed the post project survey.

307. Heertum, “Marcuse, Bloch and Freire: Reinvigorating a Pedagogy of Hope,” 46.

308. Donna Barber, *Bread for the Resistance: 40 Devotions for Justice People* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2019).

Conclusion

Many churches are already responding to poverty and injustice in their communities but do not see the dichotomy of supporting policies as an individual that counteract their corporate witness. In addition, churches are working hard to make a difference in their communities by meeting individual needs, but they can achieve more long-term impact if they learn to become advocates. Advocacy helps bring awareness to community elected officials about problem areas in the community, and in some cases can help advance public policy for the common good.

The goal of this seminar was for planters to be able to see advocacy not as something new to consider but as a long-established biblical call to go back to a framework where evangelism, spirituality, justice, and civic action together are a primary way to “participate in the Reign of God,” as Eldin Villafaña challenges Hispanic Pentecostals, believing that there is no area of life that cannot be touched by God. “To participate in the Reign of God is to participate in the political process. Christian participation in the political process is predicated on the understanding that Christ is Lord of the Kingdom of this world, too.”³⁰⁹

It is important for pastors to know from the day they start a church that their community will be expecting the church and its leader to get involved in the life of what happens there, not just as a temporary measure but for the long term. Even before a word is uttered, a church speaks through its public witness. The question a planter has to ask is:

309. Eldin Villafaña, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 196.

What do you want your church to shout to the world? Good news for all, or good news only for some?

Chapter 5: The Project Evaluated

The purpose of this project was to develop a training seminar entitled “Right from the Start: Developing Civically-Engaged, Justice-Oriented Churches.” It was intended for prospective Hispanic church planters and pastors in their first three years of church planting, and for non-Hispanics who seek to minister to and with Hispanics. The seminar took place on September 21, 2019 from 10 am to 4 pm in a rented conference room at the Florida International University Kovens Conference Center in North Miami, Florida.

This chapter presents the results of this study using a quasi-experimental, with-in subjects, repeated measures research design.

Research Process

This project was completed in five procedural steps. The first step was to identify and collect contact information for a pre-participant survey of a select sampling of church planters from the Plant4Harvest program. The President of Plant4Harvest helped with the identification process of planters, since he was familiar with all of them. The second step was to send the following items to prospective study participants: (a) a lead survey cover letter (see Appendix A), which introduced the researcher and the study to the would-be participant; (b) a comprehensive questionnaire (see Appendix B), which listed the questions necessary to gather pertinent data for the study; and (c) a Pre/Post Participant

Survey (see Appendix C) which received Institutional Review Board approval, also sent to the sampling of church planters to gauge what they understood (or not) on certain aspects of social justice advocacy. The survey was sent using Survey Monkey to forty church planters that were identified by the President of Plant4Harvest. Of the sixty persons that the researcher invited to the seminar, forty attended, twenty-two of those completed the Post Participant survey, and only fifteen completed the Pre/Post Participant survey and were in attendance at the seminar. Their demographic information is listed in Table 1 below. The third step was to identify appropriate subject matter experts in the field of social justice advocacy who would help with the development of the curriculum for the training seminar and then conduct telephone and/or email interviews (see Appendix D). The fourth step was to develop and conduct the seminar based on the input from the two surveys to church planters and expert subject matter participants. The fifth step was to conduct the analysis of the data gleaned from the post-participant survey and determined via the evaluation model chosen to what extent the training had been effective.

Table 1

Church Planter Demographics							
Planter (P) # & City	Gender	Marital Status	Race /Ethnicity	Employment Status	Yrs in Ministry	General Education Level	Justice Education Level
P 1 Tampa	Female	Single	White	Bi-vocational	10 yrs	College Degree, Pursuing Masters	Secular Training
P 2 Tampa	Male	Married	African American	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	Some College	Secular Training
P 3 Miami	Male		Hispanic	Bi-vocational	10+ yrs	AG Institute	None
P 4 Miami	Male		Hispanic	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	AG Institute	None

P 5 Miami	Male		Other- Biracial Hispanic	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	Some College	None
P 6 Miami	Male		Other- Biracial Hispanic	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	College Degree	BA Criminal Justice
P 7 Orlando	Male		Hispanic	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	College Degree	Secular Training
P 8 Miami	Male		Hispanic	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	Some College	Secular Training
P 9 Pembroke Pines	Male	Married	African American	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	Seminary	Secular Training
P 10 Miramar	Male	Married	African American	Full-time Ministry	10+ yrs	Seminary	None
P 11 Pembroke Pines	Male	Married	Hispanic	Bi-vocational	10+ yrs	AG Institute	None
P 12 Miami	Female	Single	Hispanic	Bi-vocational	10+ yrs	AG Institute	1-2 Courses
P 13 Miami	Male	Married	Hispanic	Bi-vocational	5+ yrs	AG Institute	None
P 14 Miami	Male	Married	Hispanic	Bi-vocational	3+ yrs	Some College	Conference
P 15 Miami	Male	Single	Hispanic	Bi-vocational	7+ yrs	Some College	Conference

Evaluation Model

There are various models that help evaluate the effectiveness of training seminars. One of the more popular ones is the Kirkpatrick Model.³¹⁰ Evaluation of a training is important because it demonstrates training value to organizations. Since this project advocates that church planting organizations adapt their training curriculum to include a section on social justice advocacy or at the very least offer the topic as an option for planters, its value needs to be demonstrated as something that planters feel they need.

310. James D. and Wendy Kayser Kirkpatrick, *Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation* (Alexandria, VA: ATD Press, 2016), Kindle.

Otherwise, “This lack of connection to performance and accomplishing key organizational results puts training into the ‘nice to have’ category, instead of something that is required for organizational success.”³¹¹ Essentially, this model has four levels which are:

1. Reaction: How the participants react to the training they receive. One of the more common ways to measure this is a survey after a training which gauges what they thought about the training and whether they found it useful.
2. Learning: What the participants actually learned from the training. A common way to measure that is through pre/post tests and hands-on assignments that demonstrate that the participant learned something new or perhaps changed their mind about something by virtue of what they learned.
3. Behavior: Did the participants learn something new that they will implement at their place of business in this case, the church they are planting? Some researchers evaluate this after a training by doing in-field inspections but it can also be preliminarily evaluated by asking participants if they will change their behavior by implementing what they have learned.
4. Results: Was there a change in behavior or in this case, thought process as a result of the training? This is commonly evaluated by participant surveys that indicate they have improved in a certain area or have changed how they think about a certain matter (in this case social justice advocacy).

The project results below respond to each of these evaluation levels and show that participants not only found the training useful but indicated that they felt more confident addressing and teaching some element of social justice advocacy to their leadership teams. In addition, some participants changed their minds regarding the importance of

311. Kirkpatrick, *Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Training Evaluation*.

understanding justice for ecclesiological purposes, and there was an increase in belief that the subject of social justice advocacy should be at the forefront of church planting efforts.

Study Results

Participation Rate

A total of 15 participants comprised the study's sample for analytic purposes. Participation in the study was based upon completion of the Pre Test, Training (instruction), and Post Test phases of the study. Statistical power analysis (*a priori*) using G*Power provided a sample size parameter of 12 to 27 participants for study purposes, dependent upon the anticipated effect of the intervention treatment variable (training). In light of an anticipated large magnitude of treatment effect ($d \geq .80$), the study's eventual size of 15 was more than adequate to detect a treatment effect.

Survey Completion Rate

A survey completion rate of 100 percent was achieved in both the pre-test and post-test phases of the study. The 100 percent completion rate far exceeds the customary 78.6 percent generally achieved in surveying (Fluid Surveys, 2014).³¹²

312. Fluid Surveys University, October 2014, "Response Rate Statistics for Online Surveys-What Numbers Should You be Aiming For?," accessed October 13, 2019, <https://fluidsurveys.com/university/response-rate-statistics-online-surveys-aiming/>

Findings by Research Question

Main Question

What is the biblical basis and justification for training pastors in civic engagement alongside of their other church planting training?

To answer this question and begin research for this topic, the researcher had to ask is there a theology of advocacy that can be derived solely from Scripture? The answer was yes and so we began with God. God had history with advocacy. It has been demonstrated that there are advocacy-related themes throughout the Bible, including in the way that God speaks of himself and in the way his prophets have spoken of him and on his behalf. Scripture has shown that justice is a God idea not a human idea, and most definitely not simply a political invention. God had shalom in mind from the very beginning. God expects a church to represent him well. A church is not a faithful, credible public witness if it does not believe that the good news is for all and can be applied to all things in life.

Findings support the belief that this type of training, which supports a biblical justice theology of advocacy, is as important as learning how to administrate a church, especially in urban communities where the needs tend to be greater. Although in every church plant and growing church, a pastor will need to develop relationships at some level with their congregational members, not all will face the demands that are determined by a social location where there is a greater need for advocacy work. Areas that are plagued with poverty, drugs, and other urban ills are usually where change in policy at the city, or state level are required most.

Research Question #1

To what degree did targeted training in the area social justice advocacy affect how study participants felt about their ability to equip others to become advocates and activists?

Using the t test of Dependent Means for statistical significance testing purposes, the mean score difference of 1.80 in study participant perceptions from the pre-test to post-test condition of the study was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(14)} = 6.44; p < .001$). Moreover, the magnitude of treatment effect (effect size) in research question one was considered very large ($d = 1.67$).

Table 2 contains a summary of findings for the effect of the treatment variable upon study participant perceptions of sufficiency of equipping in the area of social justice advocacy:

Table 2

Study Participant Perceptions of Sufficiency of Equipping in the Area of Social Justice Advocacy

Study Phase	n	Mean	SD	t	d
Pre Test	15	2.07	0.88	6.44***	1.67 ^a
Post Test	15	3.87	0.35		

*** $p < .001$ ^a Very Large Effect Size ($d \geq 1.30$)

This table shows that the study participants experienced a substantial increase in knowledge, and as such felt they were sufficiently equipped to engage in the area of social justice advocacy.

Research Question #2

To what degree did targeted training in the area social justice advocacy affect how confident study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

Using the t test of Dependent Means for statistical significance testing purposes, the mean score difference of 0.53 for research question two in study participant perceptions from the pre-test to post-test condition of the study was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(14)} = 3.23; p = .006$). Moreover, the magnitude of treatment effect (effect size) in research question two was considered large ($d = .83$).

Table 3 contains a summary of findings for the effect of the treatment variable upon study participants' perceptions of confidence in their ability to teach the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership teams:

Table 3

Study Participant Perceptions of "Confidence" in Ability to Teach Concepts of Social Justice Advocacy to their Leadership Teams:

Study Phase	n	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
Pre Test	15	3.27	0.46	3.23***	.83 ^b
Post Test	15	3.80	0.41		

*** $p = .006$ ^b Large Effect Size ($d \geq .80$)

Table 3 provides empirical support that study participants enhanced their confidence in teaching concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership teams in the area of social justice advocacy as a result of the training session. The magnitude of effect (d) of the study's intervention treatment variable (training) upon study participants

perception in research question two was considered large. From the finding, it would appear that the targeted training employed in the current study was an effective means by which to enhance perceptions of confidence in teaching concepts of social justice advocacy to leadership teams in the area of social justice advocacy.

Research Question #3

To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how competent study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

Using the t test of Dependent Means for statistical significance testing purposes, the mean score difference of 1.60 in study participants’ perceptions from the pre-test to post-test condition of the study in research question three was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(14)} = 7.48; p < .001$). Moreover, the magnitude of treatment effect (effect size) in research question three was considered very large ($d = 1.93$).

Table 4 contains a summary of finding for the effect of the treatment variable upon study participants’ perceptions of competence in their ability to teach the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team:

Table 4

Study Participant Perceptions of “Competence” in Ability to Teach Concepts of Social Justice Advocacy to their Leadership Team:

Study Phase	n	Mean	SD	t	d
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Pre Test	15	2.27	0.70	7.48***	1.93 ^a
Post Test	15	3.87	0.35		

*** $p = .006$ ^a Very Large Effect Size ($d \geq 1.30$)

Table 4 provides empirical support of study participants' enhanced perceptions of competence in teaching concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership teams in the area of social justice advocacy as a result of the training session. The magnitude of effect (d) of the study's intervention treatment variable (training) upon study participant perception in research question three was considered very large. From the findings it would appear that the targeted training approach employed in the current study was a highly effective means by which to enhance perceptions of competence in teaching concepts of social justice advocacy to leadership teams in the area of social justice advocacy.

Research Question #4

Which element of social justice advocacy reflected the greatest degree of impact from the targeted training session?

A total of 70 percent ($n = 14$) of the research instrument's survey items were impacted by the study's intervention treatment variable to a statistically significant degree ($p < .05$). The single greatest mean score change from pre-test to post-test was manifested in the item, *I am sufficiently equipped in the areas of social justice activism and advocacy* (Mean Difference = 1.80). Three items on the research instrument were impacted at magnitudes of effect (effect size) beyond $d = 2.00$: *Social justice should be at*

the forefront of all church planting efforts, I am confident about confronting the authorities of my city on matters of social injustice, and I am aware of the resources available in my local and metropolitan community for accessing information and training on multicultural and social justice advocacy awareness.

Table 5 contains a summary of research instrument items impacted by the study’s intervention variable by at least one full unit of the instrument’s scale:

Table 5

Survey Items manifesting at least One Unit of Change from Pre-Test to Post-Test

Item	Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
I am sufficiently equipped in the areas of social justice activism and advocacy	1.80	6.44***	1.67 ^a
I am confident about confronting the authorities of my city on matters of social injustice	1.60	8.41***	2.16 ^a
Social justice should be at the forefront of all church planting efforts	1.60	8.41***	2.16 ^a
I typically make adjustments for people who differ from me culturally	1.40	7.36***	1.89 ^a
I am aware of the resources available in my local and metropolitan community for accessing information and training on multicultural and social justice advocacy awareness.	1.33	8.37***	2.15 ^a
I consider myself to be culturally sensitive	1.27	5.55***	1.44 ^a
It is essential that Christians reflect a notable commitment to social justice advocacy.	1.07	5.07***	1.53

****p* < .001 ^a Very Large Effect Size (*d* ≥ 1.30)

Although all survey items on the study’s research instrument were impacted positively and significantly in the wake of the study’s treatment variable (training), three specific items appear to have been impacted at a noteworthy level. Study participants’ perceptions of “confronting authorities on matters of social justice,” “the importance of

social justice in church planting efforts,” and “awareness of resource access” reflected the most noteworthy effects of targeted training in the study. From the finding in research question four, it would appear that study participants’ perceptions of “avenues of action” in the area of social justice advocacy were impacted most positively by the targeted training.

Discussion of the Findings for Research Questions

The study’s research problem was addressed through one central question and four specifically posed subsidiary research questions. The following represents a discussion of the findings associated with each respective research question:

Central Question

What is the biblical basis and justification for training pastors in civic engagement and social justice advocacy alongside of their other church planting training?

Scripture has shown (as documented in this project) that God is not impressed with right beliefs but with right practice, and most importantly, that God cares how we treat our neighbor. The role of the church, its public witness, walking with the people and what that looks like is typically not discussed in church plant training programs. Not one of the planters who attended the seminar had ever heard this discussion in a training. Planter 15 said he had had only one day of training before he planted his church, and it was, as he said, “all about operating not about advocating. Yet come to think about it, many of my people needed help at the social security office, with their immigration paperwork, with the water company. I spend more time on that than in administration when I came to think about it. Not to say that administration is not important but I never

thought this would be too.” Planter 9 said “I didn’t know what I didn’t know. Most of the people who need justice are people of color but it is not people of color writing the curriculum for church planting organizations. If they aren’t thinking about it because they probably never were impacted by the justice we see in the Black and Brown community, they surely ain’t putting something that benefits us in the training. What benefits them is that we have nickles and noses, especially to pay them back!”

We see Jesus engaging in social praxis throughout the New Testament. We see examples of Jesus advocating for and speaking to right wrongs committed against people. His example provides both implicit and explicit instructions for how Christians are to live out their Sunday worship in their daily lives. The church scattered as salt and light during the week, in their respective places of employment and ministry, is just as important and perhaps even more impactful than the church gathered on Sunday. We are called to engage in a similar practice because every Christian is called to “serve the least of these” (Matt 25:31–46); to hunger and thirst for righteousness which is also translated as justice (Matt 5:6); we are to all God’s image bearers (Gen 1:27); and Jesus’ mission explicitly states that he had a special heart for the poor, the blind, and the captive, and that his entire life he spoke that truth. We cannot know peace without justice and there are many things that Christians can doubt because of denominational baggage, translation sources, etc., but Jesus’ life is the same in every Bible. If his heart led Jesus to a praxis of justice, his followers should follow suit.

Research Question 1

To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how study participants felt about their ability to equip others to become advocates and activists?

The t test of Dependent Means, a statistical technique ideally suited for use in within-subjects research designs, was used to assess the statistical significance of the mean score change of study participant perceptions of adequacy of equipping in the areas of advocacy and activism from the pre-test to post-test phases of the study. The mean score increase of 1.80 from the pre-test to the post-test phase of the study was found to be statistically significant level at an extraordinary level. ($p < .001$). Interpreted, the probability of such a finding having occurred by chance or something unexplained are less than 1 in 1000. Conversely, the probability that the finding achieved in research question one was due to the intervention treatment variable are 999 or better in 1,000. The finding in research question one confirms the impact of the research study's intervention treatment variable of targeted instruction.

The magnitude of the treatment variable's effect (effect size) was considered very large ($d = 1.67$). When Cohen's d values meet or exceed a value of 1.30, the effect is considered to be very large. The very large treatment effect exerted by the study's intervention variable, along with the probability of the finding having occurred by virtue of the intervention variable confirm the true effect of targeted instruction upon study participants' perceptions of adequacy of their equipping in the social justice areas of advocacy and activism.

The results achieved in research question one would appear to support strongly the use of targeted instruction as a means of influencing the perceptions of study

participants' adequacy of equipping in the areas of social justice advocacy and activism. The treatment effect was of such a magnitude that it was detectable within the study's limited sample size of 15 participants.

Research Question 2

To what degree did targeted training in the area social justice advocacy affect how confident study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

The issue in research question two was study participants' confidence level in teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams. The t test of Dependent Means, a statistical technique ideally suited for use in within-subjects research designs, was used to assess the statistical significance of the mean score change of study participants' perceptions of confidence in teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams from the pre-test to post-test phases of the study. The mean score increase of 0.53 (slightly over one-half unit on the Likert Scale) from the pre-test to the post-test phase of the study was found to be statistically significant to an extraordinary degree. ($p = .006$). Interpreted, the probability of such a finding having occurred by chance or something unexplained are 6 in 1000. Conversely, the probability that the finding achieved in research question one was due to the intervention treatment variable are 994 in 1,000. The finding in research question two supports the effectiveness of the research study's intervention treatment variable of targeted instruction upon study participants' perceptions of confidence in teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams.

The magnitude of the treatment variable's effect or effect size was considered large at $d = .83$. When Cohen's d values meet or exceed a value of .80, the effect is considered to be large. The large treatment effect exerted by the study's intervention variable, along with the probability of the finding having occurred by virtue of the intervention variable confirm the true effect of targeted instruction upon study participant perceptions of confidence in teaching the concepts of social justice.

The results achieved in research question two would appear to strongly support the use of targeted instruction as a means of influencing the perceptions of study participants' confidence in their ability to teach the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams. The treatment effect was of such a magnitude that it was detectable within the study's limited sample ($n = 15$) participants. Moreover, the finding would appear to be very significant in that, as an individual's confidence in teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams increases, the likelihood of their actually teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams becomes more probable.

Research Question 3

To what degree did targeted training in the area social justice advocacy affect how competent study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

The focus of research question three was upon study participants' perceived competence level in teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams. The t test of Dependent Means, a statistical technique ideally suited for use in within-subjects research designs, was used to assess the statistical significance of the mean score change

of study participant perceptions of competence in teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams from the pre-test to post-test phases of the study. The mean score increase of 1.60 (slightly over one and one-half unit on the Likert Scale) from the pre-test to the post-test phase of the study was found to be statistically significant level at an extraordinary level. ($p < .001$). Interpreted, the probability of such a finding having occurred by chance or something unexplained are less than 1 in 1000. Conversely, the probability that the finding achieved in research question one was due to the intervention treatment variable are greater than 999 in 1,000. The finding in research question three confirms the impact of the research study's intervention treatment variable of targeted instruction upon study participants' perceptions of competence in teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams.

The magnitude of the treatment variable's effect or effect size was considered very large at $d = 1.93$. When Cohen's d values meet or exceed a value of 1.30, the effect is considered to be very large. The large treatment effect exerted by the study's intervention variable, along with the probability of the finding having occurred by virtue of the intervention variable confirm the true effect of targeted instruction upon study participant perceptions of competence in teaching the concepts of social justice.

The results achieved in research question three would appear to strongly support the use of targeted instruction as a means of influencing the perceptions of study participants' ability to teach the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams. The treatment effect was of such a magnitude that it was detectable within the study's limited sample ($n = 15$) participants. Moreover, the finding would appear to be very significant

in that, as an individual's perceptions of competence at teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams increases, the probability of their actually teaching the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams becomes more likely.

The impact of the study's intervention treatment variable of targeted instruction was considerable for study participants' perceptions of confidence and competence in their ability to teach the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams. Participants' perceptions of competence were, however, impacted to a much greater degree regarding their ability to teach the concepts of social justice to their leadership teams. This would appear significant in that the information provided in the targeted instructional sessions has exerted a very strong effect upon study participants' perceptions of competence with the content associated with social justice, a primary goal of the study's intervention treatment variable of targeted instruction.

Research Question 4

Which element of social justice advocacy reflected the greatest degree of impact from the targeted training session?

The t test of Dependent Means, a statistical technique ideally suited for use in within-subjects research designs, was used to assess the statistical significance of the mean score change of study participant perceptions on all of the survey items on the study's research instrument from the pre-test to post-test phases of the study. Fourteen items (70 percent of all survey items) of the research instrument's survey items were impacted by the study's intervention treatment variable to a statistically significant degree ($p < .05$). The single greatest mean score change from pre-test to post-test was

manifested in the research instrument item, *I am sufficiently equipped in the areas of social justice activism and advocacy* (Mean Difference = 1.80; $d = 1.67$).

Although it is noteworthy that the mean score increase of nearly two full units on the research instrument's Likert Scale was associated with study participants' perceptions of being sufficiently equipped in the areas of social justice activism and advocacy, perhaps more noteworthy is the fact that 70 percent of the items were impacted to a statistically significant degree by virtue of the study's intervention treatment variable of targeted instruction, with seven items reflecting very large degrees of treatment effect ($d \geq 1.30$). As a result, the treatment effect for targeted instruction appears to be uniform and protracted for many of the concepts associated with the topic of social justice.

Summary

Due to the nature of the church planting life and that of those on the front lines of social justice advocacy, combined with the time constraints on this project, the number of participants in the surveys who were both church planters and subject matter experts were limited. In addition, many seminar participants expressed a desire to attend a lengthier training as they felt the seminar was too short.

One thing that was unanimously agreed upon within the circle of subject matter experts is that this type of training should be given to church planters. One Black American female subject matter expert in this field for over twenty years said, "It is absolutely necessary to train planters in this topic. Church planters are necessarily close to the community. To connect with and be evidence of the presence of the Kingdom of

God among community members, they need to understand how to engage in the work of moving power toward justice in their communities.” In addition, a Hispanic female subject matter expert in the faith-based advocacy world for about twenty years said “in the Hispanic community this training is crucially needed, but they need to see it as biblical, not a fad.”

The results indicate that church planters felt more confident and competent in the area of social justice advocacy after the seminar—confident and competent enough to attempt to teach their leadership teams what they had learned and to attempt to learn more about becoming a justice-oriented church not because it is a fad, a man-made idea, but because it was God’s idea from the beginning. In addition, although most of the church planters had some college and even seminary education, most said that that they had never heard teaching specifically related to biblical justice and the role of the Christian or the church.

Despite the limitations, the researcher is deeply encouraged by the response to the core content of the training and looks forward to training a new generation of church planters who want to keep a partnership between evangelization and justice and between spirituality and civic action with the Spirit of God as the driving force for it all.

Chapter 6: The Project Conclusions

After getting my Doctor of Education from Nova Southeastern University in 2007, I never thought I would go back to get another doctoral degree. Why endure such torture? Yet I felt compelled to go back to school. Therefore, after thirteen years of pastoring in various capacities, including being part of church plants, I started the Doctor of Ministry journey as a church planter with a now defunct church planting organization that hurt many people and left many planters with a lack of trust toward majority culture-operated church planting organizations. Instead of walking away from it all, as many of my colleagues did because of the lack of support from denominational executives in the aftermath of the implosion, I dedicated myself even more to the cause. At the end of my dissertation journey, I am now a church planter trainer and church plant advocate. I actually am grateful to God that I have been able to see all sides of the church planter journey.

Finishing this particular degree at this time is a kairos moment, for a D.Min. degree is said to help its recipients become “doctors of the church.” In these United States, we need healing. In this country, our society is in decline, racial division is as highly visible as the civil rights era and just as hateful, and many people who claim to be people of God are the worst ambassadors for the good news of the gospel. Many have believed the narrative that social justice is a political agenda that threatens the church and the mission of God, which is why this project has advocated for ‘biblical justice’ and the need for the church to remain focused on Christ. I believe the church needs to be what

Rene Padilla calls an integral church, which is focused on both personal and social transformation.³¹³ New churches in whatever model they choose to “do church” may be the healing balm that cultivates communities of shalom around the US. I wholeheartedly believe this and am committed to training up church planters that want to be part of that healing and representatives of the Galilean, brown-skinned Jesus who was committed to bringing transformation to every aspect of our lives and world.

This project helped me to grow in a deeper understanding of justice from a biblical framework. More importantly, it made me even more proud of being a Jesus follower in a time when so many look down upon it. Working on this project helped me to become a better follower of Jesus, a better citizen, and even a better wife and mom, because I am more sure of my faith in Christ and more firm in my convictions.

The purpose of this project was to challenge church planters to think about starting civically engaged, justice-oriented churches, not because it is or isn't popular but because it aligns with the heart of God. The goal was that planters commit to plant churches that right from the start understand that the quest for shalom and the work of social justice advocacy is best expressed through the people of God and should be present in the DNA of a church from its inception.

313. Tetsunao Yamamori and C. René Padilla, eds. *The Local Church, Agent of Transformation* (Buenos Aires, Ediciones Kairós, 2004), 20.

Final Thoughts

The central questions that were driving this study were: What is the biblical basis and justification for training pastors in civic engagement alongside of their other church planting training? Where do we see Jesus engaging in social praxis in the New Testament? Why are we called to engage in a similar practice? I believe that each question was answered as thoroughly as possible without creating a five-volume dissertation. Throughout the canon of scripture, when we look at the Word from the “resistance reader” viewpoint, as Obery M. Hendricks Jr. urges, we understand that all theology is contextual and as such, good hermeneutics is hermeneutics from below.³¹⁴ I have shown how Jesus was very much engaged in a kingdom praxis, that this is the most perfect model for Christians who want to walk in the way of Jesus, and that this is the reason why anyone who chooses to carry the label of Jesus follower must also be committed to walking in his ways.

Implied in all the texts mentioned for this project is the idea that God uses human agents to work for his purpose to restore shalom in all the ecosystems they touch. The canonical options presented seem open to a variety of ways that the people of God can fulfill God’s expectation that we be our sister’s or brother’s keeper. There are various

314. Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Universe Bends Toward Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church, and the Body Politic* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011. 1321. Kindle.

ways to do it, various models to use to do it but what is certain is that the expectation is certainly there.

In addition, all the reports and statistics show that Hispanics, whether on the side of hearing the gospel or sharing it, are a population group that cannot be ignored. They are growing and are already a powerful segment of American society. It is to a church's detriment not to address them or care about the issues that they care about or that are unfairly disrupting their lives. This project was much more than an academic exercise for me; it was both a heart wrenching and liberating journey. Heart wrenching, because I am saddened by how some around me in the evangelical world have weaponized scripture and compartmentalized their faith. Yet liberating, because I became more informed and thus able to stand courageously and often alone in a sea of opinions that were driven by a colonized version of the gospel. I emerged stronger in my faith and convictions shaped by the legacy of the pioneers that went before me. I walk with a cloud of witnesses of both biblical s/heroes and ethnic ones.

Ever since I was a little girl, I have cared about the local church. I was too young to care about how the church operated and who the church impacted, but I did. As an Enneagram 8³¹⁵, my passion for justice is wired in me and it all makes sense now. My favorite cartoon series even as a grown woman was Pinky and the Brain, simply because he was crazy enough to believe that he could take over the world with one crazy friend by his side. I, too, am crazy enough to believe that we can change the world around us. The

315. The Enneagram is a particular system of analysis to represent the spectrum of possible personality types. To find out more about this visit <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-descriptions>.

history of mi gente, la familia Hispana, bids me to stand on their shoulders and work in our cities for the restoration of shalom. I still believe that the local church is the greatest agent of transformation when it's working right, when it's planted right. We have to understand and never forget the power of the Spirit of God and God's concern for the marginalized and the poor. I want every believer of Jesus to understand that orthopraxis is just as, if not more important, than orthodoxy. Let's get what we believe right so that we can do right. New churches can have a justice orientation, right from the start, if they believe and desire to do what Jesus did and stand for those for whom Jesus advocated. I hope to spend the rest of my life writing, speaking, and mentoring others in this area.

In Isaiah 42:1, we read the words of the prophet Isaiah: "here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations." My only desire as I walk on this journey with others to bring the good news of the gospel to all and cultivate shalom is to have my heavenly father delight in me.

As Hispanic church planters, pastors, and even as church planter trainers, it is necessary to reframe history before we can see a better mañana in our churches and in our world. Our world and pressing realities have made Hispanics more politically astute.³¹⁶ Hispanic churches, led by leaders who understood why getting involved in their city and civic affairs matters have already made a difference in the history of the church in the United States. Their preparation in the past prepared the way for a better mañana for

316. Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 35, Kindle.

those of us here today, which was the time for which they dreamed, lived, and worked in the power of God's Spirit.

Lessons Learned

A number of lessons were learned as a result of the collected data and individual discussions that took place after the live training sessions that have challenged this researcher to continue to develop additional training sessions and published materials for church planters. The lessons learned were:

1. Embedded Assumptions. The people selected to participate in the surveys and training would be considered by most seasoned leaders as pastors and planters on the frontline with more than three years of experience in an urban community. Many of them were educated (with a college degree), and all had church planter training of some sort, either through Plant4Harvest or another association. Yet an early lesson learned after the first survey was that most of these planters confused civic engagement with prison reform and felt that before engaging in any advocacy there was a need to know all the governmental policies in their state. This assumption was a huge barrier for current planters and pastors to feel confident in social justice advocacy. Learning the differences helped those in attendance feel that they could address issues as they came. Planter 6 thought that his knowledge of the criminal justice system and incarceration was enough knowledge to "go to the hood and represent," but he says, "I realize that I had not

only limited knowledge of one area that our people needed advocacy in but I was also not informed about the church's role and biblical justice. My mind is blown.”

2. Lack of Biblical Justice Understanding. Almost all respondents felt their knowledge about justice as it related to the scriptures was very limited. Planter 12 said her “lack of understanding of justice and how it relates to the gospel” was a barrier to her even considering broaching the subject, ever. However, the seminar helped her realize that the Bible has much to say about justice and made her feel that “I can approach talking about this now knowing that its biblical not necessarily party politics.”
3. Lack of Time. Church planters indicated that while they are committed to justice and know of the importance of knowing the needs of their community, they need more time to get involved in social justice advocacy. Many are co- or bi-vocational and have very limited time to meet the needs of their families and their churches. This is a common concern for many churches, which is why justice work is usually subcontracted out as a ministry. i.e. to a dedicated justice minister or pastor. Planter 14 said, “I always thought that having a pastor over an area was best since they would be hired to be the expert. I realize know that I do not have to be an expert, I just have to have a passion for what Jesus did and believe that he called us to do it too.”
4. Lack of Resources. Church planters mentioned that they did not know whom to approach about learning more about justice-related issues other than going to a conference. Some of them have done that but feel not having local resources or a

network of justice-oriented churches made it difficult to have a go-to person for questions, to set up shadowing days for their ministry, etc. While some of the outside planters invited to the training (but who did not take the survey) mentioned that their denominations were unsupportive and even hostile to the idea of becoming justice oriented, the Plant4Harvest planters (who did take the survey) felt they did have support within the network to help build such a church. Planter 5 commented “Plant4Harvest has always been about the people. Our people. Getting historical and biblical knowledge adds to the rationale on why we should all be planting justice oriented churches on purpose.” Planter 9 said, “This is why they say knowledge is power. When you know better, you do better. I gotta go do better! Thank God I heard this before I launched.”

5. Present Personal Challenges. Some of the planters wholeheartedly believe in the concepts introduced at the seminar but felt their own personal challenges including language or immigration status would hinder them from fully implementing what they had learned. They did want to seek out a second or third generation citizen that could take on the charge of helping the church become justice oriented with their full backing.
6. Lack of Ecclesial Imagination. Perhaps one of the most insightful lessons learned after this project implementation is the fact that many Hispanic pastors and planters simply do what they have always seen done. They usually do not question models or theology because they view it as honoring their mentors and pastors before them. It was important for these pastors to understand that they

could dream of different ways of doing church for a new generation in a new world without dishonoring those who came before them. Planter 7 said, “I did not know I could dream of a better way. I thought it would be disrespectful to even ask if I could do things different. In training, the model is shown as the way. Maybe if they say, this is a way, not the way, we would get that we could dream.”

One final comment that summarizes what seems to be the case all around in the Hispanic evangelical and Pentecostal community is what Planter 12 said: “I guess my lived experiences, the news, what was passed down (or not) from my pastors (some who were white) and the few courses I took formed my opinion on what justice was and I should have just read about my Hispanic brothers and sisters and, most importantly, what Jesus did.”

Factors for Improvement

There were three main areas in which this project could have been improved. First, a longer training was needed. A subject like this was difficult to cover in a four-hour seminar. Everyone felt it needed to be longer. Some asked for a series of webinars (since these persons are scattered across the US). Thus, the ideal format in which to give this information might be in a college church-planting course for church-planting majors at religious universities, and via on demand webinars for church planters who are not in school and cannot afford to be in school. If this were to be the case, then more content would need to be created to cover a fourteen- to sixteen-week course or at the very least

an eight-week online course option. Perhaps a traveling seminar tour could be coordinated with city church planting organizations and/or churches.

Secondly, more time should have been allotted for recruitment and data collection. There were a number of issues that became obstacles to allowing for more time to recruit people for the project and time for them to fill out the initial survey since it was not done on site right after the workshop as the second one was. One major obstacle was that the survey was sent out during the beginning of the holiday season in 2018 and everyone's schedules were different and it was difficult to get responses on time.

Finally, it would have been helpful to present videos or have other type of visuals of Hispanic trail blazing planters and/or pastors who were also involved in the social justice advocacy world. Zoom call-ins were considered, but again schedule alignment with the date of workshop was difficult. However, I believe video recordings could be added to parts of the curriculum where their work is mentioned in the future so that aligning schedules is never an issue.

Implications of the Project and Considerations for the Future

The outcome of the project, "Right from the Start: Developing Civically-Engaged, Justice-Oriented Churches" Seminar was better than expected. As a person with the spiritual gift of teaching, having the opportunity to share something that I am passionate about was a great experience. This project first started to gain interest among church planting leaders when it was first mentioned at the National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC) conference in Orlando, FL in July 2018 where the researcher shared

the stage on a panel with Dr. Ed Stetzer, known to many in the church planting world as the guru of church planting. After that panel, Dr. Stetzer invited the researcher to write an article on the premise of this project for Christianity Today's church planting section. The article published on August 18, 2018 was entitled "Planting Pastors in the New America: A Case for Civic Advocacy Training",³¹⁷ and was shared 346 times on Facebook and led to interest from various training camps interested in the content of this project. That led to the general session being given at the Church Planting Leadership Fellowship gathering in partnership with the Send Institute, NewChurches.com and Lifeway Research on July 23–24, 2019 at Wheaton College, again at the invitation of Dr. Ed Stetzer. Those in attendance were hundreds of church planting association leaders who make decisions on how they will spend their money, who will train their planters, and on what areas they will train. Many of them have expressed interest in having more workshops given to their particular groups at regional events. Given the opportunity, this researcher hopes to continue to be a resource for church planting organizations.

The researcher also hopes to develop further and expand the workshop as well as to write a book on the topic. Curriculum is currently being developed for a longer training program for Plant4Harvest planters as well as others who would want to incorporate the content into their own training curriculum. Finally, as a member of the think tank for church planters known as the Send Institute, the researcher will continue to spend time with church planting denominational leaders from around the country as well as

317. To read article visit <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2018/august/planting-pastors-in-new-america-case-for-civic-advocacy-tra.html>.

nationally known thought leaders and will write on a variety of topics to help church planters.

Recommendations for Further Study

After this first test run of the workshop the value participants garnered from it was both amazing and a little surprising. When the topic of this project was mentioned, most people felt that it was a risky topic; but the church planters that were involved in this project seemed to have been praying for someone not only to address the issue of justice-oriented churches but also provide a model for how to plant such a church. There are a few non-traditional models that do not require a lot of initial monetary investment that have managed to become these civically engaged, justice oriented churches for which this researcher has advocated. Further research to find these churches in various states and share on their models is warranted for possible replication.

In addition, the researcher hopes to continue to build on the excellent work of Gastón Espinoza who has documented extensively the crucial role Hispanics have played in political, civic, and social action in the US. More writing needs to be done in particular on this new emerging group of Hispanic Progressive Pentecostals that believes not only in the power of the Spirit driving their work and the transformation of their communities but that also believes that the church must return to the framework that partnered evangelization with justice and spirituality with civic action.

A consideration for future study would also be to study how new churches think about discipleship and how they could intentionally incorporate biblical justice into their

discipleship training from the outset. Both are crucial to the healthy growth of an intentionally justice-oriented church. In addition, a study on the churches that are actually civically engaged and justice oriented and how they have managed to walk that path would be helpful to other church planters seeking to do the same.

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Appendices – The Project Data

Appendix A: Group Cover Letter

Dear NAME OF PLANTER:

As part of your involvement with the Plant4Harvest church-planting organization, you have been selected to participate in a study related to justice education on civic engagement for church planters. Since Plant4Harvest sincerely seeks to add value to all of its planters and help them best respond to the challenges pastors now face in this multiracial society, your insights and experiences related to working as a minister and any justice-related issues will help determine how to best prepare planters like yourself through a new curriculum being developed specifically focused on how pastors can become advocates for their people. The research project focuses on seven important questions:

Research Question 1: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how study participants felt about their ability to equip others to become advocates and activists?

Research Question 2: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how confident study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

Research Question 3: To what degree did targeted training in the area of social justice advocacy affect how competent study participants felt about teaching the concepts of social justice advocacy to their leadership team?

Research Question 4: Which element of social justice advocacy reflected the greatest degree of impact from the targeted training session?

The completion of this online survey will provide the data necessary to assist the researcher in answering these questions. Follow-up interviews with selected participants may be conducted to validate the data collected by this survey. The data will be compiled to offer the leadership of Plant4Harvest the necessary information to plan an appropriate curriculum that will be beneficial to you and meet our organizational goals. The founder and president of Plant4Harvest is aware and in support of this study.

Please complete the electronic version of the survey by using this link [LINK](#) by **DEADLINE DATE**. For participating in the study, you will be given a summary of the findings and entered into a drawing to win a \$50 VISA gift card. Thank you for your participation in this research. If you have any questions, please call me at 954-608-6802.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth D. Rios
Board Chair & Vice President, Plant4Harvest
DMin Candidate, Southeastern University

Appendix B: Preliminary Participant Survey

Section I - Personal Information

Name: _____
 E-mail: _____ Age: _____ Primary Telephone: _____
 Marital Status: Married Single Divorced Separated
 Race: Hispanic Caucasian African American Other: _____
 Number of children: 1 2 3 4 or more
 Gender: Male Female
 Employment status: Work FT Work PT Unemployed Bivocational
 Level of Justice Education: None 1 or more courses
 Years in ministry? fewer than 3 years 4-6 years 6-10 years More than 10 years
 How long have you been with P4H? _____

Section II: Boot Camp Training Program Elements			
Please indicate what program elements you believe would be beneficial for training on civic engagement.	Please indicate how important the program element would be to you.		
Program Elements	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
A time of worship			
History of Pentecostal churches and their involvement in civic engagement for social justice purposes			
The theological foundation for advocacy			
Mentor assignment with someone in the faith-based advocacy world			
Opportunities for service learning outside the classroom through P4H partners			
Other (Please List)			

Section III - Barriers
What barriers prevent you as a planter and pastor from civic engagement? (List the top three in order of greatest impact.)
1.
2.
3.
Section IV- Strategies
What strategies would you recommend the boot camp training curriculum to incorporate to eliminate the barriers that prevent you from civic engagement and walking in the role of pastor, activist, and advocate? (List the top three strategies in order of greatest impact.)
1.
2.
3.
Section V - Open-Ended Questions
V1. Do you feel civic activism should be a role of the church?
V2. Do you feel your personal journey made an impact on your decision to want to be a pastor that is also an activist and advocate? If yes, in what areas?
V3. What would you look for in the training program before considering it beneficial to recommend to others in your circles of influence?
V4. What are some areas that you wish you knew more about when it comes to advocacy and social justice as it relates to your role as a pastor?
V5. What would you consider a successful training in pastoral civic advocacy?

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview for this study? Yes No

Thank you for participating in this research study. Your assistance is appreciated!

Appendix C: Pre/Post-Project Participant Survey

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following survey items using the following rating scale:				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
1. I am sufficiently equipped in the areas of social justice activism and advocacy.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
2. Pastors and others in church leadership should advocate against social injustice.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
3. Social justice should be on the forefront of all church planting efforts.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
4. I am familiar with the theologians associated with the concept of social injustice.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
5. It is appropriate for the church to be actively involved in politics.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
6. I am aware of the role of civic engagement in church history.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
7. It is important to be considered a Progressive Pentecostal.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
8. Sin is the primary root cause of systemic injustices.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
9. I am confident about confronting the authorities of my city on matters of social injustice.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
10. I consider myself to be culturally sensitive.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
11. I typically make adjustments for people who differ from me culturally.				
5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree

12. I approach scripture and ministry through a posture of cultural sensitivity.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
13. Training is essential in equipping pastors and church planters to operate more effectively in the arena of social justice advocacy.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
14. I am aware of the resources available in my local and metropolitan community for accessing information and training on multicultural and social justice advocacy awareness.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
15. I am confident in my ability to effectively minister to, counsel or consult with culturally diverse individuals in my church and community.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
16. It is essential that Christians reflect a notable commitment to social justice advocacy.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
17. Social justice advocacy is as important a mission to the church as the salvation of souls.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
18. Mentorship plays a critical role in nurturing a mindset of social justice advocacy.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
19. I am confident in my ability to teach the concepts of social justice advocacy to my leadership team.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
20. I am competent to teach the concepts of social justice advocacy to my leadership team.
5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
Additional Comments:

Appendix D: Group B Telephone Interview Questions (for Subject Matter Experts)

Welcome/Introduction
Thank participant for their willingness to take part in this study. Explain the purpose of the study. Explain the purpose of the interview. Share that the interview will be recorded. Explain duration of the interview (twenty minutes to one hour).
1. How many years of experience have you had with faith-based advocacy? <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9-15 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 or more
2. What do you think are essential characteristics of pastors who decide to become pastoral activists and advocates?
3. What have been your top three challenges in faith-based advocacy?
4. Do you believe pastors and their churches should be involved in faith-based advocacy?
5. How did you get started in advocacy?
6. Do you believe in training church planters in civic engagement and advocacy? Why or why not?
7. If yes, what would you say are the top three essential elements a training program should have?
8. Based on your experience with advocacy and training others, what do you believe are the top barriers keeping Pentecostal pastors (and also Latino Pentecostals) from becoming civically engaged?
9. It is said that advocacy can be demoralizing and depressing at times. What do you do to encourage yourself?
10. What would be your main advice for church-planting pastors who are beginning their journey as faith-based advocates?
11. This project is focused on developing a curriculum for church planters on the biblical merits of civic engagement and advocacy without leaving out the Spirit of God according to Pentecostal belief. With that in mind, what do you believe are topics that should be covered?
12. Are there any theologians and other discipline authors that should be included in this curriculum, even if only for suggested reading (as all cannot be covered)?
13. Is there anything else you feel is important to consider in this project?

End of the interview. Thank the informant.

Appendix E: Seminar Flyer



Sponsoring Organizations

PLANT 4 HARVEST

The Passion Center
HEAR THE VOICES. USE YOUR PASSION. LOVE YOUR WORLD.

Saturday, Sept 21, 2019

Right from the Start:
**DEVELOPING CIVICALLY
ENGAGED, JUSTICE ORIENTED
CHURCHES FROM DAY ONE**

FIU-Kovens Center
10 am - 4 pm
Biscayne Bay Campus - Room 114
3000 N.E. 151st Street
North Miami, FL 33181

In a new America, Planters need a heart for justice
and a new skillset to bring sustainable long-term
change to urban communities



SEMINAR WILL COVER:

- Ministering in a Captive World
- Justice is Biblical
- Walk with the People: Planters in an Ecosystem
- Planting with/among Hispanics
- Faith-rooted Organizing & Advocacy

For more info contact Dr. Liz Rios at erios@plant4harvest.com

Appendix F: Seminar Handout

**Right from the Start:
Developing Civically Engaged, Justice Oriented
Churches**
A Seminar for Hispanic Pentecostal Church Planters & Friends



Facilitated by Dr. Elizabeth D. Rios

Location: Florida International University Kovens Conference Center
Room 114

Date: September 21, 2019

Time: 10 AM – 3 PM

An Initiative of

PLANT4HARVEST

Thank you for joining me for this four session seminar on something that has become a passion of mine for the last three years...Developing Civically Engaged, Justice Oriented Churches...Right from the Start!

I have been praying for you and for what God will reveal to all of us during this time about how we can be better public witnesses for Him in this new America.

This is just a beginning conversation for people who have a heart to understand if justice and advocacy really has a place in a church, especially right from the start when there are so many other things that compete for a planter's time. My hope is that you will see how important this was to our God and His son and make it a mission to plant a church that represents the totality of the Bible.



I am so grateful that you came out to this event and I hope that this will be the first in many conversations on how to plant a just church that represents the gospel well.

Tu Amiga in the Kin-dom,


Elizabeth Rios

SESSIONS

Session	Title
1	Ministering in a Situation of Captivity
2	Justice is Biblical
BREAK	
3	Walking with the People – Planters in an Ecosystem with discussion on planting with/among Hispanics
4	Faith-rooted Organizing & Advocacy
Discussion & Post-Project Survey Light Dinner Served Sponsored by P4H	

Session 1: Ministering in a Captive World



PLANT4HARVEST

The purpose of this session is to help you understand what God meant by shalom and the original intent God had for humanity. We will look at captivity theology further developed by Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera, holistic ministry and the concept of thick versus thin reading of scripture.

“When a person is called to minister or serve in captivity, God summons the called one to help bring about the personal and social transformation of a target audience or the society at large.”

Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera
Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister
in a Captive World, p. 25



PLANT4HARVEST

Our World is in Captivity

God created the perfect conditions in the garden. There were five traits that reflected those conditions. What were they? Spiritual (Gen 1:28-30; 2:23; 3:9-12); Emotional (Gen 2:18, 20-23); Mental (Genesis 2:10, 23); Physical (Genesis 2:3); Social (Genesis 2:16; 23; 1:29-30).

What did the Fall produce? Captivity (Genesis 3:6)

What brought that captivity? Disobedience (Genesis 3:6)

A state of separation from God and bondage to self. Where man and women lost their true identity—their relationship with God. They no longer ruled but were ruled over. This is called captivity.

Captivity strips people of their dignity and intrinsic self-worth.

Captivity has led to:

1. Spiritual Decay
2. Civic Decay
3. Dual Citizenship

Christ freed us from captivity. (John 3:16; Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Psalm 48:8, 9).

Introduction of a model for ministry in a captive world.

To develop a cadre of strong, independent, articulate leaders who who work to build up their community and help create social transformation, individuals called to minister in a situation of captivity should consider these four principles of Holistic Ministry developed by Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera.

Liberation – The Fall means that all structures are fallen and because of that they oppress and dehumanize people. We battle principalities and powers. Jesus and the early church had political dimensions. If Jesus is Lord, Ceasar is not. That proclamation was inevitably political. Christians should seek and advocate for both personal and structural liberation.

Healing – The reference point for this is Isaiah 53. We are all called to be wounded healers. It keeps us from being arrogant or paternalistic.

Community – We are called to be the community of God, authentic and knitted in love. The key here is the idea of *koinonia*, Christian fellowship or communion. But the purpose is not just to stay in a bubble, it is to bond for service. *Koinonia* is always for *diakonia*.

Transformation – We are called to be transformed into the image of Christ daily. Essentially, we are called to perpetual growth. We will never quite arrive on this side of heaven.

Four Pillars of Community Life

A civically-engaged, justice oriented Christian should seek to strengthen and transform the organizations that hold community life together as a whole that due to captivity have all been weakened and corrupted. These pillars are:

1. Family
2. Schools
3. Community-based Organizations
4. The Church

Called to Minister in Captivity?

Assume responsibility for your social reality.

You can be and should be both a credible and disruptive witness in this age of division, hate, nationalism.

Practice a thick versus thin faith.

A thin belief is a bare cognitive pro-attitude. It does not require anything from you other than believing that some is true. Thus, a thin theology may make easy demands on us. Thin theology is usually reductionist and exclusionary. A thin faith According to Miroslav Volf in his book *A Public Faith*, it is thin faith is surface level, it does not dig deep. It is the kind of faith that helps people adjust the meaning of the bible to fit their desires. It's this faith that allows things like the Holocaust, slavery, patriarchy and other evils to happen. It's this faith that is used as a political and social tool.

A thick belief requires more than a bare cognitive pro-attitude. Thick belief also requires emotion. A thick theology may make complex or difficult demands on us. Usually it is not reductionist but pluralistic and inclusionary. This kind of faith digs deep, understands biblical context of the writers and those they addressed.

Justice oriented people and churches are cultivators of shalom.

A Look at Shalom in the Bible

Shalom is used 550 times in the Bible.

The five forms are: Shalom, shalem, shelem, shalem, eirene.

Review Lisa Sharon Harper's *The Very Good Gospel* on Shalom.

Shalom – a Hebrew noun that means peace and wholeness, used 225 times.

Shalem – a Hebrew verb that means to make right and to restore, used 117 times.

Shelem – a Hebrew noun that means peace offering, used 87 times.

Shalem – also a Hebrew adjective that means loyal or devoted, used 27 times.

Eirene – a Greek noun that means peace, used 94 times.

Break up into groups and discuss quotes. What do these quotes mean to you as church planter?

Group 1

“If one’s gospel falls mute when facing people who need good news the most—the impoverished, the oppressed, and the broken—then it’s no gospel at all.”

Group 2

“Shalom is what the Kingdom of God smells like. It’s what the Kingdom looks like and what Jesus requires of the Kingdom’s citizens. It’s when everyone has enough. It’s when families are healed. It’s when shame is renounced and inner freedom is laid hold of. It’s when human dignity, bestowed by the image of God in all humanity, is cultivated, protected, and served in families, faith communities, and schools and through public policy. Shalom is when the capacity to lead is recognized in every human being and when nations join together to protect the environment.”

Session 2: Justice is Biblical



PLANT4HARVEST

The purpose of this session is to help participants understand that even though the world has been overrun by injustice and oppression, that was never his ideal scenario. God hates injustice and calls on his followers and the church to address it. Scripture will be reviewed and discussed.

Opening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A14THPoc4-4>



Justice

684,802 views

👍 26K 💬 242 ➦ SHARE ⌵ SAVE ...



The Bible Project ✓
Published on Oct 27, 2017

SUBSCRIBE 1.2M

"Justice" is a felt need in our world today and a controversial topic. But what is justice, exactly, and who gets to define it? In this video, we'll explore the biblical theme of Justice and discover how it's deeply rooted in the story-line of the Bible that leads to Jesus.

Hand out: The Bible Project Study Notes of video for review

<https://d1bsmz3sdihplr.cloudfront.net/media/Study%20Notes/TBP-Justice-SN-Final.pdf>

Group discussion: What did you learn from this video introduction?

Let's Take a Look at the Bible – A Review of Select Scripture



Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28, 31

We were made in God's image to reflect his glory on earth. God gave us dominion over the earth. God's dominion is righteous and just and that was the expectation of man's exercise of power. But we disobeyed. Sin entered the world and we entered into captivity. Every aspect of human existence was affected. We have been in captivity ever since. It was in Genesis where he first mentions shalom and everything was working exactly as it was intended.

Exodus 1:8-15

Classic example of God-given dominion gone bad. Joseph had a good relationship with the Pharaoh but as soon as he died, the new Pharaoh did not see Jews in the same light. He used his power to enslave the Israelites for 400 years.

Psalms 10:1-11

The question we all ask. The psalmist is wondering why there is so much oppression in the world. He says they do the evil because they do not believe that God will act.

Sometimes the oppressed feel helpless by the wicked people in power. History repeats itself consistently.

Psalm 10:12-18

The prayer we will pray. God please do not forget us. Here the psalmist asks God to hold the wicked accountable for their actions. This scripture reminds us and teaches us important truths about God's character and injustice. God sees, hears and acts on behalf of the oppressed.

Isaiah 1:17

One day God will restore everything as he intended it to be but until then, God wants his followers to advocate for and pursue justice on this side of heaven.

Old Testament Prophets Discussion

History: The golden age in Israel in the 10th century was dominated by David and Solomon, the great nation builders. Civil war and a divided nation characterized the 9th century that witnessed God sending prophets to help the people draw closer to him. Prophets including Elijah and Elisha combated paganism and sought to return the people to God. The early 8th century witnessed the development of the two class society, growing international unrest and a spiritual crisis which prompted God to send the first four writing prophets—all contemporaries: Micah and Isaiah in Jerusalem and Amos and Hosea to North Israel.

The people of Jerusalem regularly worshipped at the temple, read Scripture, and prayed. Yet at the same time they ignored the needs of widows and orphans, cheated others, tolerated unjust courts, and depended more on international alliances than they did on God.

Amos

- Amos preached in the Northern Kingdom. Some scholars think he was poor.
- His message primarily focused on social justice and God's concern for all people.
- He tells the people that even though they perform the rituals commanded for God, God does not approve of their actions because he cares most about how they treat people and they have been treating them unjustly. (Amos 5:21-24)

Isaiah

The book of Isaiah is about God and how he relates to his people.

What do you understand from this verse?

Isaiah 1:17

Learn to do right; seek justice.

Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless;

Plead the case of the widow.

Let's discuss. The Breakdown.

Learn to Do Right.

- From the very start we are called to learn, aka educate ourselves before we start fighting for the vulnerable.
- God wants us to become accustomed to and practice doing right.
- We often do more harm than good when we are uninformed even while passionate. Uninformed action can be worse than taking no action at all.

Seek Justice.

- Here we see like in Micah 6:8 or Amos 5:24 that our call as followers of Jesus is to seek to do justice.
- Seek in the Hebrew *dīreshû* means to pursue, to search for, as an object to be gained; to regard, or care for it, as the main thing.
- Here in context, God was making it clear that instead of seeking gain, or bribes or public favor, they were to focus on with great fervor “doing justice.”
- Essentially, God is asking his people to amend what has been corrupted.
- God loves justice. We should as well. In everything we do we always have to step up to the side of justice.
- What does that look like? (wait for responses, then add)
- Anyone who has been sexually abused (even in the church, even by a pastor) deserves justice.
- A person living in a domestic violence situation deserves justice.
- The child who has been neglected deserves justice.

Defend the Oppressed.

- Not only are we to seek justice, we are to also defend the oppressed. Who are the oppressed? The ones that have had injustice done to them.
- What does defend mean? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as:
- To drive danger or attack away from
- To speak or write in favor of (an action or person); resist an attack made on (someone or something) to protect from harm or danger
- This is a reminder that there is more to do to help vulnerable people.
- In our broken world, our state of captivity, a world full of systemic and structural violence and injustice, oppression has many faces and forms.
- Christians and churches have a responsibility to come alongside those who are oppressed to not only introduce them to the power of God's Spirit for emotional healing but also to provide practical solutions to the issues they face.

Take Up the Cause of the Fatherless.

- Those who have no father or parents are especially vulnerable.
- During this time, many who were supposed to be guardians of orphans were defrauding and oppressing them without accountability.
- God charged the guardians of orphans to be just in their dealings with them and to not take advantage of them.

Plead the Case of the Widow.

God expressed his desire to contend for her rights, she is also especially vulnerable in a patriarchal system where having a husband meant everything from sustenance to land. God made this a big part of what he expected his followers to comply with.

Isaiah and Amos had a similar message. Every ritual is meaningless to God **if you do not treat other human beings well.** (Isaiah 1:15-17)

Micah 6:8

Share the Parable of the River (have someone read it)

There was once a small village on the edge of a river. The people there were good, and life in the village was good. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. The villager quickly swam out to save the baby from drowning. The next day, the same villager noticed two babies in the river. He called for help, and both babies were rescued from the swift waters. The following day, four babies were caught in the turbulent current. And then eight, then more, and still more!

The villagers organized themselves quickly, setting up watchtowers and training teams of swimmers who could withstand the swift waters and rescue the babies. Rescue squads were soon working 24 hours a day. Each day the number of helpless babies floating down the river increased. The villagers organized themselves efficiently. Rescue squads were now snatching many children each day. While not all the babies could be saved, many numbers were rescued. The villagers felt they were doing well to save as many as they could each day. Indeed, the village priest blessed them in their good work.

One day, however, someone asked, “Where are all these babies coming from? Why don’t we organize a team to head upstream and find out how they end up in the river in the first place?”

Being followers of Jesus who are also church planters requires us to shift our ability to see hurt and the causes of hurt in the world. The Bible makes clear that God calls his people to care for those who are vulnerable and hurting, and to “act justly” as Micah 6:8 teaches. The parable of the river classically illustrates the shift.

It was a good thing that the people in the village responded by rescuing the babies floating down the river—they saw the hurt. But in the end, they also identified the need to figure out where the babies were coming from—what was causing the hurt.

The prophet Micah communicates a message that was repeated many times by the prophets. The message was consistent: in seeking justice, you will care for those who are weak and oppressed.

In verses 6-7, the prophet asks some critical questions.

Ask someone to read it.

“With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?” What will it take to please God?

God’s reply is instructive and shows us that **it has nothing to do with our sacrifice**. “He has showed you, O mortal, what is good.” God has already revealed his goodness to his people through the law and prophets.

The next question, “What does the LORD require of you?” is the question we have to ask ourselves each day and remember God’s answer.

God tells his people to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Not only does this instruction point us to love God, but it also calls us to care for others.

The Gospels and Jesus - A Few Select Chapters

Matthew: The Way of the Church

- Matthew is known for how the book speaks to the church.
- It is the most ecclesiastical in nature. Since we are talking about church plants, it is a good place to look.
- In Matthew, we find:
 - A call to higher ethical behavior (5:20)
 - The Sermon on the Mount (5-7) which calls us to righteousness which is also translated in justice.
 - A call to be the salt and light (5:13-14). We are the salt globally and locally. Salt seasons, preserves, flavors and purifies. We are salt when we reject Eurocentric or Americentric vision of the church. We are light globally and locally. Light illuminates, reveals and dispels darkness. The church is light when it does good deeds—healing and liberating and redemptive deeds.
 - The great commandment (22:36-40) to love God with all of our being but also a command to love our neighbor. This is an essential building block to the work of justice oriented church plants.
 - Matthew reminds us that orthopraxis is as essential as orthodoxy.

Mark: The Way of Jesus

- Mark is important to review as church planters considering justice oriented churches because it reminds us that like Jesus, his followers must learn to deal with opposition to the message of the good news which entails justice for all.
- Mark gives us a peek into the ministry reel of Jesus’ life showing us how he healed lepers; dined with the sinners; ministered to the outcasts and the unclean.
- Mark shows us how Jesus made outsiders the focus of his ministry and how he was always trying to bring people in instead of casting people out. He was a uniter not divider.
- Mark also reminds us that this Christian journey as modeled by Jesus is not about being first but being last (9:35).

Luke-The Way of Justice

- Luke's Gospel is particularly known for its focus on the poor.
- It is where we read Jesus' announcement that he came "to bring good news to the poor" (4:18).
- Luke reminds readers that God has a special love for the marginalized and oppressed especially the economically poor.
- Luke brings to the forefront how Jesus honored women.
- Luke provides guidelines for structuring society in a way that everyone benefits.
- Luke contains good news to the outsiders and surprising news to those who consider themselves insiders. He highlights the return of Jesus to his hometown, where he tells them his plans to share the good news but it will be for everyone to hear because God has no favorites (4.16-30).

James 2:1-13

- James reminds us in this scripture that we are not to have favorites, to be more clear, the sin of partiality.
- It is inconsistent with the model Jesus left us. When you read about what Jesus did, what he taught and how he treated all people, you see that there is no validation for discrimination.
- God is not a respecter of persons (also see Acts 10:34; Eph 5:1; 1 Pet. 1:17). When we behave in this manner we are not respecting Christ.
- We should not dishonor someone, simply because of their socio-economic status
- Discussion: How is this similar to what we see in society today?

Let's Talk About the Jesus' Model

Jesus as Prophet and Disruptor

- Jesus quoted Isaiah a lot. He did so because he would draw on the Old Testament concepts of humans as image bearers of God, the spirit that aspired for justice in human affairs, the importance of keeping covenant for a social order.
- He was prophetic in announcing the Kingdom of God was at hand and that God would fulfill his promise to the people (Mark 1:15; Luke 11:20).
- He challenged the political AND religious system.
- He even referred to himself as prophet (Luke 4:24, Col 4:1).
- In many ways, the New Testament shows us that we can call Jesus the great disruptor.
- He even gave people a clue of that in Matthew 10:34-37. (Ask someone to read)

Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household! If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine.

What does he say he would bring?

- Not peace but a sword
- Relationships tested. Man against father; daughter against mother.
- Your enemy would be in your own household.
- Division and Rejection
- Choice of Being with Him or Against Him

Examples:

- Flipping Tables at the temple with the money changers (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18).
- He was against everything that stood for and compared them to a “den of robbers.”
- He was upset that they were taking advantage of the people by charging exorbitant prices. He judged the priests for accepting the unethical trade.

Jesus was functioning as a disruptive force against the norms of society both socially and spiritually in the New Testament.

Jesus employed the power of disruptive leadership.

Why? Whenever people are faced with less than just conditions, change is needed.

The ongoing crisis of oppressive matters within the structures, governing bodies and communities of Jesus' day required a different kind of leader. Jesus tells the world what leader he will be when he announced what would be the beginning of his ministry in Luke 4:14-19 as the leader of the oppressed and against injustice and cover ups.

Why is looking at the model of Jesus important?

Interpretation is filtered by those doing the interpretation. But the stories of Jesus show what he did. When in doubt about what something means, we should look to what Jesus models. He was the embodiment of the justice of God.

Here is where the famous What Would Jesus Do? (WWJD) comes into play especially in today's divided world.

What Would Jesus Do?

- He would welcome the stranger
- Reject all types of discrimination
- Reject most kinds of violence
- He would love above all else as a ferocious forgiver
- He would tell the truth even if it made anyone in the room uncomfortable
- And yes, he would exhibit anger at unjust policies and behaviors
- He called his followers then and calls us today to imitate him.
- And why not, he is the most perfect model.

Go over these concepts and how they related to a justice minded church planter planning to establish a justice oriented church.

How do you define the following: (Put on Board)

The missio Dei (the mission of God)
imago Dei (image of God)

Scholars still argue over the primary mission of the church. Is it to evangelize and save? Or it is to be a holistic church that impacts all areas of life?

Justice oriented churches believe the latter. Planters work as participants in the missio Dei because it is just as important what a church does as what a church says.

Now What?

Justice is biblical! But now what? How can you see oppression in your midst? Let's discuss the Five Faces of Oppression.

This information is adapted from "Five Faces of Oppression", a chapter in *Oppression, Privilege, and Resistance* by Iris Young.

Five Faces of Oppression

Exploitation

Marginalization

Cultural Imperialism

Powerlessness

Violence

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*

Embodiment and Justice

Resisting Embodied Oppression

“We must begin with ourselves” E. Townes
“...we are in a world we have helped make.”

Working as allies to dismantle oppression

Embodiment and Oppression

Oppression as institutional, systematic
processes imposed often unwittingly
through practices and norms

Impacting various social identity groups

Systematic injustice as consequence for
whole groups of persons who share a
social identity

Exploitation

The transfer of the results of the labor of one social group to the benefit of another

Enacts an inequitable structural relation between social groups

Marginalization

Whole groups of persons:

- expelled from useful participation in society
- Subject to serious deprivation
- Not allowed to work
- Loss of freedom, dignity, self-respect

Powerlessness

In relation to Professionals:

- Lack authority, status, sense of self
- Take orders rather than give them
- Not treated with respect

Cultural Imperialism

The imposition of dominance

- Symbolic control
- Construction of the “other”
- Rendered invisible
- Marked

Violence

Directed toward particular social identity groups as “dangerous or hated other”
Systematic and irrational,
Tolerated if not encouraged

Oppression and Beauty

“Who can tell me what beauty is?” Fanon

The perception of another is
never innocent, ahistorical, or unaffected
by power

Tutoring eyes and hearts to “see”

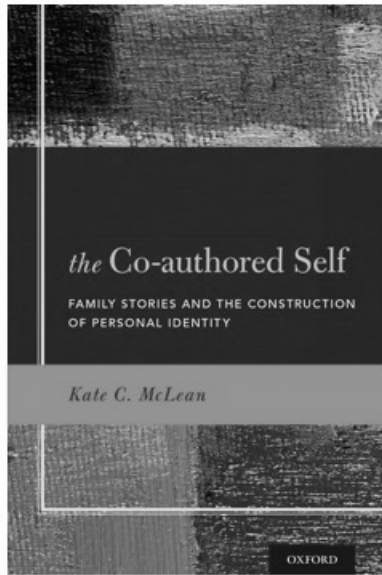
Session 3: Walk with the People – Planters in an Ecosystem (Planting with/Among Hispanics)

**Session 3:
Walk with the People – Planters in an
Ecosystem**



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The purpose of this session is to help you realize you are walking into an already established ecosystem and your work is to tell your story, hear stories and make new stories together. We will discuss the very complex identities of the Hispanic community so that you can determine which kind of Hispanic you are set on reaching, no matter if you are planting a Hispanic church or a multi-cultural church.



▫The stories we tell ourselves and others hold powerful weight in developing and sustaining social ties, in persuading the self and others to action, and in constructing the selves that make up a community. When we are able to weave together seemingly unrelated past events into a story about where we have been, where we are, and where we are going, we create a sense of continuity through time—the same person who was then, is now, will be.

McLean, Kate C.. The Co-authored Self (p. 4). Oxford University Press.

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The Importance of Stories

My story: I always cared about church

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My Story

268 Stagg Street
Brooklyn

Birth to 10 yrs old



PLANT4HARVEST

My Story

403 East 8th St
Manhattan

11 to 13 yrs old



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My Story

The Jefferson's
Experience

"Deluxe" Apt in the
Sky

13 - 25 yrs old
(left when I got
married)



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The Importance of Stories

► **Individuals, Societies and Communities are products of stories**

Everything we know individuals, societies and communities are products of the stories that were told to them.

► **What were the narrative ecologies that informed your identity? That helped form the person you are today?**

Each of our stories are co-authored by the organizations and people that shared a counter narrative for us for what we as Latinos/as could be.

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Why is the role of co-authoring important for a church planter?

1. When your planter starts a church in a community and starts ministering to people, the planter then becomes part of someone's narrative ecology.
2. The church planter now becomes part of helping shape the story of who a person can become and what if any, role they will play in their community.



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“So much of human action—what people actually do in the world—arises from the need to stake out and to sustain an identity. This need, like hunger and thirst, is part of our survival instinct and thus a powerful compeller of human behavior.”

McLean, Kate C.. *The Co-authored Self* (p. 2).

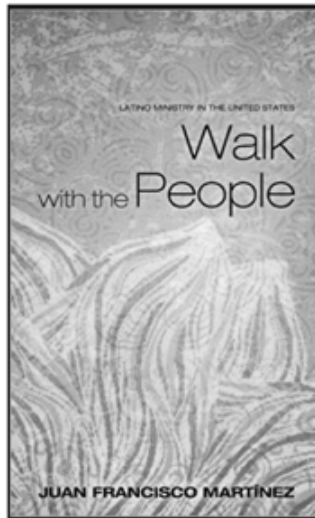
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Master Narrative

seeks to neutralize, discredit or silence counter-narratives, representing the interests of those in power.

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Walk with the People



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The complexity of Latino identity in this country is born in the ambivalence, treatment, and historical events that begin in the 19th century and that developed particularly in the states of the Southwest. . . My perspective is that anyone who wants to minister in the Latino community needs to know their history to understand their current reality. —*Eduardo Font*

Pastor of Iglesia Esperanza Viva, Orange, CA

We know the needs of the Latino community, not only because I am Hispanic, the same as them, but because I was also undocumented for many years, the same as them. The needs of our people are not only spiritual, but also familial, economic, physical, educational and, of course, also related to migratory status. —*René Molina*

Pastor, Iglesias de Restauración, ELIM, Los Angeles, CA

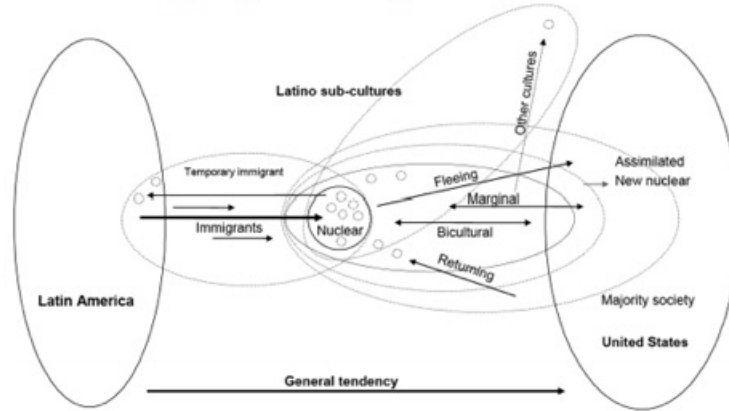
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What Latinos Are Dealing With

- Growing numbers of broken families
- Machismo and sexism manifested in violence against women or in limited opportunities for women
- Overcrowding suffered by many Latinos in urban areas
- Latino young people that are not finishing high school
- Growing numbers of Latinos under the poverty line
- The level of suicide among Latina adolescents
- The number of Latina single mothers
- The percentage of undocumented people in the community
- The racisms within the Latino community, particularly toward the indigenous and toward those of African descent

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Who will the planter be dealing with?
Latino Sub-Cultures - We Are NOT all the same.
Same Language Perhaps. Big differences.



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Walk with the People
How It's Been Done

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Models of Ministry in Latino Community By Majority Culture Org/Churches

Usually
Starts
Here

Ministries for the community

Religious Services

Departments

Sister Congregations

Partnerships

Sister churches

Independent or Interdependent

Growing autonomy and responsibility

Leadership – Vision – Program – Finances

We need
more
here

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Primitive Christian Church



Rev. Dr. Marc
Rivera, Senior
Pastor



Key training and planting church



Pastor Juan L. Lugo

Juan 3:16




Known as a Citadel in the city

Rev. Dr. Ricardo Tañon pastored for 34 years, retired on 6/28/77 when the church was the largest Hispanic church in the U.S.A.



Rev. Jerry Kaufman, English Pastor in Juan 3:16 eventually planted Love Gospel Assembly in the Bronx



Walk with the People
**Plant a church that advocates
with and for the people**

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Session 4: Faith-rooted Organizing & Advocacy




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The purpose of this session is to help you envision planting a just church that practices prophetic advocacy. Terms will be explored and Rev. Dr. Raymond Rivera's "confront and engage" model of advocacy will be introduced.




Orlando Costas, a Puerto Rican pastor, missionary to Latin America, community organizer, internationally known missiologist, contextual theologian, and theological educator said...

The Hispanic church, as a minority church, serves the cause of Social reconciliation, and validates thereby its personal reconciliation with God, by working for structures that Make it socially and politically difficult for the strong to oppress the weak, for the majority to exploit the minority...the minority church expresses its love toward its majority counterpart by challenging it to repentance and restitution and inviting it to join forces in the struggle for a new moral order.



The hard truth is that setting captives free “in the hood” usually involves social transformation on the streets not just soul transformation in the church

Advocacy is *practice-based* pastoral leadership.



“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; show him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Advocacy adds... Make room on the bank of the river for the person to fish, and finally, stop the factory upstream from dumping chemicals that are killing the fish.

Definition of Evangelical Transformational Advocacy

Intentional acts of witness by the body of Christ that hold people and institutions accountable for creating, implementing, and sustaining just and good policies and practices geared toward the flourishing of society. It challenges injustice and obstacles to human flourishing at whatever level it is practiced by humbly engaging with people who can address the wrong, trusting God’s Spirit to change all those involved as well as the institutions themselves.

Rev. Rivera's Captivity Advocacy Model

As the church, we are not all called to advocate in the same way or in the same way all the time. Rev. Rivera suggests your relationship with your community and God's Spirit will direct you in which way to advocate. The four ways are:

ENGAGE your community.
CONFRONT your community.
ENGAGE the powers.
CONFRONT the powers.

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ENGAGE your community

When you engage your community, you will establish relationships with people within the covenant community and serve as an instrument of transformation within the church and para-church institutions.

CONFRONT your community

Like John the Baptist, God may be calling you to confront your community for its spiritual and social renewal. During Roman captivity John was called to confront in both the religious and political arenas.

When you confront your community you accomplish four things:

1. You can ensure that the community acts on its godly mandate.
2. You can oppose the existing status quo.
3. You can move institutions to support the community.
4. You can involve God in peace and justice efforts.

Ultimately, your efforts will be instrumental in realizing the shalom of society.

ENGAGE the powers

Don't be afraid to work with the power structure in your community even the ones that are non-Christians. Historically, the church in some communities have been more successful than others in this area because they learned to engage both on an individual and collective level.

Engaging DOES NOT MEAN assimilating or relinquishing your prophetic role. *Nehemiah was a great example of engaging the powers for his community.*

CONFRONT the powers

The powers in our community always seek obedience and honor, even while failing to meet the needs of their citizens. The book of Daniel gives us a great look at how to confront the powers.

Throughout history, God's people have confronted the powers in response to the abuses perpetrated by the powers and their systems and structures.

BECAUSE of confrontation, God's people have been at the vanguard of major Kingdom-minded social movements. THEY have influenced the POWERS to RESPOND to the needs of the people and communities affected by the lack of pro-justice policies.

Organizations Doing the Work of Justice & Advocacy

Sojourners: Christians for Justice and Peace

Mission is to articulate the biblical call to social justice, inspiring hope and building a movement to transform individuals, communities, the church, and the world.

<http://www.sojourners.com/>

Freedom Road

Mission is to consult, coach, train and design experiences that help groups in multiple sectors do justice in just ways.

www.freedomroad.us

Community Renewal Society

Mission: To “inform and bring people of faith and congregations together...to intentionally and decisively transform society toward greater social justice at the intersection of racism and poverty.” They affect this refinement of perspective and policy through engagement within their communities, holding policymakers accountable, and helping the public understand that their income is not a restriction on their right to be fully participating members of society.

<https://www.communityrenewalsociety.org/>

The Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

WATER is an education center “committed to theological, ethical, and ritual development by and for women.” Their mission is “to use feminist religious values to create social change.” Their work of the past thirty years has included ensuring women’s right to exercise their humanity and spirituality. WATER has implemented a variety of programs, such as WATERtalks, which is a monthly free and open to the public presentation featuring female scholars and religious leaders who create a dialogue with the audience through sharing their experiences in a specific field as a woman. WATER also hosts various collaborations, such as Women Crossing Worlds (WCW), which is an engagement with women from Spain to Mexico through reciprocal visits and teachings intended on strengthening their study of effective enactments of theology.

<https://waterwomensalliance.org>

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