

3.7 Training for today's key challenges for gospel mission across the globe (Claudio Quinteros BTN-ITC 2018)

INTRODUCTION

The Argentinean Experience

As it was stated four years ago on the Third ITC, the traditional paradigm of missionaries coming from Western Nations to the rest of the world, has being replaced by a vibrant missionary task-force coming from a “anywhere to anywhere” reality.¹

In recent years, we are witnessing the power of God’s work amidst Brethren assemblies in Argentina. There is a systematic growth and a growing awareness of missions in many churches. In addition, there are many committed young people considering becoming involved as full-time workers in both, local and cross-cultural mission work.

As a result, some churches are learning and evaluating their role in this stage of the missionary awakening that we are experiencing.

Since the last five years or so, FEMA (Argentinean Evangelical Missionary Fund), has been taken an active role in addressing the needs and consultations of church elders who often feel overwhelmed due the lack of training and tools for missionary work.

Among others, I will list some of the steps that FEMA has taken to help local churches and missionary candidates:

- Creation of a Cross-cultural Mission Department
- Translation, edition, and printing of the book "Global Missionary Strategy"
- Provide guidance, support and pre-field training to missionary candidates
- Organization of missionary conferences, retreats, and short-term service trips worldwide
- Strengthen fraternal ties with other support funds such as Echoes of Service, Christian Missions in Many Lands, Missionary Service Committee, GLO Europe, Redes de Mision Peru

Beside these commendable efforts, FEMA realized that there was an urgent need for establishing a mission training program in order to prepare those who were being called by the Lord to serve as missionaries.

In 2014, also during the Third ITC, we had anticipated that we were praying and seeking God’s guidance to start a missionary training program for our Brethren assemblies.²

Today, we can share with that the Lord has been faithful with us and He guided us to start what we’ve called CeCaBíM, the first Biblical and Missionary Training Center in Argentina.

CECABÍM is a ministry identified with the Brethren Assemblies. Its purpose is to contribute to the spiritual development, training and equipment of each believer with the missionary call for the Christian service.

¹ Third International Training Consultation, Emmaus Bible College, Consultation Papers 2014, *Workshop 4.3 Training for cross-cultural mission in the 21st Century, Facilitator: Claudio Quinteros*, Dubuque, May 27-31, 2014.

² Ibid.

This ministry offers to the church, a program based on biblical foundations with a theoretical-practical system of learning. Along with an adequate Bible training, a cross-cultural missionary training is also offered for equipping those students that God is calling to serve in different parts around the globe.

Although we are aware that most of missionary learning actually happens on the field, training programs and resources should be made available to support churches with brothers and sisters interested to serve as missionaries.

Why cross-cultural missionary training is necessary?

People in different places think and see the world differently than we do. Missionaries are going to another culture, another language, another people group. They are human beings, real people with intelligence, history, feelings, thoughts, customs, and minds; and like the uneducated surgeon, our good intentions alone will not be able to enter into their world to help them.

We need training to understand how to interact with them in even the smallest of ways. What is the proper way to greet these people who are so different from us, and yet created in God's image, just like us? How do we buy bread in the store or marketplace from these people who function in ways we've never seen before? Why do they do the things they do, which seem so strange to us, and yet are so normal to them? How do we even begin to have conversations with these people, whom the Lord loves?

We need to know how to communicate truth in the way they will understand. We will need to be able to skillfully evaluate and comprehend someone else's worldview in order to connect with them.

TRENDS AND NEEDS IN MISSIONS TRAINING

Candidate characteristics

Mission candidates have varied backgrounds, ages, capacities, learning styles, therefore, require different amounts and types of preparation.

Candidates seem to have less biblical and theological knowledge and understanding today than in past years. Many of them lack spiritual disciplines.

Candidates are all over the place in terms of maturity, but in general many of them exhibit a more limited ability to know how to order the private world, whether physically or emotionally.

Training Aspects

Learners seek to access training freely, anytime and anywhere. They desire training paced over shorter blocks of time.

There also seems to be a significant increase in training being done by distance. The missionary program may offer online and virtual learning environments.

Learning in community / cohorts is highly valued by this generation of workers.

Mentoring the first year or transitional year missionaries (online).

Learning by practice. Some basic teaching followed by role play, case studies, or interactions with people.

Cross-cultural Needs

The importance of language acquisition skills is something that must be strengthened. The need expressed to me with the most regularity is the need for help learning English.

Security issues (specially in closed countries) are a growing concern. There is a need for having professionals teaching about this issue.

Candidates with short term cross-cultural experiences may have unrealistic expectations about long term service.

There is a great need for counseling missionaries pre- and on the field, both singles and families who have been under significant pressure.

Candidates should be prepared to work under national leadership, or cross-cultural teams that already exist in the countries of service.

Ministry Topics and Needs

Muslim/immigrant ministry understanding and methodology.

Orality training, or other ministry specific training.

Help or training in Islam or contextualization.

Training in projects management.

Missionary Care

Team building exercises where there is conflict to solve and perhaps having to deal with poor leadership and unrealistic demands.

Conflict resolution. Self-care and member care.

Continued spiritual formation and personal development (especially in the midst of stress).

There needs to be more focusing on learning the part that 'suffering' and 'pain' actually being a large part of life and ministry service.

Debriefing for missionaries as well as their children.

Return/re-entry culture shock issues and how to handle such stresses.

It is proved statistically that there is a large percentage of missionaries' children who do not continue in ministry. Many of them have wounds or anger because of their parents' service.