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Bridging the Latino--Anglo gap: A transition towards a cross-cultural church at First Baptist Church, Robbins, North Carolina

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BRIDGING THE LATINO–ANGLO GAP: A TRANSITION TOWARDS A
CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
ROBBINS, NORTH CAROLINA

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY:

ERNESTO ROBLEDO

AUGUST 4, 2014

APPROVAL FORM

BRIDGING THE LATINO-ANGLO GAP: A TRANSITION TOWARDS
A CROSS-CULTURAL CHURCH AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
ROBBINS, NORTH CAROLINA
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ABSTRACT

In its 2,000 years of existence, the church has remained mostly segregated in regards to the inclusion of other cultures within one setting. Christians from various traditions have spent centuries trying to be more like Jesus as they worshiped in many different settings. Even though the church has been active for so long, the reality is that she has been predominantly white. Through an intentional pastoral project, twenty-four individuals participated in a four-week bilingual Bible study and a community-wide missionary event. These purposeful interactions proved that the church can change her traditional ministry pattern by engaging members of the Latino and Anglo congregation in a cross-cultural experience at First Baptist Church of Robbins, NC.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Making transitions has not always been an easy thing for people to experience. Transition may be easier in a professional context when changing from one job to another or perhaps may be smoother when an individual changes his/her school or residence. However, when a group of people go through a transition within a church setting, it is a completely different situation. One reason for this is due to the fact that whoever is leading the process must mobilize a diverse group of people. This was the case when I implemented various biblical principles in the Latino congregation along with the Anglo Baptist church that helped them embrace the diversity of both congregations as they engaged in an ongoing transition towards a cross-cultural church. As part of the process, I served as the liaison who provided the necessary training in the area of cultural awareness for the two groups.

A portion of my project was to teach a four-week bilingual Bible study based on John 4:1-26 (see Appendix C). This passage, along with other Scripture passages, reinforced the purpose of my project and served as the foundation for the implementation of my project, (for example, Matthew 28:18-20, Colossians 3:10-12, Ephesians 2:12-20, Acts 2:1-11, and Acts 11:19-26). During the bilingual Bible study I focused on four important factors related to the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at Jacob's well regarding her culture, fears, tradition, and misconceptions. By doing so, I also incorporated some personal applications in a way that encouraged both groups to step out of their comfort zones and enhance their understanding of God's vision for the church as

a whole. I was confident that the Spirit of the Lord would touch the lives of the participants and continue to move them forward in their transition.

As part of the implementation of the project, I led a group of parishioners from my congregation and from the Anglo church to participate in a community-wide event where there were cross-cultural experiences among different ethnic groups¹. This event took place on November 9, 2013, when two cultures, Anglos and Latinos, came together on a Saturday in northern Moore County for a common mission that was a great impact for needy families and the community as well. Followers of Jesus Christ formed work teams who prayed together, ate together, and completed projects such as landscaping, minor home repairs, and general clean-up. Part of my responsibility was to evaluate and assess the overall experience between the various cultural groups, mainly the experimental group which was the focus of my project. By doing so, I looked at various aspects of how well the groups interacted with each other, if they felt comfortable working with people from other cultures, whether or not they learned from each other, and if they were willing to interact with people from a different ethnic background in a new setting. In the end, I had a clearer perspective as to what the results were of the missionary event among the various cultural groups.

Ministry Setting

Robbins is a rural town located in Moore County, North Carolina. It is the hometown of the late Charles E. Brady, NASA astronaut of the STS-78 space shuttle mission in 1996. Robbins is also the hometown of former North Carolina senator and

¹ See Chapter Two

2004 Democratic vice-presidential candidate John Edwards. Robbins' name has changed ten times over the years. It started as Cagle's Goldmine community in the early eighteenth century and was settled by the descendants of Leonard "Lion-heart" Cagle who emigrated there via Philadelphia from the Palatine Valley of Germany at age 70. His son Henry is believed to be the one that settled between the creeks that border the city to the east and owned the land where the gold mine was located. Kennedy Gun Works (Mechanics Hill) was located in Robbins during the War of 1812 and Mexican War (1846-1848). Robbins is also home to the Standard Mineral Company, a mine on the outskirts of town that ships Pyro phyllite all over the world.²

Through the years, Robbins has experienced a change in regards to ethnicity. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2011 the percentages of the diversity of races were as follow: Anglo 82%, Afro-American 13.6%, American Indian and Alaska Native 0.9%, Asian 1.0%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander 0.2%, and Latino population 6.1%.³ As a result, Robbins and Moore County have become a rather diverse community. There has been a drastic demographic change caused by the influx of Latinos who have traveled from their native countries to North Carolina hoping to achieve the American dream. Like any other culture, they have contributed to the community of Robbins with their religious beliefs, fiestas (parties), and sports like soccer and baseball. Throughout all of this, coming to the United States has been challenging for them.

One of the biggest obstacles that Latinos have to overcome is the language barrier. Upon arrival, not knowing English, it is very difficult for them to communicate

² Wikipedia Article, <http://www.ask.com/wiki/Robbins>, North Carolina, (accessed March 28, 2013).

³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Moore County Quick Facts," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37125.html>, (accessed March 28, 2013).

for basic necessities such as buying groceries, obtaining a driver's license, eating out at a fast food restaurant, and even attempting to purchase property. The positive effect of all of this is that once the parents enroll their children in school, the children learn the language faster than their parents and are able to become interpreters in these different scenarios. These children play a pivotal role in the church when attempting to navigate between the two cultures. Soong-Chan Rah elaborates on the concept of a "Multicultural Worldview" as an aspect of cross-cultural churches. He writes, "The second-generation ethnic church, however, is still in the process of forming a sharply defined identity. The second generation is usually defined as the children of immigrants who were either born in the United States or raised and educated in the United States."⁴ Rah's statement is very well evidenced in my own ministry setting as the congregation consists of a group of first-generation Latinos who are not fluent in English.

The second generation, on the other hand, has in fact become both bilingual and bicultural. Rah adds, "Second-generation Latinos are able to live and work in majority culture...Second-generation Latinos are also able to move among their parents' generation (the immigrant generation)...However, they are not fully comfortable in the first-generation culture."⁵ In my experience, I have learned that second generation Latinos are not comfortable in first generation culture because they have been raised in a more Americanized culture and are part of a bicultural generation. The immigrant generation on the other hand, prefers to preserve their cultural traditions such as speaking Spanish, pursuing in their Catholic faith, and wanting to return to their country. In regards to religion, despite bringing a strong Catholic background with them, some

⁴ Soong Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, an Imprint of Intervarsity Press, 2009), 181.

⁵ Rah, 182-83.

immigrants do cut ties with their traditional beliefs and convert to Christianity. It is important to note that both first and second generation Latinos make up the congregation of the Latino mission and served as vital components to the cross-cultural vision that I set out to accomplish within our church.

Planting a church has been a long journey for those who envisioned starting a church in Robbins in its early days. As I read a historical booklet from First Baptist Church of Robbins, I learned that it was founded on September 26, 1935 by the evangelist G. W. Swinney during one of his tent revivals while serving as pastor of Glen Hope Church in Burlington, North Carolina. According to the historical accounts, the first official gathering of the church members was held in a tent meeting offered by Swinney.

He was largely responsible for giving moral support to encourage the small number of people to pursue finding a suitable place for worship and additions to their body of members. October 20, 1935 was an important date as the name First Baptist Church of Hemp, North Carolina was accepted. By 1943 Hemp became Robbins, thus changing the church name to First Baptist Church of Robbins.⁶

At the present time, First Baptist Church of Robbins has made significant progress compared to when it was founded. According to the current secretary of the church, there is a total membership of 426 and an average attendance of 78 in Sunday school.

In reference to starting and supporting a Latino mission, the Anglo church has struggled since the 1990s. Under the leadership of Ernest Ferrel, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, the Sandhills Baptist Association, and First Baptist Church of Robbins made joint efforts to get the work started but were unsuccessful for

⁶ *Our Fifty Years Booklet 1935-1985*, First Baptist Church, Robbins, North Carolina (CU Printing Service, Robbins, North Carolina), 5, 9.

various reasons. During the planning stages, there was a lack of collaboration to support a Latino mission from Anglo churches within the association. Not a single church was willing to provide their facilities to accommodate a Spanish speaking congregation. Another factor that hindered the work was limited financial assistance from the association. The Executive Council of the association was not willing to fund a salary or materials needed for the church plant. Yet another obstacle was that neither the Senior Pastor nor the leadership of the association had someone to lead the new work. By 2004, one of the instrumental people who contributed to the new church plant was John D. Jones, the Language Ministry Consultant for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Jones suggested to the Director of Missions at Sandhills Baptist Association that Florentino Yáñez serve as pastor for the Latino congregation at First Baptist Church of Robbins. After various meetings and prayerful consideration, Yáñez was invited by the Latino Taskforce Committee of First Baptist Church of Robbins to be the church planter for the Robbins community. In June of that year, the Latino mission held its first worship service on Easter Sunday in the fellowship hall of the sponsoring church. According to Yáñez, there were internal problems causing difficulties, and he did not have the full support of the Latino Taskforce. The Senior Pastor at that time did not have a vision for the new church plant, nor did he fully commit to the new work. There was an overall lack of communication between Yáñez and that Senior Pastor. While Yáñez was enthusiastic about reaching out to the Latino community, his limited English proficiency became a barrier between them. In an attempt to address this issue the Latino Taskforce appointed a liaison to facilitate the dialogues between the groups. However, Yáñez and

the liaison were not able to establish a working relationship. Having an intermediary between the groups resulted in essential information not being properly communicated, which affected the decision-making process. This additional step eventually became cumbersome and discouraging for Yáñez's efforts. Another internal complication was that many members of the Anglo church had strong discriminatory resentments toward Latinos. These members were not able to look past their personal biases, even within a church setting. From an administrative stand point, even though Yáñez had the full support of the Baptist State Convention and the Sandhills Baptist Association, the deacons did not collectively endorse the Latino mission.

These early attempts to reach the Latino community were also hindered by a two-year agreement between First Baptist Church of Robbins, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, the Sandhills Baptist Association, and Florentino Yáñez. At the end of the agreement, Yáñez ended his work, and there was not a Latino church planter for the next two years.⁷ The next attempt to continue the Latino outreach did not occur until June 15, 2008 when Kenneth McNeill invited me to serve as the bi-vocational pastor of the Latino mission. I began reaching out to the community and letting people know that they were welcomed to study the Bible and worship in Spanish at the Latino mission.

After almost six years as the pastor of the Latino Mission, my wife Irma and I have had our share of obstacles. For example, one of the elderly members of the church did not want the Latinos to congregate in the same facility. She told the Senior Pastor, "I am willing to donate \$50,000 so you can find a separate building for the Latinos." This particular lady, along with one of her friends, could not stand being in the same location as the Latinos, especially when the Senior Pastor combined the congregations for a time

⁷ Florentino Yáñez, Interview by author, Candor, North Carolina, April 18, 2013.

of fellowship. The elderly ladies did not want to acknowledge my wife and me, and they made it a point to ignore us every time we came close to each other. Despite this initial rejection, the Lord has been at work and provided avenues for progress. Kenneth McNeill, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Robbins has been instrumental to the growth of the Latino mission. He has been totally supportive of the ministry since he arrived at the church and has always had a passion for the lost, especially for the Latino community of Robbins.

Ministry Question

Due to the history of the Latino outreach efforts as First Baptist Church of Robbins, I decided to directly address the cultural divide between the Anglo and Latino congregations as the focus of my project. In doing so, I taught a four-week bilingual Bible study to twelve Anglos and twelve Latinos based on John 4:1-26. Through this series, I addressed four cross-cultural issues: the Samaritan Woman's culture, her fears, tradition, and misconceptions regarding her encounter with Jesus at Jacob's well. A major portion of my project was to engage all of the participants in a community-wide, cross-cultural missionary event.⁸ The purpose of the activity was to assign the participants into culturally mixed groups to work together to rake leaves, trim tree branches, and clean gutters in the homes of five families in the community of Robbins.

During the five years in this particular ministry setting, I have always wondered if both congregations would ever be able to embrace each other by learning and respecting each other's ethnicity in spite of their cultural differences. Interestingly enough, the

⁸ See Chapter Two

Senior Pastor Kenneth McNeill and I shared the same vision for guiding both congregations toward gradual interactions with the other through fellowship, worship, and other joint events. The purpose of these interactions would be to unite them in such a way that would be more effective witnesses in a community that desperately needs to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the question that set the foundation for this ministry project was as follows: “How can both groups embrace diversity by showing mutual respect and, at the same time, celebrate the unity in Christ in a way that will continue to grow in future generations?”

During my years of ministry in Robbins, I have seen the need for both congregations to minimize language and cultural barriers and serve as a model for the community. The separation that had existed within our church for so long impacted our ability to minister effectively to the lost. Paul wrote to the Ephesians as he addressed a similar situation when he said,

Therefore remember, formerly that you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers for the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:11-13).⁹

The issue that Paul addressed to the church of Ephesus is one that is still evident today. Similar to the Jewish belief of superiority towards non-Jews, many Latinos find themselves marginalized just as the Gentiles were. J. Kameron Carter talks about this topic in his book *Race: A Theological Account* as he notes, “This is the modern problem of imagining the human being in racial terms, and within these terms positioning

⁹ Scriptures taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, Copyright© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, by The Lockman Foundation, Used by permission.

whiteness as supreme. As a central ideological component in constructing the modern world as we have to come to know it, the racial imagination arose inside of, nurtured itself on, and even camouflaged itself within the discourse of theology.”¹⁰ After reading Carter’s statement, I asked myself: where did the idea of being totally segregated come from? Was it rooted in tradition? Or white superiority? I am aware that by asking these questions, many more will arise in reference to race. At the same time, I believe that the church needs to address and answer these and many more questions regarding how and why ethnic groups have grown further apart when they worship. I agree with J. Daniel Hays’ comment when he notes, “Black scholars identify the racial division in the Church as one of the most central problems for contemporary Christianity, while many white scholars are saying, ‘What problem?’”¹¹ Acknowledging the separation of ethnicities within the church setting is the initial phase towards racial reconciliation.

The importance of being an all-encompassing church of Jesus Christ in the world has always been a critical objective in proclaiming the gospel. Jesus both suffered and died so that his church would be a reflection of those who were bought when he shed his precious blood to provide the way to salvation for every person who believed in him. This holistic inclusiveness serves as the prime example for which the Senior Pastor and I have established a clear vision for both congregations

¹⁰ J. Kameron Carter. *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 12.

¹¹ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downer Grove: Illinois, Apollos Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 17.

CHAPTER 2

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The ten-year-old Latino mission in Robbins has gone through different struggles throughout its existence. The biggest one took place two years ago when a group of 22 parishioners randomly pulled out of the church. This group stated that they did not feel welcome or comfortable worshipping in an Anglo facility. Rather than experience the dissension at church, they preferred to meet in the comfort of their own homes. Despite this group's departure, there has been significant growth along the way. They preferred to meet in the comfort of their own homes rather than experience the dissension at church. In spite of that, there has been significant growth along the way. Since my arrival in 2008, the Senior Pastor and I have promoted spiritual growth by leading both congregations through various activities with the purpose of embracing diversity and deepening the bond as one body of Christ. We have made numerous attempts to encourage purposeful interactions among the previously divided parishioners. Our first initiative was to focus our efforts on establishing a culturally inclusive Vacation Bible School program. In previous years, Latino participation was almost non-existent due to a lack of visionary leadership. For the first time in church history, the Senior Pastor and I collaborated on family night to share the Plan of Salvation in both languages. We felt that this was the best way to initiate the integration process. This is something that we have continuously tried to promote in the community for the last five years.

Another attempt we have implemented has been to participate in joint baptismal services. During these services both congregations come together after Sunday school for the first part of the worship service. After a short prelude and a prayer, the Senior

Pastor proceeds with baptizing the candidates from his congregation. Once he has finished, I then baptize the Latino candidates. Once this part of the service is over, the Latino members then return to the fellowship hall. The Senior Pastor and I feel that this brief, yet intentional interaction has served as a foundation for us to build on. In addition to this, we have tried to implement combined food and fellowship activities through breakfasts on months with a fifth Sunday. Even though we have been encouraging participation over the last four years, we have not had the anticipated results. One of the main reasons for this is that many of the Latino members still do not feel comfortable being in the same setting as the Anglos. After being culturally separated in every aspect of their lives, this has proven to be an uncomfortable challenge. As a result, Latino attendance has been extremely low and inconsistent. This, coupled with Anglo uneasiness, has not made these events very well received among the groups. In an effort to respect people's comfort levels, the Senior Pastor encouraged me to contribute a bilingual article to the church's monthly newsletter. He felt that this would allow people to gradually connect with the other culture. This publication has reached beyond the members of the local church and is disseminated to others throughout the Sandhills Baptist Association. Through this newsletter, the Senior Pastor and I have attempted to present spiritually driven information embedded with cultural updates for people to read in the comfort of their own homes. The Senior Pastor has also asked me to participate in the monthly business meetings with the senior leadership of the church. This is an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with church leaders, which has also validated the Latino mission for many of them. All of these efforts combined have served as the impetus behind my project.

Despite the many internal and external obstacles, the Latino mission consists of 22 members and an average attendance of 45 during the worship service. While the services have been held in Spanish, some English-speaking people have occasionally attended our services. Some of these Anglo visitors have been friends, family, and significant others of the Latino congregants. As the pastor of the church, I have typically shared a brief summary of the sermon in English in order for them to understand the message. The format of my bilingual sharing of the gospel reflects Jesus' inclusiveness for all people. The unity of both groups is based on John's account of Jesus' prayer as He said,

I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me (John 17:20-23).

The kind of unity that Jesus prayed to the Father is the same needed in my ministry setting at First Baptist Church of Robbins. During his earthly ministry, Jesus never made a distinction between ethnicities. On the contrary, he lived, taught, and modeled harmony amongst every person of every race.

George Yancey alludes to the topic of race in his book, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches*, and writes,

Understanding the effects of this historical racism is important for us to be able to understand some of the obstacles that hinder the growth of multiracial churches. It is not an accident that racial alienation is part of our society. This alienation is the natural result of our history of racial abuse.¹²

¹² George Yancey, *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2003), 21.

Yancey makes a strong point about the obstacles that have hindered the development of congregations with mixed ethnicities. His observation highlights the juxtaposition of Jesus' vision in his prayer and the reality our churches face today. Since multiethnic churches are a minority in North Carolina, Christianity has become a racially segregated institution which goes against Jesus' prayer for his church. The effects of this historical racism have been deeply rooted in the community of Robbins. While addressing Jesus' unity with the Father and Yancey's reflection about racism in the church, I attempted to close the language and racial gap between the Anglo and Latino congregations through the implementation of my project. I believe that pastors must teach the church about the inclusiveness of God to avoid becoming what Emerson and Smith call a racialized society, "a society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships."¹³

The world has come to the United States, which is evidenced in the local supermarket, gas station, or the nearest school in our neighborhood. Many of the ethnic groups that have made their homes in America have had the opportunity of hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a recent telephone interview, Ken Tan, Team Leader of the Multicultural Ministries for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, stated that "there are more than 200 languages spoken in North Carolina, and about 30-35 language groups are part of the ministries of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina."¹⁴ Tan also mentioned that there are at least three problems that Anglo churches have which keep them from opening their doors to other ethnic groups: "1) not seeing the need to

¹³ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and The Problem of Race in America* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

¹⁴ Ken Tan, Team Leader..., of the Multicultural Ministries of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, interviewed by author, Candor, North Carolina, March 8th, 2013.

reach ethnic groups, 2) slavery relationships in the history of the country, and 3) not having a biblical understanding of inclusiveness in the gospel.”¹⁵ All three of these issues have been evident throughout the Latino mission’s existence at First Baptist of Robbins. Even though the demographics in our communities are changing, people’s traditional views have not.

Churches across North Carolina have been very slow to reflect the changing cultural make-up of our state. Guillermo Soriano, Multicultural Evangelism Consultant for the Evangelism and Church Growth Team for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, stated that “There are 4,300 churches in North Carolina and out of those there are 200 languages spoken other than English.”¹⁶ Both Mr. Tan and Mr. Soriano confirm that there is a glaring need for stronger outreach and incorporation of the diverse groups forming part of our own communities. When asked about the possibility of having cross-cultural churches in the future, Mr. Soriano added, “It is possible if there could be cooperation between both groups, having a partnership network with God to reach the community, and the context defined the model of the church.”¹⁷ This serves to make the case that significant ground work must be done in order for the traditional church model and practice to move towards this particular goal.

Despite all the struggles mentioned before, I believe there can be more cross-cultural churches in the future based on the fact that there are churches already willing to open up to other ethnic groups in order to minister together. During a personal interview

¹⁵ Ken Tan, Team Leader..., of the Multicultural Ministries of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, interview by author, Candor, North Carolina, March 8th, 2013.

¹⁶ Guillermo Soriano..., Multicultural Evangelism Consultant for the Evangelism and Church Growth Team of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, interview by author, Candor, North Carolina, February 7, 2013.

¹⁷ Guillermo Soriano..., Multicultural Evangelism Consultant for the Evangelism and Church Growth Team of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, interview by author, Candor, North Carolina, February 7, 2013.

with Larry Phillips, Senior Consultant from the Multicultural Team for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Phillips stated that there were several gaps between Anglo churches and Latino congregations such as “1) a lack of understanding from both groups: Anglo churches did not understand nor had appreciation for the Latino worldview, 2) no clarity in the role of expectations from both groups, 3) reluctance of Anglos to be influenced by the Latino community, and 4) a tendency for Latinos to remain dependent and not assuming necessary leadership roles.”¹⁸ These factors help understand the hesitancy from both groups to embrace each other. The issues Phillips addresses were strongly evident in the early years of the Latino mission in Robbins.

On a positive note, Phillips stated that there were factors that had begun to bring both groups closer together. He explained that,

there were five important factors: 1) a shift from sharing facilities to an awareness of doing life together, 2) deepening of trust by both Anglos and Latinos, 3) a deep desire to have strong interpersonal relationships with someone of another race, 4) biblical understanding that we are all equal in Christ, and 5) cooperating in mutual ministry opportunities that foster deep personal friendships.¹⁹

There is a close connection between these factors and what I attempted to implement in my ministry setting. These elements helped guide me in establishing the direction of my project. Three of the main objectives of my project consisted of minimizing the language and cultural barriers, both congregations embracing diversity despite their cultural differences, and deepening the bond between the Senior Pastor, leadership of the Anglo church, and the Latino mission. Phillips concluded by saying, “my vision for the future is a church that engages all ethnicities. Churches have to

¹⁸ Larry Phillips, Interview by author, Asheboro, North Carolina, February 22, 2013.

¹⁹ Larry Phillips, Interview by author, Asheboro, North Carolina, February 22, 2013.

consider the *Ethnographic chore*, ”²⁰ which is the study and systematic recording of human cultures. In comparison with Phillips’ statement, my vision is somewhat similar because the purpose of the implementation of my project was to encourage Anglos and Latinos to experience cross-cultural embracement toward each other. My focus was to implement some foundational principles that would engage the two congregations into a closer relationship as they serve the same God.

Literature Review

During the research for my project I learned that there were a great deal of authors and books related to multiracial congregations. I came across Mark Deymaz, who was experienced in the intentional integration of different ethnicities in the local church, and shares a good biblical foundation that supports his vision. In the introduction of *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*, he writes, “If the kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the church?”²¹ His expertise enhanced my knowledge in my project and gave me a broader picture of what other ministers were doing around the country in reference to multiracial churches. Deymaz is a pastor who went through the process of implementing the needed steps to gradually become a multiethnic church. His model gives practical and specific details as to why and how he envisioned an inclusive congregation, accepted the challenge, and witnessed the results of his work

Curtiss Paul, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim were also inspirational to my project. They too, had the vision of seeing a variety of ethnicities

²⁰ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A. (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2001), 398.

²¹ Mark DeyMaz Harry Li, *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 19.

worship in one setting. According to them, “Beginning in the 1940s, the twentieth century became a time for experimentation with multiracial congregations and racial reconciliation.”²² Their contribution was amazingly outstanding for the fact that they lived in the years when racial discrimination was a more serious issue than it is in the present. These pioneers were truly committed to their vision, and with God’s divine intervention, they overcame racial and cultural barriers. Their hard work proved to be efficient in regards to the integration of various ethnicities in the local church. The efforts from these authors proved that the church can indeed be intentionally inclusive despite the opposition that they encountered from the predominant and traditional church through centuries.

Duane Elmer’s book on *Cross-Cultural Conflict Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* is another good resource which contains practical insights that are relevant to my project. For example, in the section Conflict, Unity and the Gospel he states, “The Western world does not place a high premium on unity. Wherever individualism reigns supreme, community is easily sacrificed for personal preference.”²³ In connection with Elmer’s statement, I have also seen members of the Anglo church portray an individualistic behavior toward Latinos. In the past, Anglo parishioners did not want to acknowledge the presence of Latinos in the same facility even if they worshipped in a separate section. Elmer’s ideas reinforced my attempts to bridge the racial and cultural gap by bringing both groups together in one setting through the implementation of two components of my project: a four-week Bilingual Bible study that

²² Paul De Young, Michael O, Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Kim Chai, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford University Press: New York, New York, 2003), 63.

²³ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1993), 25.

took place during the month of October, 2013, (see Appendix C), and a community-wide missionary event that happened on November 9th, 2013. These activities helped Anglo and Latino congregants embrace each other regardless of their differences.

Human Resources

Some of the people that played an important role in my project were the three consultants from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina that I interviewed via telephone. Guillermo Soriano, Multi-Cultural Evangelism Consultant, shared from his many experiences some of the locally applicable aspects of my project. One of his main responsibilities is to provide training for the 4,300 churches throughout North Carolina. Soriano serves as liaison between pastors from various ethnicities and travels across the state to encourage them to work as a team in order to be better proclaimers of the gospel. Larry Phillips, Senior Consultant of the Multi-cultural Team, was also essential to my project. Phillips served as missionary in Latin America for many years and has played a crucial role in the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Phillips has been working with the Latino pastors in the area of congregational services which consists of having updated materials available related to help the new believer's spiritual growth and with discipleship. Phillips has coordinated a number of trips to Latin American countries to provide training for leaders and pastors from the local churches. Because of his background and experience serving in North Carolina, Phillips was able to share some highlights of his ministry that contributed to my project. Ken Tan, Team Leader of the Multi-cultural Ministries was also influential throughout the research portion of my project. Tan's experience has not only been a great asset to

the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, but also to all of the churches across the state. His passion for reaching all ethnicities has touched the lives of many people both regionally and nationally. Tan is a model of the message of an inclusive God as he encourages leaders of all cultures to make an effort to expand their outreach to people from every nation. Tan was also a great contributor to my project as he shared his personal perspective in reference to the church being an inclusive institution in its own community.

My faculty advisor Dr. Steve Harmon was utilized for his insights and experience for the report and analysis of the project. In addition, there were two mixed groups from both Latino and Anglo congregations that served as the experimental groups for my project. My goal was to implement biblical principles that led both congregations toward being a cross-cultural church as they celebrated unity in diversity. By doing so, it helped the members become a healthier and more efficient church. I evaluated them by giving them surveys which determined the success/failure of my overall project (see Appendix A). Another key person who contributed to the beginning and continuation of the Latino mission is Kenneth McNeill. Since the beginning of his ministry in March 2006, Kenneth McNeill has been very supportive of the Latino ministry. I have had the privilege of knowing him since the early 1990s when we both served in the same association. McNeill has truly shown a genuine passion for the Latino community in every church that he has served. Now that we are both in the same church, we feel that the Lord has called us to do his ministry with a specific purpose, to reach the lost for Christ regardless of their ethnicity or cultural background.

Physical Resources

First Baptist Church of Robbins was the most appropriate place for our meetings during the four-week period. The newly renovated fellowship hall was used as the site for our bilingual Bible study. It was the ideal place for our Bible study and fellowship because of its accessibility and capability to host such functions, and has a big screen that can be used for PowerPoint presentations, movies, and Bible studies. The facility was also a good place for our sessions due to the fact that Latinos felt comfortable being in that setting since the Latino mission is based out of the fellowship hall. Another important factor for the meeting place was that the kitchen was part of the building and it was convenient for our time of fellowship after each Bible study. In addition, the facility was a comfortable place for the Anglos because they were used to hosting a variety of church and social events in the fellowship hall. Overall, the meeting place became the perfect setting where the Anglos and Latinos were able to experience their life-changing, cross-cultural event.

Project Goals

My project had three goals. The first goal was to bridge the existing gap due to language and cultural barriers between both congregations. This has been a dividing factor between the groups since the beginning of the church plant. Many of the Anglos believed that because they were unable to communicate with the Latinos, there was no need to interact at all. Through this project, I hoped the congregations would be willing to go beyond their comfort zones by learning from each other's cultures and having mutual respect in spite of their differences. In his book *Racial and Ethnic Groups*,

sociologist Richard T. Schaefer states, “The alternative to these relationships between the majority and the minority is pluralism. *Pluralism* implies that various groups in a society have mutual respect for one another’s culture, a respect that allows minorities to express their own culture without suffering prejudice or discrimination.”²⁴ This pluralism encompasses what I sought to establish between both parties involved in this project.

I believe that the strategic and ongoing interactions as brothers and sisters in Christ encouraged both congregations to overcome their cultural barriers and to fellowship with each other. While there initially was a great deal of fear amongst the participants, through these interactions it was gradually phased out. Duane Elmer’s book, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry*, provides an interesting perspective when he writes, “There are sound theological reasons for committing ourselves to understand other cultures and appreciate them whenever possible. Making that commitment will unfold for us new and wonderful dimensions of God’s character, for our God can be properly revealed only through diversity.”²⁵ Elmer’s statement shows the importance of embracing diversity as the only way to properly experience God’s essence. Yet again, this spiritual unification reinforces the vision that I strove to communicate to all of the participants through their interactions.

The second goal was to enhance their awareness and celebrate their unity in Christ through various joint efforts between both groups. In all of my years ministering in North Carolina, I have learned that the majority of Anglo churches and Latino congregations have been segregated from each other due to the lack of biblical foundation on which to build. My experience specifically indicates a need for unity of

²⁴ Richard T. Schaefer, *Racial and Ethnic Groups*, 12th ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001), 25.

²⁵ Elmer, 13.

the church, cultural awareness, and education from both sides. In addition, the experiences by both congregations encouraged them to grow in their faith while they ministered in the community. There are many biblical foundations in regards to the inclusive fellowship between people of different cultures. A prime example is the book titled *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as An Answer to the Problem of Race* written by Curtiss Paul DeYoung where he shares his perspective. In the section “A Radically Inclusive Fellowship” he noted,

Jesus’ inclination toward building an inclusive fellowship was not limited to the entourage of disciples who traveled with him. He intentionally reached out broadly to all he encountered, inviting them to participate in the life of his ‘congregation’ of followers. This is most apparent in what scholars called his ‘*table fellowship*.’ Table fellowship symbolizes those you found to be worthy of inclusion in your social circle.²⁶

DeYoung’s example emphasizes how Jesus taught inclusiveness to his disciples. His earthly ministry showed the ability of people to be united by God. Through his example, we are taught the importance of reaching out and including all people. In reference to that, I think that different racial groups ought to experience unity in diversity. Inclusiveness has always been the essence of God’s message. The Bible affirms that “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Today, in the twenty-first century, there are a variety of fears from different ethnicities inside the church. For example, there are those who fear the simple fact that they do not know another person’s culture or language. This fear leads to a great deal of resistance among racial groups. On the other hand, some churches have overcome some of those barriers. Alfredo Oviedo, Mission Developer at Grace Lutheran Church of

²⁶ De Young, 16.

Hendersonville, North Carolina, has been in a similar situation to the racial conflict in the Old Testament. During the interview, he talked about a process of integration that took three years for both congregations, Latino and Anglo, to overcome their fears. When asked about receptiveness from the Anglo congregation, he stated:

Since we started the initial integration in 2005, some of the leadership was hesitant about the legal status of the Latino parishioners. But after a period of three years they realized that their legal status did not matter that much. And from then on, both congregations have been intentionally interacting with each other by having joint youth camps, missionary trips, and joint worship services the first Sunday of each month.²⁷

Oviedo's comments are a perfect example of how continuous collaboration can help people overcome their cultural fears. Oviedo also mentioned some of the positive outcomes of the integration. "Some of the good outcomes were joint recreational activities among the children and youth and more effective witnessing of the church in the community. The Latino pastor is considered part of the church staff, and the Anglo congregation has been learning some of the family values from the Latino parishioners."²⁸ In my ministry, I have seen Latino congregations shift from being a segregated group inside of an Anglo church to a more diverse and interactive entity as the body of Christ. The majority of the Latino missions have gone through a painful process as they struggled to overcome various racial barriers similar to my ministry setting. Even though the process of being an inclusive community has been gradual and lengthy, the results have been somewhat positive in certain ministry facilities. Some of the lives of the participants have been transformed as they actively participated in the two components of my project, the four-week bilingual Bible study (see Appendix C), and the community-

²⁷ Alfredo Oviedo. Mission Developer, Grace Lutheran Church, Hendersonville, North Carolina, interview by Author, Candor, North Carolina, April 23rd, 2013.

²⁸ Oviedo, interview.

wide event. These events demonstrated that Anglos and Latinos achieved part of my second goal, which was to learn cultural awareness and celebrate unity in Christ by working in unison. Achieving the goal contributed to the satisfaction of the congregants from both groups as they came closer to each other, learning that there was no need to be segregated within the same facility.

Many books have been written on the subject of diversified and multiracial churches across the country. Mark Deymaz writes about overcoming the cross-cultural obstacles within his church.

The pursuit of ethnic blends will require you to take multiple variables into account if you are to achieve optimum results. And blending people of different ethnic and economic backgrounds, their personalities and preferences, into a flavor-fully attractive community of evangelical faith will likely be as much an art as a science.²⁹

This particular reference to the end result, as well as the approach, indicates that it will surely take multiple efforts to achieve. The artistic reference can be interpreted as the physical manifestation of the end result, while the scientific reference may be viewed as the methodical approach to achieving said result.

As I read the Bible, I was reminded of the fact that God is the source of unity among humanity. His harmony was evidenced during his earthly ministry as Jesus did not teach partiality. On the contrary, he preached and lived a perfect example of unity between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. John wrote, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37). John’s writing is a perfect example of the unified divinity of Jesus and this passage clearly demonstrates God’s purpose for all of humankind. His essence was

²⁹ DeyMaz, 148.

not only to love but also to unify humanity through his personal example. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples he stated,

‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, (*ta ethne*), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’ (Matthew 28:18-20).

Matthew’s account solidifies the reality that all people are to be included in the preaching of the gospel and united by the blood of Christ. Jesus’ last words on earth clearly defined his vision to share his love with all nations which includes every ethnicity.

The third goal of my project was to deepen the bond between the Senior Pastor, the church leadership, and members of the Latino church through various cross-cultural events. The events, in turn, would enhance their vision and guide their efforts to reach those who are lost in the community by being more effective witnesses of the gospel. Given the history of ineffective communication between the church leadership and the Latino mission, there was a need to solidify their working relationships. Soon-Chan Rah shares good insights in regard to culturally responsible leadership within the church setting in his book, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church*. In his section titled “Culture, Personality, and the Iceberg,” Rah notes, “To be inter-culturally sensitive, we need to examine the internal instinctual part of our own culture....In the church context, it is imperative that the church leadership and community develop a level of cultural intelligence.”³⁰ Rah’s perspective indicates the need

³⁰ Soong Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2010), 87.

for dialogues and interactions between church leaders and the community they serve. By doing so, they will become culturally proficient and better witnesses.

Selection

Teaching a bilingual Bible study in my ministry setting was a huge milestone. Because of the history of the Anglo congregation, what took place was definitely unprecedented. If I had attempted this project back in the 1990s, it likely would have never happened. As a matter of fact, there would not have been a Latino ministry at First Baptist Church of Robbins. Being deeply rooted in the South, the members of the Anglo congregation likely would have never even considered the idea of being in the same place with a Latino group. On the other hand, the Latino parishioners would likely have never thought of being part of a Christian event in the same classroom with their Anglo brothers and sisters. When I shared the goals of my project with the Senior Pastor, he told me, “I think that’s great and I will support you as much as I can. I think that the Anglo congregation is ready for something like this.” As soon as I heard those words, I thanked God for the Senior Pastor and for his vision to reach all people in the community with the gospel.

As the Senior Pastor expressed his commitment to the recruitment process, he mentioned that he was going to be very careful in the way he handled the situation, and that he would touch base with me regularly. We agreed on having lunch once every few weeks in order to go over some of the details and to inform each other on the status of both groups. I spent quality time in prayer, talked to some of the Latino parishioners about my project, and met with the Senior Pastor to share on the details of my project.

Just like the Anglo group, the Latino parishioners had been hurt in various ways in the past and were hesitant to be in the same setting as the Anglo group. Despite that, the Senior Pastor and I both expressed our faith that the Lord was in control of the entire process. That made all the difference and kept us motivated to continue taking the necessary steps to carry out the project.

Long before the actual recruiting process began, I prayed that God touch the lives of both congregations, and that they would respond to the invitation in a positive manner. Once the marketing of the project was underway, I did not receive the enthusiastic response that I had hoped and prayed for. I announced the events to the Latino congregation during our church services for two months prior to the project's implementation. While I was recruiting for the project through oral conversations, the church secretary included the details of the event in the church bulletin. The Senior Pastor and I decided that these announcements in the bulletins would run for the three weeks leading up to the project. With four weeks left until the first Bible study, the Senior Pastor and I had only managed to enlist six Latinos and eight Anglos. He and I met with members of our congregations to encourage them and to explain the implications that this project could have for our church.

With one week left before beginning the first bilingual Bible study, people began to express more interest. The Senior Pastor recommended a few more members from his congregation and I met with them to make sure they understood the purpose of the event. As the number of Anglo recruits increased, I worried that the Latino participants would not be able to fulfill their commitment. I understood that not all of the participants had the same work schedules or family commitments, which would affect their attendance.

Nevertheless, the Senior Pastor and I continued to encourage all of our parishioners to participate in the cross-cultural events.

Describing the groups

As part of the recruiting plan adopted by me and the Senior Pastor, we decided that we would create a target group of people of all ages from our respective congregations. Our plan was to address the elderly and adult populations' practice of racial separation, yet reach out to the youth and young adults who were not too set in their separatist ways. The purpose of doing so was to ensure that the project would not only reach a certain age group, but rather, be an all-encompassing experience for the church. In our early conversations regarding this plan of ours, we made a list of specific people we wanted to participate in the events. I mentioned that there was a young interracial couple in my congregation that I hoped to include. There is a young Latino male who is engaged to an Anglo young lady, and the couple attends the Latino mission. I mentioned to the Senior Pastor that their continuous cross-cultural experiences would help guide the discussions throughout the Bible studies.

During this brainstorming session of my meeting with the Senior Pastor, I also suggested that he and I target an Anglo member of my congregation, who had been immersed in the Latino culture for over twenty-five years. This particular lady spoke fluent Spanish and also participated in our praise and worship group. Even though she had been very active in the Latino community, she kept strong ties within the Anglo community as well. I mentioned to the Senior Pastor that her participation would also bring a completely different dynamic to the project, as well as serve as a prime example

of being spiritually and not culturally driven Christian. He agreed that her participation would be instrumental in modeling how someone could work past the often-stigmatized cultural limitations put in place by society.

The Senior Pastor followed up my two suggestions by stating that he would like to see his longest tenured deacon and his wife participate in these events. The other benefit of having this couple form part of the group was that his wife was also the Director of the Women's Missionary Union for the church and the Sandhills Baptist Association. This influential couple also happened to be the most active members of the church over the last thirty years. Aside from their roles within the church, this couple were also very prominent business owners in the Robbins community. He mentioned that having church members as respected as this couple commit to the project would speak volumes to the rest of the church, and hopefully encourage others to follow their lead. The Senior Pastor and I thanked the Lord when this couple agreed to participate in the project, as well as help us recruit others.

After hearing the description of the Anglo deacon and his wife's roles within their church and community, I immediately thought of their equivalent in my congregation. I approached an elderly Latino male who had also been the most faithfully active member in my time at the Latino mission. Not only was this man the oldest member of our congregation, but he was also one of the very first Latinos to have arrived in Robbins over thirty years ago. This member was extremely well known in Robbins and was also very well respected by the Latino community. He continuously witnessed to his family and had managed to encourage many of them to join our church. Through his membership, he had brought his oldest son to church, who I recently married him. This

marriage and connection was especially important because I conducted the first bilingual wedding ceremony at First Baptist Church of Robbins, and many Anglo community members were in attendance. These newlyweds were also very eager to participate in the project, as they hoped to build on the wonderful cross-cultural experience of their wedding.

The rest of the Latino participants consisted of first generation immigrants with only work-related experiences with the Anglo culture. There were two middle-aged couples whose teenage children also agreed to volunteer. The majority of the Latino parishioners were newborn Christians, which I worried would have an impact on their understanding of the biblical references. The Senior Pastor and I wanted to make sure that the volunteers were spiritually mature enough to make a serious commitment for the events. These Latino parishioners also lived further away from Robbins, and many of them had to drive a significant distance in order to be at every session. Many had expressed a concern for child care during the Bible studies, since they had to bring their children with them.

During the last week of recruitment, the Senior Pastor and I met to discuss the status of the participants. As we cross examined the list of volunteers, he and I realized that we had almost reached our intended populations. The only group we were missing was Anglo young adults so we discussed prospective volunteers. The Senior Pastor mentioned that he knew of a young couple in his congregation that would be perfect candidate to participate. The husband was born to missionary parents, and had traveled the world as a young boy and wife was a high school teacher, which further excited us since she taught in a nearby community with a heavy Latino concentration. He and I

prayed as we discussed the added benefit of having this young couple's perspective in our experimental group. On the Wednesday night before the bilingual Bible study was set to begin, the young man and his wife approached me after church and expressed their interest in joining our group. As always, the Lord provided the means for his work to be done and did so according to his plan. Now finalized, the twenty-four volunteers and I were ready to make history at First Baptist Church of Robbins.

Weekly Project Description

Building Bridges through Bilingual Bible Study Week I

The Samaritan Woman: Her culture John 4:1-9 October 6, 2013

Construyendo Puentes por medio del Estudio Bíblico Bilingüe Semana I

La Mujer Samaritana: Su Cultura Juan 4:1-9 Octubre 6, 2013

As people began arriving, I noticed that there were a few more people than I expected from both groups. I prayed that those who had committed would show up, and was pleased to count twenty six in attendance. I began by thanking the attendees and asked my wife to lead us in prayer, which she did in both languages. In continuing with the bilingual effort, I led both groups in two bilingual worship songs. I chose "Lord I lift your name on high/Señor tu nombre exaltaré" and "This is the day/Este es el día" since they are two very common songs in both languages. As we sang, some Latinos tried to pronounce the English words of the choruses, which showed their desire to praise God. Out of the Anglo group, there were only two who made an effort to sing in Spanish. It was obvious that this may have been too much too soon for some Anglos. The difference

in their reaction of this cross-cultural experience may be attributed to previous exposure, or lack thereof. In preparation for the worship portion of my project, I had begun to incorporate bilingual songs during our Spanish services. In doing so, I was hoping to help condition the Latino parishioners for a smoother transition for my project. However, none of the Anglos had been exposed to this type of setting.

As I observed the participants, I noticed that Anglos were sitting on one side and Latinos were seated on the other. This obvious separation proved the subconscious effect that the long term division had on both groups. After noticing this, I engaged the participants in an ice breaker activity. I asked them to pair up with a person from another culture and introduce themselves by sharing their names, where they lived, and their professions. Upon hearing this, many participants' facial expressions conveyed uneasiness. While they were all aware of the purpose of the project, they may not have expected to interact in such close proximity. The groups were slow to partner up and I had to help make suggestions on pairings. Some of the bilingual Latinos seemed to have less trouble communicating with their counterparts. However, for those that were limited English proficient, the language barrier seemed to affect their comfort levels.

One Anglo member, who is a deacon, did not hesitate to approach a Latino parishioner. He quickly shook his hand with a smile and began talking to him in a friendly way. That gesture helped decrease the tension from the Latino participant, as he too responded by smiling and shaking his hand. Some of the Anglo and Latino ladies struggled while interacting with each other due to the language barrier. However, that did not hinder their efforts to communicate as they used their hands trying to carry on a conversation. Each group was given roughly three minutes to get to know each other.

Once the time was up, I randomly called on people to share what they had just learned. Some Anglo and Latino congregants were surprised to be called on and they looked at each other and took a few seconds before they participated. Soon after that, an Anglo sister stood up and shared part of her experience with a Latino sister without fear. Her reaction encouraged the Latino lady to open up some by sharing the sister's information. This lady shared her experience in Spanish, which I then translated for the group. The participation of the first two Anglo members created a small chain reaction as others decided to express their gratitude for knowing basic information about their brothers and sisters in Christ.

During the Bible study, I used a PowerPoint presentation which included bilingual slides (see Appendix C). The presentation helped bridge the language gap as I switched between languages. My introduction began by briefly explaining the difference between multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and cross-cultural. These terms are very commonly misused, and I wanted to establish that the focus of my project was cross-cultural experiences. While we were on the topic of culture, I asked the group to share some of the cultural differences they had observed between Anglos and Latinos. One Anglo lady said that she noticed Latinos greet and depart from each other differently. When entering or leaving a room, Latinos tend to shake hands while making eye contact. According to her, Anglos come and go without having to do so. A Latino member responded that it was a gesture to respectfully acknowledge everyone present. The Anglo lady added that, while different, she understood the importance of respect in the Latino culture. Another Anglo member mentioned that this was a learning experience for her and that she would be more observant of this practice in the future.

After this conversation, a Latino member commented that Anglos and Latinos have very different views on punctuality. He mentioned that Latinos tend to have a much more relaxed concept of time and do not concern themselves with being punctual. He stated, “If my family says we are eating at 5:00, we may not sit down at the table until 6:00 or 6:30. When I go to eat with my girlfriend’s family for dinner (who are white), they treat it like a doctor’s appointment. Eating at 5:00 means you’re seated at the table at 4:59.” This comment generated laughter in the group and many nodded their heads in agreement with this observation. While laughing, an Anglo added, “it sounds like Latinos are on what we white people call ‘island time.’” Both groups seemed to be a little more at ease after sharing these observations and a few laughs together.

As a continuation on the topic of cultural differences, I related their observations to those that existed between Jews and Samaritans during Jesus’ earthly ministry. I explained that their differences were so deeply entrenched in their cultures that they avoided each other completely. By explaining this, I was able to help the group to understand the implications and significance of the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Even though Jesus was well aware of the history between the two cultures, he took the initiative and served as a bridge between them. Jesus’ only concern was to witness to the woman and offer her eternal salvation. Through this example, I hoped to encourage the participants to follow in Jesus’ footsteps and learn to embrace each other.

As we continued the bilingual Bible study, we moved towards the conclusion of the first session. I asked an Anglo brother to close the meeting with a word of prayer since a Latino member prayed at the beginning. Soon after that, we moved towards the

kitchen area of the fellowship hall to have some refreshments. I noticed that some of the Anglo participants left immediately after the bilingual Bible study and only six stayed for the fellowship. I was amazed at the fact that all of the Latinos remained and appeared anxious to socialize with their new acquaintances. Those that remained were able to establish a friendlier atmosphere as they laughed and learned from each other. An Anglo participant approached me and said, “Pastor, I really appreciate what you are doing. I believe that being part of the bilingual Bible study, will be a tremendous experience for me.” Hearing this comment made me realize of the importance of my project and gave me hope for achieving my project goals.

Building Bridges through Bilingual Bible Study week II

The Samaritan Woman: Her fears John 4:10-11 October 13, 2013

Construyendo Puentes por medio del Estudio Bíblico Bilingüe Semana II

La Mujer Samaritana: Sus temores Juan 4:10-11 Octubre 13, 2013

As the second session began, I noticed that only six Anglos were in attendance but all of the Latino participants were present. I asked the Anglo deacon about those who were missing, and he informed me that two were called in to work and would not be attending. One of the Anglo participants had nursery duty which kept her from joining us. The other three were unaccounted for but we carried on without them. I began by leading the group in bilingual worship by singing “Oh magnify the Lord/Oh magnificad a Dios” and “Lord I lift your name on high/Señor tu nombre exaltaré.” During this time of

praise, I was pleased to see members of both groups make more of an effort to pronounce words in the other language.

I looked around the room as we sang and noticed that both groups sat segregated from each other. In an attempt to address this, I called on various members and quizzed them on what they learned from their partner the previous week. When I mentioned that, the group seemed nervous and looked around the room to see who would be first. After a few moments of silence, one Anglo lady bravely volunteered to be first. She confidently stood up and said, “I don’t remember how to pronounce my partner’s name but she lives in....and works at....” Without being prompted, several Latinos applauded her willingness and correctness. The Anglo lady smiled and seemed to appreciate this gesture on their part. Shortly after that, I called on a Latino male who was also able to provide accurate information. Once he finished answering, the aforementioned Anglo lady started a round of applause for him. He smiled and waved to the group which triggered laughter amongst us all. Through these humorous interactions the participants seemed a little more comfortable with each other.

To begin our bilingual Bible study I asked the group to turn to the Scripture on the PowerPoint slide (see Appendix C). While trying to change things a bit, I asked a Latino member to read the two verses in Spanish and then asked an Anglo member to read them in English. While the Scripture was being read in English, I noticed that some of the Latino congregants were more attentive trying to understand the word of God. As it was being read in Spanish, an Anglo member turned towards the Latino parishioner reading to make sure he understood what was being read. He looked over at the man and then back at his Bible as if to confirm that what “his” Bible said is what was being read aloud. His

reaction seemed to be an attempt to visually confirm what he thought he was hearing. I did this to help both groups be exposed to Scripture being read in the other language to help lessen any fear or discomfort they may have been feeling. Through this effort, all participants could follow along in their own language and know that what they were hearing was God's word. Establishing a level of comfort was fundamental to the success of my project and the spiritual growth of the church in Robbins.

Once the Scripture was read in both languages I elaborated on the cultural differences between Jews and Samaritans that were introduced during the first bilingual Bible study. Since the group had a better understanding of the sociocultural context of this account, I wanted to expand on her reaction to this encounter. Through the verses that were read, I explained that the woman was weary and fearful in her conversation with Jesus. Due to the deeply rooted racial tensions between the cultures, most Samaritans were well accustomed to being mistreated and ignored by Jews. Yet here stood Jesus, a Jew, offering the Samaritan woman life-altering water. Jesus, who was well aware of this cultural divide, wisely utilized water as a neutral source of initiating this dialogue. Although he was a Jew in his physical attributes, he never once imposed nor practiced the well-established cultural norms. On the contrary, he transcended all earthly boundaries and sought out to help anyone and everyone alike. Given the historical evidence leading up to their interaction, one can understand why the Samaritan woman was hesitant to accept what Jesus had to offer.

In relating the interaction between Jews and Samaritans, I asked the participants to share some personal experiences in dealing with people from the other culture present. I was not quite sure what to expect since the participants I recruited tended to have

minimal interaction with the other culture. One Anglo man spoke up and said, “I have hired plenty of Latino workers to help me work and have never had a bad experience. They have all been hard-working, family-oriented, and just all around good people for me.” He also mentioned that because he had several positive experiences with Latinos, he was curious to see how that would translate into his faith-based cultural interactions through these Bible studies. This comment prompted the Latino male that read the Scripture in Spanish to share his particular experiences with Anglos. He prefaced his statement by clarifying that his only interactions had been in the work setting. He stated,

Yo le doy gracias a Dios porque mi supervisor Americano me trata bien, nunca me falta el respeto y entiende mi necesidad de proveerle a mi familia. Aunque solo trabajamos dos o tres días a veces me paga el sueldo de toda la semana./ I am grateful to God that my Anglo supervisor treats me fairly, never disrespects me, and understands my need to provide for my family. Even though we may only work 2-3 days a week, he often pays me a full week’s salary.

After hearing this, many in the group looked surprised to learn of this type of working relationship. An Anglo member followed up by saying that she was glad to hear this because Latinos are often exploited in the workforce. The comments shared seemed to generate positive dialogue between the participants.

I continued by commenting on how fortunate they were to have such positive interactions with the other culture. In both of the examples shared, there was a mutually acceptable working relationship. However, this was not the case during the encounter at the well in Shechem. In order for Jesus to extend his offer of the living water, he crossed cultural, sexual, and religious barriers that predated him. As a consequence of these three hurdles, it was only natural for the Samaritan woman to be fearful and apprehensive towards Jesus. While she was bound by her limited earthly knowledge, he led her to a better understanding of God’s universal plan of salvation. I concluded by asking the

group, what kind of fears do we need to overcome in order to better witness of God in our community?

After we ended the bilingual Bible study in a word of prayer, I invited the group for a time of fellowship. I was surprised that once again, all of the Latinos remained and seemed eager to socialize with their counterparts. This time all of the Anglo participants stayed and mingled with members from the Latino group. I noticed that most of the Anglo congregants seemed a bit more at ease talking to their Latino partners which set a positive tone for the evening. The majority of the participants commented that they felt okay being in a bilingual Bible study and learning about cross-cultural experiences through the study and their own experiences.

Building Bridges through Bilingual Bible Study Week III

The Samaritan Woman: Her Tradition John 4:12-18 October 20th, 2013

Construyendo Puentes por medio del Estudio Bíblico Bilingüe Semana III

La Mujer Samaritana: Su Tradición Juan 4:12-18 Octubre 20, 2013

Prior to beginning the third session, I stood by the entrance of the fellowship hall to greet and welcome the participants as they arrived. I wanted to make sure to shake everyone's hand as they arrived to add a personal touch and show my appreciation of their willingness to join us again. I also hoped to incorporate the importance of respect and acknowledgement in the Latino culture comment made during the first bilingual Bible study to remind the attendees of what we had learned together. There were eleven Anglos and twelve Latinos congregants present. Once we were scheduled to begin, I led

the group in a word of prayer in both languages. Once I had finished my bilingual prayer, I led the congregants in bilingual worship as we sang “This is the day/Este es el día,” and “Oh Magnify the Lord/Oh magnificad a Dios.” I chose these songs because we sang them during our first bible study and I wanted to help the group feel a little more comfortable. I felt that by guiding them through a more familiar experience, this would help put them more at ease. As we praised God, I noticed that four Latinos arrived a bit late, quickly found a seat, and joined the group by singing along. On the contrary, all of the Anglos arrived about ten minutes before our study began. I remembered the comments made during our first bible study about punctuality differing between the cultures as was evidenced in the participants. I noticed that the seating pattern was the same as the two previous sessions, Latinos sat on the right side of the fellowship hall and Anglos on the left side. As we concluded our time of worship, I began the bilingual Bible study by discussing the definition and role that traditions play in our lives. I went over this to give the group clearer understanding of the term which coincided with the topic of our Bible study for that evening.

As we continued, I asked a Latino congregant to read John 4:12-18 in Spanish and an Anglo participant to read the same passage in English. While the Scripture was being read in Spanish, I noticed that some of the Latinos were following along by looking attentively in their Bibles and nodding their heads in agreement with what was being read. The Anglos reacted differently as they heard the Spanish reading. I noticed that some were listening without looking at their Bibles, while others were focused on following along in their own Bibles. After the passages were read, I continued on with the Bible study by giving an explanation of the Samaritan woman’s deeply rooted

tradition at Jacob's well. I shared a historical explanation dating back to Genesis 33:18-19 and explained how Jacob moved to Syria and purchased a property in Shechem, on which the well was included. For generations, Samaritans have strongly believed that Jacob's well has been the only historical place where they accessed their water supply.

I transitioned from the Old Testament events to a contemporary application for the group as I mentioned that as humans, we all have our own cultural traditions that stem from our ancestors and have been carried on throughout many generations. I gave an example by saying that one of the unique traditions in the Latino community is the commemoration of the quinceañera (fifteenth birthday). In this particular celebration, the parents of the young lady invite their friends and relatives to join in this joyous occasion by having a special dedication service at a church, followed by a feast and plenty of music afterwards. I compared this celebration to the Anglo culture, which places great importance on a young lady reaching the age of sixteen. These sweet sixteen celebrations may also consist of a special celebration but those in our communities are typically not as elaborate as the quinceañera. As I made these cultural comparisons and explained their importance to each culture, many in the group nodded their heads in agreement with their respective practices.

Having clarified the importance of traditions to various cultures, I then transitioned back to the encounter at the well. Even though the segregation among the Jews and Samaritans was a long standing practice, Jesus' goal in his interaction with the Samaritan woman was to address and to bridge the gap through eternal salvation. I emphasized the Samaritan woman's response in verse 15 when she proceeded to ask Jesus for a drink of the water that he offered because it demonstrated the Holy Spirit's

ability to transcend any and all earthly limitations. While her culture, her fear, and her tradition may have initially served as barriers in her dialogue with Jesus, the Samaritan woman was eventually able to overcome them and reached out to a Jew for spiritual help. Her request for Jesus' living water serves as a prime example of how all Christians should strive to look past all secular distractions and impediments, and focus solely on spiritual matters. The efforts made by Jesus and the Samaritan woman are what I hoped to model and implement through this Bible study series.

Once we had concluded our study for the evening, I noticed a difference in the participants' behavior. Rather than reaching for their Bibles and waiting to be asked to join in fellowship, the mixed group stood and interacted with each other. One Anglo participant made it a point to walk across the room and shake the hand of an elderly Latino male whom he knew spoke very limited English. It appeared to me that the language barrier did not seem to matter to them, as they shook hands, smiled, and exchanged a few pleasantries. As I packed up my laptop and picked up materials, I noticed that the group migrated towards the kitchen area of the fellowship hall, which gave me a sense of relief. All of the participants stayed during this time and did so for longer than they had before. I could not help but smile as I watched the entire mixed group appear to be much more at ease with each other.

Building Bridges through Bilingual Bible Study Week IV

The Samaritan Woman: Her Misconceptions John 4:19-26 October 27, 2013

Construyendo Puentes por medio del Estudio Bíblico Bilingüe Semana IV

La Mujer Samaritana: Sus Conceptos Equivocados Juan 4:19-26 Octubre 27, 2013

Prior to the beginning of our final session, I made several preparations before the participants arrived. I anxiously gathered my notes and read over the PowerPoint presentation twice as I waited for the participants to arrive. A few Anglo members came early and greeted me with a handshake. I found this interesting because it appeared that they had remembered the comments made during the first Bible study, as this was the first time they approached me with a handshake. Just a few minutes later, some of the Latinos began to arrive and they too made it a point to shake everyone's hand. I welcomed them and interacted with those that had arrived early as we waited for the rest of the participants. Once it was time to begin, I was surprised that the majority of the members from both groups were present. There were twelve Anglos sitting to my left and twelve Latinos sitting to my right.

As I welcomed the group, I noticed that there was something different about them. Not only was this the first time that all of the participants were on time, but there also seemed to be a higher level of comfort amongst the group. I looked around the room and noticed that just about every participant, regardless of ethnicity, seemed excited to be there. I based this observation on the body language of the group for this final Bible study, versus the way the volunteers looked tense and uncomfortable during the first session. Although the group sat culturally divided, there were smiles and waves from across the room. Once everyone was seated, I led the group in a time of worship as we had done so in every meeting. We sang "Lord I lift your name on high/Señor tu nombre exaltaré" and "Oh magnify the Lord/Oh magnificad a Dios." I chose these songs for our

last Bible study because we sang them in many of our previous studies, and I wanted to reinforce the comfort level that the participants had with hearing the other language. At this point in the series, I wanted to make sure that both groups had learned that the other language they heard during worship was all for the same purpose. As we praised the Lord, both Latinos and Anglos made much more of an effort to sing the songs in each other's languages. By this time, the pronunciation of the words was not as important as lifting their voices in unison to the Lord. After the bilingual worship, I shared words of encouragement with the group by telling them that I hoped and prayed that each one of them received a blessing from God by spending time with their brothers and sisters in Christ of a different culture. As I said that, I noticed that some of the members from both sides were nodding their heads as an affirmation to my comments.

In continuing our session, I asked a Latino member to lead the group in a bilingual prayer. For this session, I did not ask anyone to read the Bible passage out loud, but instead, encouraged them to follow the PowerPoint slide. Since our topic revolved about the Samaritan woman's misconceptions, I asked the group about some of their own misconceptions about the other culture. An Anglo member commented that many other Anglos thought that all Latinos did not speak English and were undocumented. Many in the group, including Latinos, nodded their head in agreement to this very common misconception. His participation encouraged a Latino female to add that she believed the majority of Anglos had some kind of discrimination toward Latinos. She mentioned that this belief was based on unpleasant interactions she had experienced at work and in the community.

Once these comments were shared, I transitioned the conversation back to the Scripture by adding that the Samaritan woman had similar misconceptions about Jesus because he was a Jew, just as the Latinos and Anglos had in our communities. In the encounter at the well, the Samaritan woman was apprehensive towards Jesus simply because he was a Jew. Even though he was the Messiah, she only saw him as a Jew. I then mentioned that too often we, as humans, are guilty of this same type of short sightedness. Just as the Samaritan woman had the Son of God right before her, she was bound by her limited earthly knowledge. I asked the group, “How often do we have the same reaction towards people who are different than we are?” Even though the Samaritan woman had that initial misconception, she was able to overcome it and accept Jesus’ offer of the living water. I continued by mentioning to the group that Jesus did not focus on who the Samaritan woman was, but instead, on what kind of spiritual need she had. I also made the connection and application to their lives by saying that Jesus’ purpose in the past was the same for them in the present.

While I shared those important comments, I could see that the majority of the participants from both sides were attentive and very much concentrated on the topic. By the time we discussed verse 21 when Jesus stated, “Believe me the time is coming,” I made an effort to explain this in practical terms. I related God’s plan to their lives as I explained that it was time that both ethnicities began the process of embracing each other and building stronger bridges and becoming one unified body in Christ. As I said that, I initially expected a negative or reactionary response from the congregants but to my surprise, they nodded their heads once more in agreement.

I continued explaining that according to the history of Jews and Samaritans, they both worshipped the Lord in two different places: Jews in Jerusalem and Samaritans in Gerizim. I emphasized that Jesus did not show any partiality towards either of the groups. Instead, he became the unifying factor between both races in a way that he bridged the cultural gaps and brought them together to become God's chosen people. I reiterated the importance of making stronger efforts to step out of our comfort zones and continue trying to be closer to each other by being active participants in future activities. I referenced verse 22 where Jesus stated, "By using us God will save the world," and alluded to the fact that we were also God's people and he had the power to help us become better witnesses in our community. An interesting point about Jesus is that when he said "us" he was not exclusively mentioning the Jews, but instead, he was including every people from every nation who believed in him.

Once I made this point and related it to our present day dilemma, I thanked each and every person for having volunteered and made a genuine effort to participate in the bilingual Bible study series. I expressed my gratitude for them helping me achieve an academic goal, but most importantly, a spiritual one that the Senior Pastor and I shared. An elderly Anglo lady spoke up and said, "Pastor, I don't think we should look down at anybody because of their race. I love all of you and consider you as part of our church family." Her comment served as the perfect way to end our session, as I thanked her for sharing her desire to help bridge the gap at our church. The sentiment must have been shared by all as I watched the entire group walk towards the kitchen area to spend time and fellowship together. The entire group stayed for this time and did not appear to be in any rush to leave. After the third study, the entire smaller group in attendance stayed

back but this time, there was even more camaraderie amongst the group. Another Anglo lady approached me and said, “I’ve really enjoyed spending my Sunday evenings downstairs for these bilingual Bible studies. Now it’s going to feel weird for me to go back to an English only service on Sunday afternoons.” This type of response is what I set out to accomplish with this project, and I thank the Lord for His work in all of the participants, myself included.

Ethnic and Cultural Lessons

After teaching the four-week bilingual Bible study on John 4:21-26 (see Appendix C), I learned several important lessons regarding to cross-cultural experiences. First, I was aware that Jesus utilized the method that Daniel Sanchez calls *contextualization* to share the gospel with the Samaritan woman which is “the process by which the relevance of the gospel is demonstrated in a social-cultural context.”³¹ By using this technique, Jesus crossed three major barriers: racial, sexual, and religious, they are explained in more detail in the bilingual Bible study (see appendix C). Jesus was able to overcome the racial barrier, for according to Old Testament accounts, Jews did not tolerate Samaritans because they were a mixed race (II Kings 17:24). Jews believed that Samaritans had corrupted their purity by interacting and marrying other races.

Jesus also overcame the religious barrier that had existed between Jews and Samaritans for centuries. For instance, Jews strongly believed that the only place to worship God was in the Temple of Jerusalem. Samaritans, on the other hand, had the conviction that Mount Gerizim was the place to worship the Lord because Deuteronomy

³¹ Daniel Sanchez, *Church: Growth and Culture* (Nashville, Tennessee, Convention Press, Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993), 7.

27:4 identified Mount Ebal, which was beside Mount Gerizim, as the place to build an altar. The Samaritans only believed in the Pentateuch and considered Moses their only Prophet, Deuteronomy 18:14-18. Jesus taught the Samaritan woman that in the future neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem would be the place of worship, but instead, both would be replaced. Jesus taught her that he would take their place instead. Jesus treated the Samaritan woman with respect and used water as a common denominator in order to make the connection to share the gospel. He did not show partiality towards her ethnicity or religious background. Instead, he demonstrated his love and went on to make her aware that she was a special person in the eyes of the Lord regardless of her culture, her fears, her tradition, or her misconceptions. Jesus' focus on a person's soul and not their culture is what I hoped to teach the group of volunteers at First Baptist Church of Robbins through their cross-cultural interactions.

Community-wide Missionary Event November 9, 2013

For the second component of my project I planned a community-wide event where members from both congregations would once again engage in purposeful interactions. I envisioned a day where the groups would come together to jointly and actively give back to their community. The goal of this event was to guide the participants through a cross-cultural experience where they would collaborate to help those in need of minor household repairs. In preparation for this day, I met with the Senior Pastor, who was instrumental in coordinating the details of the day's activities. In the months leading up to this portion of the project, he reached out to many local organizations to learn recruit their efforts in targeting the needy families. The

organizations that were contacted and invited to participate were Habitat for Humanity Housing Repair, the Northern Moore Family Resource Center, Robbins Area Christian Ministry, which includes ten Protestant Churches, and First Baptist Church of Robbins' Anglo and Latino congregations. The Habitat for Humanity Housing Repair initially volunteered to donate any and all materials needed to help the group carry out any repair work. In the Senior Pastor's conversations with this organization, they agreed to provide tools and supplies for building ramps, fixing leaky roofs, and minor landscaping projects. The Habitat for Humanity Housing Repair offered to take the lead in contacting and organizing the volunteers provided by the various participating organizations. All of these other organizations agreed to commit skilled volunteers to help with the many projects that would be taken on by the group.

In early October the Senior Pastor received a call from the Executive Director of the Habitat for Humanity Housing Repair and was notified that they had a scheduling conflict and would not be able to lead in the event. Not only were they unable to help organize the event, but because of their other commitment, they also had to rescind their offer and donation of the building supplies. Unfortunately, once the other organizations found out that the Habitat for Humanity would not be participating, they too decided to pull out of the event. Pastor Kenneth approached me before church one Sunday morning to inform me of the recent withdrawals, but also to encourage me to move forward with our plan. During our meeting, he and I expressed our commitment to leading our congregations through this particular event. In our conversation, we decided to revise the plan for the day and focus the group's efforts on minor landscaping projects. This decision was made because our activities would take place during the fall, where most of

the needy families could greatly benefit from leaves being raked and gutters being cleaned. He and I decided that by doing so, the group would be able to maximize our limited resources and also minister to the elderly members of our church.

In order to ensure that these projects would revolve around cross-cultural interactions, the Senior Pastor and I decided to divide the participants into culturally mixed groups. Thus, our activity shifted from having the involvement of three community organizations and eleven churches to a local ministry that included two ethnicities, Anglos and Latinos. As the advertisement for the activity began, I made sure that the same group that was part of the bilingual Bible study participated in the community-wide missionary event.

The group met at 8:00 A.M. in the fellowship hall at First Baptist Church of Robbins. I made it a point to walk around and shake each person's hand, and personally thanked them for coming out so early on their day off. As opposed to the Bible studies, the Latinos arrived much earlier that morning than the Anglos. I had originally recruited twelve Anglos and twelve Latinos and was distraught when many of the Anglos did not show up. The Senior Pastor pulled me aside and mentioned that he had hoped more members from his congregation would have shown up, but reassured me that God would come through for us. He called the group together, asked us to form a circle, and led us in a word of prayer. The Senior Pastor and I provided breakfast for the group and we encouraged everyone to enjoy some time together before we went to work. Interestingly enough, the breakfast options for the group also had a cross-cultural theme. The Senior Pastor brought breakfast biscuits and orange juice while my wife and a Latino member

prepared breakfast tacos, which were scrambled eggs mixed with refried beans and wrapped in tortillas.

Once we finished our morning fellowship time, the Senior Pastor and I called the group together once again and divided them up into culturally mixed groups. Since there were fewer participants, he and I divided the sixteen participants into two groups. The first group traveled to an elderly Latino member's home while my group began working at an elderly Anglo lady's home. While the group continued to work, the Senior Pastor went through the contacts list on his phone and was able to recruit more volunteers. Two more Anglo males arrived and quickly joined the rest of the group. I noticed that everyone was busy raking leaves on the large property and would only come together when combining large piles of leaves. This separation instantly changed when another volunteer arrived with a commercial sized leaf blower commonly used to clean parking lots. The entire group came together to watch the new machine work and many laughs were shared while taking turns pushing the blower.

As we finished our first project, the elderly lady called out to us and said, "I made y'all some coffee and some apple pies. Come on inside and have some." This invitation was important because the elderly lady had been a part of the bilingual Bible studies and welcomed everyone into her home. While the group drank coffee and enjoyed the apple pies, we laughed as we talked about the improvements we made to the home. During this short time of fellowship, the Senior Pastor and I expressed our amazement at how the participants were interacting with each other. After a few minutes of fellowship, the Senior Pastor asked a Latino member to lead the group in a word of prayer, thanking the

Lord for this time together. This too was an important moment in the day because the group was able to acknowledge the Holy Spirit's presence amongst us.

Both of the culturally mixed groups finished their projects around the same time and both groups came together and traveled to another elderly Anglo couple's home. The Senior Pastor learned that the elderly husband was in the hospital so he and I decided that working together would be a perfect way to minister to them. Since there were so many volunteers working at the home together, the group could not help but interact with someone from the other culture. One Latino male and one Anglo male climbed up on the roof and worked together to clear off all of the branches. I looked up from my corner of the property and noticed that they communicated and cautioned each other while up there, which reassured me that the Lord was using the home repairs to bring people together. I then looked over to the other side of the property and noticed a Latino lady and an Anglo lady knelt down cleaning out the flower beds. These two ladies seemed to partner up and did most of their work together while at this home. Once I finished raking my section, I looked over and noticed that the Senior Pastor and another Anglo man were trimming low hanging branches around the property with a saw. I joined a group of four Latino males and two Anglo males that were picking up the falling branches and hauling them off to the woods nearby. The group laughed and joked as we carried off branches and we took turns volunteering each other to carry away the heavier ones.

As they were trimming these branches, we noticed that there was a large branch dangling over the spot where the couple parked their car. Since the group was trying to help them out as much as possible, we hoped to avoid it falling on their car. The caveat was that the branch was very high up in the tree, and it was a very dangerous climb for

whoever attempted it. After a few minutes of deliberation, a young Latino volunteered to take the risk. Another Latino male and an Anglo male rushed over together and joked as they brought the ladder, saying their efforts were also very important to the risky climb. Once the ladder was set an Anglo adult mentioned that he would hold it in place for the young man. At this point in the home repairs, everyone else had finished and the entire group gathered to watch the young man make his attempt to climb the tree. The young man reached the top of the ladder and then had to begin climbing the tree in order to reach the branch that was barely hanging onto the rest of the tree. As soon as he reached the branch and threw it down, everyone gave him a round of applause as he climbed back down the ladder. The group cheered together as they expressed their gratitude towards the young man who did not show any fear while doing the task. Collectively, the group was aware that the job was very dangerous, and he could have easily been injured. Despite risking serious injury, he did it to show the love of God to the elderly couple who owned the home.

As we finished up the last scheduled home, the Senior Pastor approached me and asked, "Do you think we can get everybody together and do one last job?" He explained that there was an elderly Anglo couple from church in desperate need of help, since the husband had recently had surgery. I replied that as well as the group had worked together throughout the day, I did not think that they would mind helping one more family. Once we arrived at the last home, the group noticed that the home's landscaping was in disarray and immediately started working. I looked up from my raking duties and noticed that the group was working diligently and there seemed to be a higher level of comfort among the group. Four teenage boys, two Latino and two Anglo, started a

competition to see who could finish raking their areas the fastest. Their camaraderie and collaboration set the tone for the group as many other adults joined in the youths' playful competition. While working together, the group managed to clean up the entire yard in under an hour.

Once the group finished, the Senior Pastor knocked on the front door and asked the elderly couple to join the group outside and see the much improved yard. To my surprise, the elderly lady was one of the church members opposed to the Latino mission in the same facility. The Senior Pastor thanked the couple for allowing the group to work together in cleaning their yard. Knowing the couple's initial resentment towards Latinos, he purposely asked me to pray for the couple, for their health, and for the group as a whole. After I led the group in a word of prayer, the elderly lady was overcome with happiness and began to cry. With tears streaming down her face, she spoke to the group saying "thank you so much for being a blessing to us. We really appreciate all of your help today." As the elderly lady expressed her heartfelt appreciation to the group, two Latino ladies approached the lady and gave the woman a hug.

The Senior Pastor and I looked at each other and were grinning from ear to ear, knowing that the group's efforts had a powerful impact on the volunteers, as well as the recipients of the good deeds. This was an extremely important milestone for the church as the Holy Spirit's work was evidenced through this particular cross-cultural embrace. The elderly couple's gratitude touched the rest of the group as many shook hands and thanked each other for their work that day. It was interesting to see that as the group realized they were done with their work for the day, no one appeared to be in a hurry to leave. There was an Anglo participant who had not attended any of the bilingual Bible

studies who mentioned that he was glad he got out of bed that morning and joined the group. He expressed his desire to make this type of collaborative approach to ministering in the Robbins community an annual event. Once again, the Senior Pastor and I smiled as we realized the impression that our months of planning had on our congregations.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

I strongly believe that the project was necessary in my ministry setting because both groups, Latino and Anglo, needed to improve their interactions as brothers and sisters in Christ. Rather than losing each other's cultural identity, they embraced their diversity by showing mutual respect and celebrated their unity in Christ in spite of their differences. As God continued to touch the lives of people in both congregations, parishioners were reminded that he never modeled a literal segregation for his people. Instead, according to Scripture, his desire was for everyone who believed in him to be part of his family without any cultural barriers, distant behaviors, or indifference. John 3:16 serves as a reminder that his love is universal. He is an inclusive God by nature and essence, not exclusive as has previously been practiced by many congregations.

According to John 3:14-15, Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood for all of humanity. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-28, he included all the nations in the world (*ta ethne*). Paul reminded the church of Ephesus that Jesus' death destroyed every cultural and racial barrier and provided direct access to him through faith without any fear whatsoever, (Ephesians 2:12-20). Paul also taught the church in Colossae that in Christ there were no racial or cultural differences, and that each person was special in the eyes of God, (Colossians 3:10-12). Therefore, Christians should be aware that they need to practice a holistic approach to living their Christian lives in spite of each other's ethnicities.

Old Testament

The Creation

Genesis relates the beginning of creation and how according to Scripture, the earth was formless. Later, the biblical accounts narrate that God began to put everything in order. For example, he separated the light from the darkness, ordered a portion of the earth to be dry land, and created the living creatures to live in the water. Once he finished creating the basic elements, his next step was to create man. Scripture reads,

Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them’ (Genesis 1:26-27).

My understanding of this text is that when God formed man and woman, he did not establish any particular distinctions. The primary purpose of the creation of man was to give both genders the ability to fellowship and to have a relationship with their creator. In his commentary on Genesis, Clyde T. Francisco elaborates on this as he writes, “An image is ‘something cut out’ such as an idol. It describes an exact resemblance, like a son who is the very image of his father. *Likeness* (appearance) is a more indefinite term and emphasizes the fact that, although man is like God, he is not God.”³² After reading about the unique way that God created man and his original intention, I am sure that he did not discriminate against male or female in their relationship and interactions with each other. I am also convinced that God is the same today as he was in the past. Just as in the creation story where God did not show partiality towards Adam and Eve, my

³² Clyde T. Francisco, *Genesis, The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Volume I Revised (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), 125.

project reinforced the importance of being one body in Christ in order to set aside our differences and proclaim the gospel in the Robbins community.

Exodus of Israel

The Exodus story has been one of the greatest examples of how an amazing God loved His people in such a way that He took the time to create a divine plan to set them free from the Egyptian bondage. The biblical accounts have shown the lessons that God taught His people, the Israelites. The Lord showed mercy toward them in the way that He carefully chose Moses as the leader who was to follow his instructions every step of the way. When Moses heard God's voice through the burning bush, he felt His presence and he knew that he had been called to carry out the most difficult task of his life. Throughout all of that, Moses struggled to understand how to confront and convince Pharaoh to free the Israelites from bondage. After a long discussion with the Lord, Moses understood that no one would prevent him from carrying out God's divine order. When Moses confronted Pharaoh, and after suffering from ten deadly plagues, Pharaoh eventually freed the Israelites.

Throughout the four hundred years of slavery, the Israelites could not help but interact with other enslaved cultures. Scripture reads, "Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. And a mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock" (Exodus 12:37-38). The Exodus account shows how a diverse group was seen as one before God. Even though the setting of the event was not a

pleasant one, there is biblical evidence of multiracial groups who were part of the Exodus. In reference to this passage, John H. Tullock shares an insight as he notes,

The last blow was struck! Pharaoh had had enough! Summoning Moses and Aaron, he told them to take their families and animals and leave. Their Egyptian neighbors also were anxious for the Israelites to leave, even giving them jewelry and clothing. From Rameses, they set out to Succoth, a company of Israelites accompanied by a 'mixed multitude' (12:38), who presumably were non-Israelite.³³

Tullock's statement is another example of how people from different cultures were seen by God as one in the way He cared for them regardless of their circumstances. God's perfect plan was fulfilled with the liberation of the mixed multitude of people. In the present day, there is still the opportunity for groups from various ethnic backgrounds to participate in this type of inclusive fellowship. Thus, the intention of my project was to recreate a similar scenario. Similar to how God literally freed the multi-cultural group and brought them together in exile, I hoped that through this project the Latino and Anglo participants would be freed from their historically and culturally segregated approach to worship. The interactions and blended worship experiences were intentional so that the group would be able to learn from first-hand experience the way the Lord worked wonders in our midst as we participated in the various cross-cultural activities.

Woe to Jerusalem and the Nations

When pastors study the Old Testament, they are aware of the vast blending of races that existed in those days. In his book, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, J. Daniels Hays writes, "It is probably safe to conclude that the

³³ John H. Tullock and Mark McEntire, *The Old Testament Story*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 1960), 74.

Israelites of the Old Testament had numerous ‘ethnic’ affinities with their neighbors in and around Palestine and that the lines of ethnic demarcation were not hard and fast.”³⁴

Upon reading this, I became more aware that the two topics of race and ethnicity were deeply rooted in the Bible. Not only that, but they also played a crucial role because the majority of these ethnic groups were somehow connected to the people of God. In addition, I was able to incorporate a solid biblical foundation for my project and prove that my goal was supported by the accounts of the Old Testament. These blurred racial lines facilitated a wide-ranging acceptance of previously marginalized and excluded cultures. Hays notes, “However, a fairly strong consensus is emerging among scholars today that the early Egyptians were probably a mixture of both Black African elements and Asiatic elements.”³⁵ Based on Hays’ clarification, I am reminded that the Lord of the Old Testament is the same of the New Testament in regards to not showing partiality towards a particular ethnic group or tribe. Instead, he is and will always be a universal God. He continuously provides evidence of this by carrying out his divine and redemptive purpose towards humanity, regardless of language or skin color.

Throughout the Old Testament, there are numerous accounts in reference to the unity, interaction, and inclusion of various cultures. In Leviticus, Christians find God’s command to the Israelites to treat people from other ethnicities as their own. Scripture reads, “The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34). This passage in the Old Testament teaches the direct

³⁴ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 31.

³⁵ Hays, 40.

inclusion of those who belong to a different culture and speak another language than the people of God, the Israelites. This passage clearly emphasizes the importance of not differentiating between themselves and their neighbors. Although the Israelites did not feel that they had to treat other racial groups as equals, they learned to obey God's command and incorporated them into their communities.

In a similar way, the Prophet Isaiah shared a word of hope with the people of God as he echoed his powerful message by stating, "Then it will come about in that day That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and his resting place will be glorious" (Isaiah 11:10). Isaiah's words are indeed one of the primary texts in the Bible that allude to the fact that the Lord would send his Son to the Israelites who were in the process of being disciplined by him for their rebellious behavior. Despite that, God gave hope to his people while Isaiah proclaimed a righteous reign of the Messiah who would come as a descendant of Jesse. The message of unity in diversity is well defined by the writers from the Old Testament.

As I read the Old Testament accounts, I was aware that the various racial groups had problems interacting with each other. While comparing God's message from the creation through Isaiah's proclamation of hope to the Israelites, there is a pattern of his embracement of cross-cultural inclusiveness. In connection with his message, the purpose of the implementation of my project was to unify two cultures in my ministry setting. I guided both groups, Latino/Anglo, to a more developed lifestyle as the people of God. I reminded them of the biblical mandate of being one body in Christ and encouraged them to step out from their traditional perspectives of being two different segregated groups, functioning independently of each other, while living out the Christian

life. In addition, I motivated them to embrace each other as one family despite the differences of language and culture.

New Testament

When church members read the book of Revelation, they are told that before the end of time people from all over the world will become part of God's family. John writes, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb'" (Revelation 7:9-10).

In these and many other passages, Christians learn that God has never shown partiality towards humanity. On the contrary, his love and mercy have always been a part of his divine essence. Before Jesus died, was buried, and resurrected, there was a great deal of prejudice between Jews and Gentiles. However, according to biblical accounts, his death demolished the dividing wall between them and made them part of the same family of God. Paul alluded to that when he wrote to the church in Ephesus, "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:3-6). After reading these passages, I am fully convinced that God never intended to be partial in any way. Instead, he has demonstrated his nature as a loving and caring God for all of humanity despite his/her nationality.

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

In regards to the implementation of the project, an important component was to teach a four-week bilingual Bible study based on John 4:1-26 (see Appendix C). The purpose of the study was to encourage the experimental group to interact with each other through joint Bible studies, worship, fellowship, and prayer. In doing so, I evaluated the interactions of the cross-cultural group by handing out surveys that helped me assess the outcomes of the activities. During the bilingual Bible study, I addressed the following topics:

Week I the Samaritan Woman: Her Culture John 4:1-9 (October 6, 2013)

Week II the Samaritan Woman: Her Fears John 4:10-11 (October 13, 2013)

Week III the Samaritan Woman: Her Tradition John 4:12-18 (October 20th, 2013)

Week IV the Samaritan Woman: Her Misconceptions John 4:19-26 (October 27, 2013)

John's account of the Samaritan woman gives Christians insight into the hostility between two ethnic groups, Jews and Samaritans, and displays how Jesus and the Samaritan woman overcame the racial barrier that had existed for centuries. When the Samaritan woman went to draw water from the well, she did not have any idea of what was going to happen to her. Leon Morris' *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John* explains, "Jesus had been at work in Judea. The next incident John narrates took place in Samaritan territory; therefore, John

inserts a brief section to explain this change of scene.”³⁶ Morris’ comment gives a broader perspective of the encounter between Jesus and the woman from Samaria and focuses on the geographic area where the event took place.

John shares an interesting comment as a preparation of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman. “There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food” (John 4:7). I believe that John gives an appropriate narrative in reference to the face to face dialogue that took place. He also prepares his readers in order to encourage them to the life-changing event in the life of the woman from Samaria.

Through his accounts, John reaffirms the fact that two people from different ethnic backgrounds can embrace their cultures and interact in a respectful manner with each other in spite of their differences. Jesus’ dialogue and instructional interaction with the woman from Samaria in John 4:1-26 support my rationale. In reference to the Samaritan woman, she experienced a culture shock when she met Jesus at Jacob’s well. Jesus, on the other hand, did not talk about cultural differences. Instead, he concentrated on sharing the gospel with the Samaritan woman by making a perfect connection between water and salvation. For instance, John recorded Jesus’ words when he stated, “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life’” (John 4:13). With this example Jesus offers to quench both physical and spiritual thirst for all. Jesus’ teaching is the ultimate example of how Christians should strive to communicate

³⁶ Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 222.

the gospel to all cultures. Jesus' reference to "whoever" again establishes that his water is intended for all of humankind.

Joel C. Elousky quotes Theodore of Mopsuestia in regards to this availability of water for all people.

In a similar way also the virtue of this water provides the one who receives it with perpetual help and will always preserve him and not allow him to perish. Therefore, the one who receives this grace will never reach death. He said what he did for good reason, because this is what the virtue of the Spirit is.³⁷

As Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman, he helped her realize that salvation was better than drinking earthly water. He taught her that the living water would definitely last forever because he, the author of salvation, was willing to give her eternal life by forgiving her sins. This gesture again clearly established the universality of Jesus' offer to help and save any man or woman that should drink from his water.

Towards the end of the narration, John makes a smooth transition by writing about the way Jesus took control of the situation and, at the same time, encouraged the woman from Samaria that neither religion nor tradition was as important as experiencing the new life in him. Besides that, John is also careful about the way he interconnects both cultures as he portrays the reality that it is possible to have cross-cultural connectedness, embrace cultural differences, and experience diversity.

Peter and Cornelius

The book of Acts presents many different perspectives concerning the interrelationships of diverse people. In Chapter 2, Luke narrates the coming of the Holy

³⁷ Joel C. Elouisky, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament IVA John 1-10 (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2006), 152.

Spirit at Pentecost which fulfilled his promise of preparing them to proclaim the gospel. Through this experience, the disciples were empowered to proclaim the gospel in a courageous way. Because of the Holy Spirit working in their lives, many people believed, repented, and were baptized. The Lord blessed the effective witnessing of the disciples in a way that those who were saved began to gather in the temple and in homes to study the word of God. The disciples fully obeyed Jesus' command to reach all nations, and people from different ethnicities responded to the gospel and they too were saved.

By the time Christians read Acts 10, some hostility began to rise from Jews towards Gentiles. As the number of believers grew, cultural traditions began to emerge as a dividing force. For example, when Peter was called to Cornelius's home, God used this particular event to teach him an important lesson. Given the racial purity emphasized by Jews, Peter felt uncomfortable interacting with the Gentiles who had gathered with Cornelius. However, upon realizing that the purpose of their gathering was to learn more about God, Peter was able to set aside his racial bias and shared the gospel with them. Luke writes about Peter addressing the crowd and Cornelius, "And he said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean'" (Acts 10:28). This transformation in Peter set a precedent for how the early church, and all churches, should interpret and carry out the Great Commission.

Using Peter's experience, one of the purposes of the project was to increase the cross-cultural experiences between the Latino parishioners and the Anglo church by establishing that God gave his only Son to die for all people in the world. Therefore,

Christians should be willing to embrace diversity and make an effort to worship the same Lord in one unified spirit. In reference to unification, Luke shares a good insight as he writes about the early church, “And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common” (Acts 2:43). Luke’s accounts of the early church give us a glimpse of what heaven will be like in the future, becoming one unified body without any cultural barriers whatsoever. This harmonious and cohesive unit is what I set out to follow with my project.

Personal Rationale

If God allows me to continue to serve for several more years at the Latino congregation in Robbins, I would like to persevere with my vision of having a series of cross-cultural events more frequently between Anglo and Latino parishioners. It is not only my conviction that churches from various cultural backgrounds should be more open-minded to embracing other ethnicities other than their own, but it is also the reality that all of us have to face and do something about. If churches prefer to preserve their traditional way of ministering in their communities by focusing only on their culture, they will not only remain as plateau churches, but sadly, some of them will even die spiritually without a vision of expanding their outreach to different cultures. Multiracial churches are not just a new movement that emerged in recent years, but instead, are very much rooted in Scripture.

The effort to become accepting of other races needs to be part of our lives today. This project needed to be implemented in my congregation now that the Senior Pastor is

very supportive, the leadership was willing to be somewhat inclusive, and both groups were open to embracing each other. If the Senior Pastor resigns and the next one has a different vision of not being inclusive, it is possible that both groups would go back to their own traditional pattern of ministering totally segregated from each other, without any cross-cultural interactions whatsoever. This was therefore the opportune moment for making the movement toward racial inclusion more intentional

Historical

When parishioners read the history of the church, they learn that in its 2,000 years of existence it has been through many harsh times in regards to its beliefs, in its freedom to proclaim the gospel, and in its ability to worship in a free manner. Sadly, the existence of mono-cultural congregations in a multicultural society is a distinctively modern phenomenon with no clear historical precedents. As proven throughout the Old and New Testaments, Christians are provided with God's plan for inclusion of all people. Part of my project had to do with the fact that God's people should not allow any barrier to hinder both congregations from being one united family, which in turn would reflect the love of God to every person in the community. Kenneth A. Mathews shares an interesting insight in his work entitled *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation* as he writes, "In the United States, racial discrimination in public venues was prohibited in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. No longer can discrimination against racial minorities impede voting rights, integrated housing, and equal hiring opportunities."³⁸ The problem of race has been a serious and highly debated

³⁸ Kenneth A. Mathews & M. Sydney Park, *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, Academic & Professional, 2011), 17.

issue for centuries. This observation helps provide even more historical perspective into the well-established cultural divide affecting many of today's churches.

Civic order recognized inclusion as a positive phenomenon and has seen that discrimination and segregation in the civic order are illegal. The church, on the other hand, has its own scriptures and traditions that have utilized resources to argue for inclusion beyond simply affirming what the civic order has done. Despite the fact that there had not been historical facts about multiracial churches, there is evidence that God raised leaders who would attempt to have multiethnic congregations and who would succeed to a certain extent. It was not easy, but at the same time, these courageous leaders were willing to pay the price of facing many obstacles in their ministry.

One example is Curtiss Paul DeYoung's *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as An Answer to The Problem of Race*. In the section on the Emergence of Multiracial Congregations he writes, "A small group of African American religious leaders made a pilgrimage to India in 1935. Among those on the journey was mystic theologian Howard Thurman, who would become the foremost proponent of racial reconciliation in the United States from the 1940s through the 1970s."³⁹ When I read accounts of Thurman's multiracial congregation initiative in India, I thought that going through the process of racial reconciliation would be a smooth transition. However, as I kept reading, I was aware that it was not that easy, and it became a progressive and lengthy process. For instance, church leaders were the only ones willing to implement changes in the church without support from other Christian leaders in the community. According to DeYoung's accounts, leaders like Thurman and Khyber Pass confronted many other difficult situations and were able to overcome every one of them.

³⁹ DeYoung, 62.

The historical accounts state that “Nearly ten years after the visionary experience in the Khyber Pass in India, Howard Thurman embraced an opportunity to make this vision a reality in the setting of a local congregation-- the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, California.”⁴⁰ This development changed the history of the church mainly because it was a drastic move from being a segregated group to a culturally diverse and inclusive congregation. The effort to become a blended church was only a minor contribution to the change of the general perspective of the church as customary and as traditional as the church was back in those days. Perhaps, the majority of the Christian leaders opposed the non-traditional shift in the church in such a way that they did not think that change would create a tremendous transformation within the church itself. According to the historical facts, “The resident membership of Fellowship Church was always multiracial. During Howard Thurman’s nine-year tenure, the congregation was about 60 percent white, 35 percent African American, and 5 percent Asian and Hispanic.”⁴¹ Thurman’s desire to have an inclusive congregation is one example of how drastic changes can be made wisely and progressively in the church without creating a rift. The positive outcome proves that the impossible became a reality within the life of the congregation, at least within Fellowship Church.

As a result of Thurman’s courageous attitude, his vision touched other leaders and churches as well. Despite the fact that there are few multiracial congregations, the evidence remains as DeYoung and his co-editors note, “Multiracial congregations are still few and far between. In our work with the Multiracial Congregations Project we discovered that only 5½ percent of Christian congregations in the United States are

⁴⁰ DeYoung, 63.

⁴¹ DeYoung, 65.

multiracial (less than 80 percent of the membership is from any one racial group)).⁴²

These statistics are indeed astounding. This also presents a clear picture of how the church has remained in its traditional and closed minded stage. Having read this, I felt led by God to begin to make a change to this statistic in the small community of Robbins.

The church has been in existence for 2,000 years. The church can reflect on this history and conclude that it has not experienced many changes. The delay can be attributed to the fact that throughout much of its history, the dominant race has been predominantly white in European and North American contexts (the situation is different in the two-thirds world). Unless there is an intentional effort to embrace diversity, the situation is likely to remain the same in the future. Apart from all of the obstacles faced by those leaders who have been willing to give their lives to embrace diversity, progress will eventually be made in the years to come. DeYoung concludes the chapter as he comments,

The twenty-first century holds the potential to be the century of the multiracial congregation, despite the relatively small percentage such churches represent among total congregations. The broad population shifts taking place in the United States are expected by the midpoint of the century to produce a country with a racial demographic that is very diverse and without a numeric majority.⁴³

Even though there have been various laws that prohibited segregation, the ongoing battle between different racial groups continues to the present day. This matter has infiltrated the church, and there is a great deal of animosity among parishioners. One of the results has been the segregation of ethnic groups by worshipping in separate

⁴² DeYoung, 74.

⁴³ DeYoung, 74.

facilities within the same building. However, Mathews offers one alternative to the problem of a segregated church as he adds,

The answer resides in the European philosophical movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries known as the Enlightenment. This intellectual movement elevated the moral capacity of human reason and civility, contending that reason and the essential goodness of human character were universal traits that could result in universal peace and equity.⁴⁴

Mathews' position is that the church has reasons for inclusion beyond universal peace rather than arguing that the philosophical perspective is the key to solve the problem of inclusion in the church. However, the correlation with my project is that I expected the participants' innate desire for universal peace between both of the congregations to lead to unification during the events. I did not anticipate there being much, if any, resistance amongst the parishioners. Instead, the cross-cultural integration and fellowship enhanced their biblical understanding of how both congregations could be the people of God as they ministered in a common setting.

Mathews comments on the percentage of multiethnic churches in the U.S. as he adds,

Sociologist George Yancey defines a multiethnic church by percentages of ethnic representation in worship services. He found that only 8 percent of U.S. churches are racially integrated. The number of churches that are fully integrated in leadership and worship style is significantly lower.⁴⁵

The questions that come to mind in regards to these statistics include the following: What kind of perspective does the church have in reference to being totally integrated? Are they missing the biblical foundation of believing in the one true God

⁴⁴ Mathews, *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation*, 23.

⁴⁵ Mathews, 33.

who created us equal in order to have a close relationship with him and one another?
 Have churches gone astray from God's original purpose of calling and choosing those
 who have faith in him to be the light of the world and salt of the earth?

Theological

The Image of God

As congregants study theology, they learn about God's essence, love, power, and compassion. I believe this uniqueness is the crucial starting point that parishioners seriously need to consider before they draw their own theological conclusions in reference to the nature of God. When Christians take this into consideration, they will then have a broader perspective of how God's universal love works on earth as he carries out his plan for humanity. Stanley J. Grenz refers to God's plan as, "The Universality of God."⁴⁶ Grenz's reference to this universality indicates that God's love was not limited to Jews but, instead, extends to all. Aside from that, Christians need to consider the creation account and, specifically, the fact that humanity was created in the image of God. Scripture narrates God's purpose when He gave life to Adam as it reads, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). This particular passage makes reference to the creation story by which God embedded his likeness in Adam. By doing so, he created humanity with the ability to love all of humankind. When believers read this passage, they are reminded that God did not focus on cultural preference or the ethnicity of humanity, but rather, God's inclusivity is shown in his creative work of art. Since humanity was formed with

⁴⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 32.

these divine characteristics in mind, humanity should fulfill God's purpose as the crown of creation on earth.

Grenz elaborates on the topic of blended congregations by referencing a biblical example from the first century church. He adds, "The early church inherited the debate concerning the universality of God. At the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) the inclusivists won a decisive battle. The church leaders concluded that Gentiles need not become Jews in order to join the community of faith."⁴⁷ The verdict by the Jerusalem council demonstrates how the church should also personify the universality of God. The inclusion of Gentiles in the church is a perfect example of my vision and purpose for the ongoing cross-cultural experiences that I intended to carry out in my ministry setting.

In reference to God's image reflected in humankind, Grenz shares the traditional stance on this concept. He writes, "The classic view understands the image of God primarily as an anthropological concept. Being a formal structure of the human person, the divine image is something we 'possess' and it includes the properties which constitute us as human beings."⁴⁸ Grenz's observation indicates that these divine characteristics literally identify humanity's nature. Grenz's comment is a direct correlation with God's original plan for creating humanity. Since the structural view supports that the physical and spiritual entities are one, these characteristics should be carried out by all Christians.

Continuing on the topic of humanity consisting of God's likeness, Grenz references Martin Luther as Luther writes about the relational view. Grenz explains, "In its place Martin Luther offered a unitary view of original righteousness that the

⁴⁷ Grenz, 32.

⁴⁸ Grenz, 169.

scholastics relegated to the divine likeness.”⁴⁹ I believe that Luther makes a good point due to the fact that God is the only one who has the authority to manifest his divine image in the life of the individual whom he created. At the same time, he gave humanity the ability to seek him so that he would establish the relationship intended by God since the creation story.

God created man a sociable person with the freedom to interact with the rest of humanity, especially with his creator. For instance, the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner comments on the image of God and its role in humanity. He states, “Here, therefore, the fact that humanity has been ‘made in the image of God’ is spoken of as having been lost, and indeed as wholly and not partially lost. Humanity no longer possesses this *Imago Dei*: but it is restored through Him, through whom God glorifies and gives Himself: through Jesus Christ.”⁵⁰ Brunner’s statement is evidenced after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they were separated from God and there was no hope for them. It was only after they asked God for forgiveness and repented of their sin that they were able to restore their relationship with him. God further showed his love and mercy toward humanity by allowing Jesus Christ to be sacrificed despite the reality that man was lost (Romans 5:8). Through these acts of love, God attempted to reestablish the image that humanity had lost because of sin.

The First Sin

The book of Genesis has the greatest spiritual treasure as it narrates the beginning of creation. In Chapter One, God separated the waters from the earth and established the

⁴⁹ Grenz, 170.

⁵⁰ Emil Brunner, *On the Image of God*, in *The Christian Theology Reader*, 444

creation of light. In Chapter Two, the Lord created man and woman. Up until that point, everything was going smoothly until Chapter Three which tells about the disobedience of Adam and Eve. By the time parishioners read this section, there is a huge shift of events. As a result of the fall of humanity, there were several serious consequences. First of all, Adam and Eve became aware that they were naked. When they knew of their sin, they blamed it on each other.

Unfortunately, the relationship between God and humanity had been broken due to humanity's disobedience. In addition, Adam and Eve felt the burden of their sin. They knew that they were guilty and that there was nothing they could do but suffer the consequences. Grenz elaborates on this as he states, "The Genesis story teaches that in the midst of the bliss of the Garden, the first human pair chose to disobey the divine prohibition and thereby plunged humanity into sin."⁵¹ In this section of the Bible a clear division is established between humanity and his creator. Shortly after, Adam and Eve realized that there was no hope for them, and everything seemed to be lost. Adam and Eve had nowhere to go, but, most importantly, they were separated from the divine presence of their maker.

This account is relevant to my project in that when both congregations are isolated from each other, it is similar to what Adam and Eve experienced when they sinned against God. When a diverse group decides to ignore its brothers and sisters in Christ, the separation is obvious, and it creates a huge gap between them. Therefore, the unification of both groups was my goal, as well as to encourage both congregations to take one step further and make an effort to connect with those who have been saved by the Son of God. I served as the liaison who guided and assisted them in overcoming their

⁵¹ Grenz, 191.

barriers. I believe that both congregations achieved the unity that Paul taught to the church of Galatia when he wrote, “There is neither a Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Christology

When Christians study Christology, the person and work of Christ, they learn many important facts. For example, this study not only focuses on who Christ is but also on the work that he does as it centers on the divinity of Christ. Once believers establish that Christ’s nature is divine, they can proceed by learning about his life on earth. When believers learn about the true nature of Christ, they know that since Christ is indeed the Son of God, it also means that God has the exact same essence and purpose for humanity. Jesus does not show preference towards mankind; instead, his nature is to do his Father’s Will. At the same time, Jesus’ universality is shown in the fact that he died on the cross for every person so that he/she could have eternal life through faith in him.

Grenz shares how God’s will is shown through his people. He writes, “Humans are also the objects of God’s reconciling work. In this way, the doctrine of humankind is the bridge to the remaining doctrines of systematic theology. The remainder of our systematic theology is the explication of this gracious activity of God, especially as it is carried forth by the Son and the Spirit.”⁵² Grenz explains that God’s plan is intended to be carried out by Christians. The connection to my project was to teach both groups cultural awareness and, most of all, the urgency of being the people of God by reflecting

⁵² Grenz, 244.

His love and mercy as they fellowshiped and practiced a progressive closeness with each other.

All church members ought to read, interpret, and practice the biblical texts in such a way that it will help them live the Christian life the way Christ taught and lived it. Despite the fact that there have been a great deal of ongoing struggles between Latino and Anglo parishioners on whether or not to fellowship with each other, both congregations have come a long way according to the church's history. There have been some rough times, and both groups have learned to gradually set aside their differences and come together as the people of God on various occasions.

Christians must set aside their own racial perspectives in regards to the practice of the elements of theology and must immerse themselves into the most valuable treasures of the living God by giving the Holy Spirit time to teach them his ways. In addition, every church member should conduct a personal inventory of the way he/she has been practicing Christianity and surrender to the sovereignty of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the supremacy of Christ. If church members are willing to pay this costly price, their perception and practice of being a Christian will perfectly match the intention of the all mighty God for his people. At that point, believers would be in agreement with Paul when he wrote to the Ephesians, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-5).

Soteriology

Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, is the essential experience in which humanity reestablishes their relationship with his creator by having faith in Jesus who died on the cross. Soteriology is the doctrine that has been misused and neglected by Christians throughout centuries. Knowing this, pastors, theologians, scholars, and laypersons have done their best to proclaim the reality that forgiveness of sin is only obtained by faith in Christ. Athanasius of Alexandria, one of the great church fathers of the fourth century, talks about the connection between Christology and Soteriology as he states,

If the works of the divinity of the Word had not taken place through a body, humanity would not have been made divine. But now the Word became human and took as his own the properties of the flesh. Thus, because of the Word which has come in humanity, these attributes (death and corruption) no longer pertain to the flesh, but have been destroyed in the body by the Word.⁵³

Athanasius' statement highlights the sacrifice and suffering that Jesus endured for humanity. His love was clearly shown when he died on the cross, taking the sins of humankind in order to provide the way to heaven. According to Scripture, Jesus gave his life voluntarily for all of humanity regardless of their ethnicity. Just like the Father, Jesus did not show partiality for any particular race. Instead, he willingly took the sins of the world and opened the way to salvation for everyone who had faith in him. Jesus' universal love is directly connected and related to my project. This same biblical foundation helped guide the diverse group towards a cross-cultural experience that will hopefully become an ongoing fellowship and interaction without any racial barriers.

⁵³ Alister E. McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA, University of Oxford Blackwell Publishers 2001), 332-33.

Pneumatology

Pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is fundamentally important to Christianity. For centuries, believers have practiced the foundational doctrines of their faith. Christians are well known for their belief in the doctrine of the Trinity which means that there is one God who is comprised of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Believers have typically been limited in allowing the Holy Spirit to fully manifest himself in their lives. The emphasis is normally placed on the love of God and that Jesus provided the way to salvation by having faith in him. However, believers often do not sufficiently emphasize the urgency of allowing the Spirit to guide them and carry on God's will in their lives.

In contrast to Baptists, Pentecostals have tended to give greater liberty to the Holy Spirit through their experience of "the manifestation of the Spirit." For instance, the Pentecostal tradition has intended to be radically inclusive inasmuch as they readily embrace anyone in whom they see the work of the Spirit, regardless of race. However, the church fathers did an excellent job as they recognized the purpose of the Holy Spirit. Alister McGrath cites Basil of Caesarea as he writes, "Capable of perfecting others, the Spirit himself lacks nothing. He is not a being who needs to restore his strength, but himself supplies life; he does not grow by additions, but possesses abundant fullness; he abides in himself, but is also present everywhere."⁵⁴ McGrath's comment gives a broader understanding about the identity of the Spirit. He also emphasizes the fact that the Spirit is indeed the giver of life and is self-dependent in essence and divine nature, just like the rest of the Trinity. In understanding this truth, believers are aware that neither member of

⁵⁴ McGrath, 183.

the Trinity shows partiality towards humanity. I used this truth as a foundation for the direct interaction that took place between the Latino and Anglo congregations in my ministry setting.

Paul alludes to this topic as he writes,

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity, (Ephesians 2:13-16).

In light of this passage, I encouraged the diverse groups to take further steps of faith by taking the time to intentionally mingle and learn from each other's differences and goals for their spiritual walk with Christ. I also participated in a direct manner by acting as a liaison and being involved in every possible opportunity to guide them to engage in a more direct approach. In the midst of that, the role of the Holy Spirit was essential as he worked in the lives of the parishioners by helping them set aside their cultural differences and by reminding them that they were one family redeemed by the blood of Christ. In addition, I led the diverse group in a careful manner to be active participants in the bilingual Bible study and the community-wide missionary event.

Ecclesiology

Similar to Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, is also an essential belief for Christianity. When parishioners study this doctrine, they learn that it is the foundation on which they grow as they take time to know each other as they

fellowship as the body of Christ. Ecclesiology also includes the nature and tasks of the local church which are to share the gospel and to be the living witness of the God-given transformation to those who are lost in the community and in the world. This doctrine would be helpful for every congregation to be fully aware of its mission in its own setting. Without a mission, the church would not fulfill its purpose according to God's original plan. Grenz gives an accurate definition of the church as he writes, "Fundamentally, the church of Jesus Christ is neither a building nor an organization. Rather, it is a people, a special people, a people who see themselves as standing in relationship to God who saves them and to each other as those who share in this salvation."⁵⁵

In a similar way, the Latino-Anglo congregations at First Baptist Church of Robbins have been striving to be the salt of the earth and light of the world. In spite of their cultural differences, both groups have been attempting to overcome their fears by participating in a variety of events by being an inclusive congregation as they embrace Latino parishioners as members of the same body of Christ and by celebrating joint baptismal services whenever possible. The transition has been slow and gradual. The outcomes have shown that it is possible for two different groups to come together as one body in Christ. Paul touches on the same topic as he writes, "for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household (Ephesians 2:18-19).

⁵⁵ Grenz, 464.

Eschatology

Eschatology, the doctrine of the last things, teaches about the events that will take place soon before the second coming of Christ. Through this particular doctrine, Christians are given a description of how they will suffer because of their faith in Jesus. When Christians hear about the final events before the end of the world, the average person panics because there would be no hope in the catastrophic society. A good starting point for the person who fears the imminent events is to surrender his/her life to Christ in order to receive salvation. Once this decision has been made, the individual will no longer have a trembling feeling when reading about the coming of Christ. Instead, there will be a joyful and positive expectation of Jesus' return rather than feeling hopeless in the world. McGrath comments on Rudolph Bultmann's *Existential Interpretation of Eschatology* and writes, "In the preaching of the Christian church the eschatological event will ever again become present and does become present ever and again in faith. The old world has reached its end for the believer; he is a 'new creature in Christ.'"⁵⁶ McGrath's statement assures that the believer has experienced a new birth through Christ.

Scripture mentions the rejoicing of the saints upon the imminent return of Jesus Christ. John writes, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands" (Revelation 7:9). John's narrative echoes the importance of my project. The implementation urged the mixed congregation to develop a deeper understanding that there is no favoritism among God's people. His love united people from every part of the

⁵⁶ McGrath, 632.

world. He bought the believer through the blood of Jesus. Therefore, individuals from all parts of the world can be members of the family of God.

CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Evaluating Research Groups

The implementation of the project took a great deal of work between the Senior Pastor and me. From the beginning of the recruiting process for my project, I was confident that the church as a whole would agree to support me. Encouraging members from both congregations to be a part of the four-week bilingual Bible study seemed plausible because both congregations had been participating in various joint events over the last four years. Given these prior interactions, implementing my project did not seem too farfetched. I decided to recruit twelve participants from each group, which would provide some leeway in case someone was to withdraw or not follow through. Once I began the recruiting phase, I realized that not all of the participants responded by the deadline I had initially established. As far as securing Latino volunteers, I did not think that they would commit to the month-long bilingual Bible study (see Appendix C). To my surprise, even those who were not active parishioners showed up for the event and continued until the end.

As we progressed through the bilingual Bible study series, I heard several positive comments from both cultural groups expressing their enjoyment in being part of the bilingual Bible studies, and being able to fellowship with their brother/sister in Christ. One young Anglo stated, “Wow, I never thought I would be part of such a unique event in my life, especially in church. I hang out with Latino friends at school almost every day, but this was an awesome experience for me.” This comment helps illustrate how social interactions with Latinos had been experienced in a school setting, but had not

reached spiritual interactions while at church. This separation was precisely the issue that I set out to accomplish with this project.

Once the implementation portion of my project was complete, I made it a point to speak to and thank all of those who volunteered. I wanted to make sure that these cross-cultural interactions were not isolated incidents, but on the contrary, the beginning of many more to come. I approached an Anglo gentleman who did not participate in the Bible studies but helped out during the community-wide event after church one Sunday and was pleased to hear his response. He mentioned that even though he only participated in one event, he was very happy to have been able to get to know the Latino volunteers, and work together to help their community. I asked him if he would be willing to write a short statement about his experience that day, and he gladly consented to help out. (see Appendix E). In his statement, the Anglo wrote, “All of the people I worked with were hispanic [sic] or they were people in the church that I didn’t know, It was great that we could come together for a common cause, I really enjoyed that day and Im [sic] hoping we can get together again *very* soon.” Hearing and reading this man’s reaction to his experience that day reassured me that the Lord had accomplished his work through his people.

Some of the Latino volunteers shared a few positive comments with me as well. Many were happy to have been able to collaborate with their Anglo counterparts and approached me on several occasions to express their willingness to participate in another event. One Latino volunteer mentioned that he had never interacted with an Anglo person in a church setting. He was willing to write a personal statement of reflection and shared the impact that the experience had on him, (see Appendix E). He wrote,

Trabajar juntamente con nuestros hermanos Americanos fue una verdadera experiencia [sic] y aprendí a convivir y ha [sic] hacer compañerismo [sic] con ellos y he aprendido hacer amigo y eh [sic] encontrado que son muy buenas personas./ Working with our American brothers was a true experience and I learned to interact and fellowship with them and I learned to make friends and I found that they are very good people.

This particular response demonstrated this volunteer's personal growth as well as his newfound perspective of the other culture. He mentioned that the only positive interactions he previously had with Anglos were with his supervisor, who was the only nice Anglo he had ever met. He seemed very happy to know that those types of good people were also there within the same church, and also willing to work closely with him. This Latino member also expressed his gratitude with the project because his home was also one of the five that the group worked on during the community-wide event.⁵⁷ He joked that he was twice as blessed as everyone else because he also had a clean yard to go home to.

Another Latino youth approached me after church one day and mentioned that, while he was not able to attend every Bible study, he really enjoyed being a part of the community-wide event. He explained that because of his limited English, he had not dealt with many Anglos, even while he was in high school. He was also a new believer, and had not had any prior interactions with Anglos within a church. He shared,

Bueno fue una linda experiencias [sic] poder alludar [sic] a los demas hermanos y poder compartir nuestras culturas juntos y brindarles nuestra allude [sic] a los que nesecitan [sic] por que [sic] dios asi lo quiere y por que [sic] todos somos hijos de dios./ Well it was a beautiful experience being able to help the other brothers and to be able to share our cultures together and offer our help to those in need because that is how God wants it because we are all His children. (see Appendix E).

⁵⁷ See Chapter Two

Hearing and reading this young man's personal reflection spoke volumes to me because I truly believed that the best way to address the cultural divide within our church was through the youth in our church. These young members are the future of our congregations and having them learn such a powerful lesson at an early age could serve as the ground work towards a more spiritually centered church.

Evaluating Project Goals

The transition from being segregated congregations to those willing to participate in a cross-cultural experience was not easy, but it happened when those involved committed themselves to work towards it. By stepping out of their comfort zones and taking the time to learn about each other's cultural differences, the congregations worked hand in hand and proclaimed the good news of the gospel to people in need. As I mentioned at the beginning pages 21-27, I had three specific goals that were the main purpose of my project. These goals were to: (1) bridge the gap between Anglo and Latino congregations and help them embrace diversity as one body united by the blood of Christ, (2) enhance their awareness of unity in Christ and strengthen their relationships, and (3) deepen the bond between the Senior Pastor, the church leadership, and members of the church through the interactive joint activities among the Anglo and Latino congregations. While challenging, these goals proved to be attainable through the various events that the volunteers participated in.

In attempting to address the gap that has long existed between the Anglos and Latinos within our church, I hoped that the various events would lead the participants to a better understanding of God's will. As I previously mentioned, working towards this

goal was not an easy task, given the tension and the great divide that had separated the groups for so long. Through the willingness and determination of the volunteers during the cross-cultural efforts, this gap was drastically improved. One Latino member shared his personal account of this process as he noted,

At first I was a little nervous as to how I would work alongside people from the Anglo congregation as well as some of the Hispanic members. This nervousness was quickly replaced by teamwork and friendship. As we split up into blended groups, I was able to get to know some of the other members and become more comfortable as the time passed, (see Appendix E).

This reflection helps to emphasize the initial nervousness that was probably felt by all, and then the gradual increase in the comfort level through the group interactions. It is interesting to note that this particular volunteer was only able to attend one of the bilingual Bible studies but made sure to attend the community-wide event.⁵⁸ In knowing this, one can better understand the impact that the event had on a person that was willing to be led by God. The activity itself broke the cultural and traditional patterns that have been a hurdle for both congregations for years. The community-wide event was not only the culmination of my project, but also managed to have a lasting impact in the community of Robbins.

Another focus of my project was to not only bridge the cultural gap between the two cultural groups but to also help the groups become aware of the unity that exists through Jesus, and to help strengthen the relationship between the groups. I feel confident that this particular goal was accomplished given the level of camaraderie that was experienced by the participants. Having worked with the Latino mission for over six years, I noticed the difference in how the groups have reacted after the project

⁵⁸ See Chapter Two

interactions that they were guided through. During the fifth Sunday breakfasts, there was minimal Latino attendance, and those that did attend, only sat with other Latinos. In the breakfast fellowships since the community-wide event, I have noticed that the participants now approach each other and engage in meaningful conversations. The members that participated in the events seem to have much more positive interactions with each other than before the events.

Yet another example of the strengthening of the relationship between the groups has been the testimony that the recipients of home repairs have been able to share with others. The Senior Pastor shared a comment from the family that owned the home where the young Latino male had to make the risky climb during our time there. When the Senior Pastor and I decided to work on this particular home, we did it with the intention of surprising the elderly couple, since the husband was hospitalized. To our surprise, the home owner's mother, who does not attend First Baptist Church of Robbins, lived across the street and was keeping an eye on the home while the couple spent many weeks at the hospital. The wife received a frantic call from her mother who explained, in disbelief, the kind gesture that was being shown to them.

Once the couple came home from the hospital, the wife mentioned that she stood in her driveway and shed tears of joy and amazement at the work that was done to their home. The mother later spoke to the Senior Pastor and relayed her astonishment and appreciation to the group. She stated, "I wish I had a church like yours, where people of all kinds can work together, love each other and serve the community. My church never goes into the community to help" (see Appendix E). The mother's response reflected an image of cultural and spiritual unity that I set out to accomplish through the various

activities. Not only did the group manage to strengthen their relationships within the church, but also portrayed the unity that Jesus modeled during his earthly ministry. Hearing this woman's comment validated the efforts of the group and confirmed the success of the second objective of my project.

The third aspect of the project centered on reinforcing the bond between the Senior Pastor and me. I hoped that strengthening this bond would translate to a more unified approach to serving our congregations, and thus, improving our ministerial capabilities. Like in most organizations, the ability to implement change must either begin with or incorporate those who lead the organization. Even though the Senior Pastor and I had a great working relationship, he and I saw the need to work even closer together to better serve our congregations. Prior to the project portion of my academic studies, the Senior Pastor and I would meet for lunch every other month to discuss our vision for our unification efforts. Once he and I decided to implement the bilingual Bible studies and the community-wide event, our lunch meetings took place every other week. This increase was a sign that the Lord's work in the congregations truly began through the two of us.

Once this bond was further established, I also hoped that it would carry over to the rest of the church leadership. This effect was also part of the goals the Senior Pastor and I had for the church, which also proved to be successful. Incorporating the oldest tenured deacon and his wife in the focus group helped convey the spiritual unification that took place among the group. The Senior Pastor mentioned that this deacon shared his testimony with the rest of the deacons, which yet again, helped communicate the impact the interactions were having on both congregations. I noticed that, while the

church deacons had always been very cordial towards me, they began to engage in more personal conversations with me after the events. This improvement was also extended towards the Latino congregation as I have noticed that the deacons have made more of an effort to make them feel welcomed. A prime example of this happened after the Anglo congregation put on a church play in the fellowship hall, which temporarily shifted the logistics of the Latino mission's services. A church deacon made it a point to arrive an hour before Sunday School and made sure that the tables, chairs, and sound system were properly set up for our Spanish services. This made an impression on me because there seemed to be a genuine concern for the Latino members' ability to worship God, which proved to strengthen the relationship between the church leadership and the Latino congregation. The events and experiences appeared to help the leadership of the church get rid of their cultural lenses and see through the eyes of the Lord with love and compassion for one another.

Evaluating Personal Spiritual Growth

The implementation of this project contributed to my personal growth in many different ways. First, it allowed me to understand God's purpose and helped me see the world through different cultural lenses, instead of limiting myself to one group of people. It also helped me become more aware of the reality that God's Kingdom was not limited to one particular ethnicity. In addition, my ministerial vision was enhanced and this encouraged me to reach people from other cultures for Christ, not just Latinos. Through my project I learned that no matter what kind of racial background a person may be, he/she can overcome any barriers through the love of Christ. While I participated in the

two components of my project, I realized that my vision and my ministerial skills were limited. Serving as the liaison between the Anglos and the Latinos made me understand that I had to learn so much more about cross-cultural ministry. Through the various ways that participants interacted with each other, both sets of parishioners were a blessing to me. As I led the bilingual Bible study, I saw the Spirit of God working in our lives and He made us aware that we were indeed one body in Christ. Even though at the beginning of the series both groups seemed a bit uneasy, by the time we finished our second session, some of the volunteers began to make more of an effort to step out of their comfort zones and gradually began to interact with each other.

At the same time, I learned to rely on God instead of my own conclusions. It was then that I realized that my thoughts were not the same as God's thoughts. From that moment on, my attitude changed, and I was reminded once more that God was in control of the whole event and that I had to allow him carry on his plan. I also learned that from that point on, the Lord would put everything in its place and that my responsibility was to obey him. Being part of the bilingual Bible study made me realize that we had the ability to come together as a community of God as brothers and sisters in Christ. As God's servant, I became aware that I could make a bigger difference in the lives of those who were lost by participating with the Anglo parishioners in various activities to proclaim the gospel more effectively. I experienced the unification of both congregations while they tried to be better witnesses of the Lord by ministering hand in hand in the same church setting. I learned in a practical manner what Scripture reads about the Ephesians when Paul wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of

your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Being a participant of the two components of my project contributed to my spiritual growth. The events helped me understand the importance of seeing each other as part of the family of God. I learned to establish stronger relationships with the Anglos by taking time to hear about their desire to show God’s love through their actions. The Senior Pastor and I collaborated together by leading our congregations to an inclusive setting as we encouraged them to cross their cultural context and acknowledge one another as individuals created by the same Lord. In addition, I became aware that I was growing in my spiritual walk while the participants from both groups took time to laugh, share their tools, and help each other in order to make a difference in the lives of those who were being ministered. I noticed that through the bilingual Bible study God worked in a miraculous way as I saw Anglos and Latinos come together to be spiritually nurtured by studying God’s word in the same location.

I was not aware of how rewarding this would be for being willing to submit to his will and allow him carry out his perfect plan in my life. I experienced the power of the Lord in me throughout all of the activities. He gave me the wisdom and ability to know what to do and how to treat the persons from both groups while we moved ahead throughout the planning and implementation period. The presence of God was seen in the lives of the congregants who ministered in a passionate way in the community by doing landscaping work. Most importantly, I witnessed God’s love when I encouraged some of the Anglos and Latinos to continue being a blessing to others around them, not just to the recipients who were ministered to in the community. Every time any of the

volunteers encountered a person from a different ethnicity, they took time to smile and share encouraging words towards one another. Those interactions suggested to me that the Lord had transformed the lives of the congregants in a visible way as they put aside their differences and coming closer as the community of God. Because of their reactions, I was able to understand that the people who were part of the activities had gone the extra mile to acknowledge their counterparts. The cultural unification from the two congregations became a positive example for other churches in the community that could be having the same problem that we had in our church in regards to segregation within the four walls.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

My ministry project demonstrated the effectiveness and the positive results that cross-cultural events can have on a congregation. The members of the Anglo congregation gradually demonstrated a desire to set aside their own cultural perspectives and learn by seeing and feeling through the eyes of Jesus and their lives were transformed as they participated in the activities. Their bond with the Latino congregation was strengthened as they fellowshiped and worked together, and obstacles were overcome because of their desire to embrace the diversity of the other group. I strongly believe that the main purposes of learning to embrace each other and building a stronger bond were fulfilled. As we approached the end of the Bible study series, the love and fellowship drastically improved compared to where it was in our first meeting. Given the racial divide that existed between the focus group prior to the implementation of my project, one can understand how the participants' lives serve as evidence for the spiritual ramifications that these events had on their lives.

By analyzing the participants' responses on their pre-Bible study survey, and then comparing those results to the post-Bible study survey, I was able to gauge the change that took place in them (see Appendix D). It is interesting to note that during the Pre-Bible study survey for the Anglos, there was only one participant who strongly disagreed to wanting to learn from another culture, and also only one participant who responded that they disagreed with this end result. I believe that these two members were two of the volunteers that did not return after the first session. However, in looking at the responses from the post-Bible study participants, 100% of the participants responded that they

believed the Bible taught and promoted spiritual unity across cultural lines. To see the evidence of this change in their lives is remarkable and can only be attributed to the Holy Spirit's work in the participants' lives throughout the four-week Bible study. It is also important to observe the change that took place in the Latino volunteers' lives throughout this Bible study series. During the pre-Bible study survey, 50% of the Latino participants answered that they were strongly opposed to learning about the Anglo culture. As I have previously mentioned, this may be due to the negative interactions that the Latinos had with the Anglo culture. These responses drastically improved in the Post-Bible study surveys where all of the participants responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed to the Bible's teaching of cultural inclusiveness. These results reflected a positive change in the focus group's personal and spiritual awareness of God's visions for his church.

The Senior Pastor played a pivotal role in achieving these results by modeling what a true Christian ought to be like, while serving a culturally diverse community. Since he began his ministry at First Baptist Church of Robbins, the Senior Pastor prayed and envisioned an expanded ministry that would include more than Anglos. Through the years, his efforts have been rewarded by gradually guiding the leadership of the church to acknowledge the reality that God loves all people from all nations, not just their own. Through the leadership of the Senior Pastor, many of the members of First Baptist Church of Robbins have come to the realization that there should not be any distinction among both cultures. This is evidenced by the responses of the Anglo participants on the Post Community-Wide surveys (see Appendix D). 71% of those surveyed responded that they strongly agreed on learning about unity in diversity through the missionary event. The other 29% answered that they agreed to this same principle and result as well. The

Senior Pastor and I were amazed at how smoothly things transpired once the activities actually began. Even though there were moments of serious doubt and high levels of anxiety because the volunteers were slow to commit, the Lord taught us that he was present and in charge of our interactions. This spiritual guidance that we witnessed was also conveyed to the leadership of First Baptist Church of Robbins, as there has been an improvement in the deacons as well.

Since the implementation of my project, the deacons have displayed more of a personal touch when interacting with my wife and me. Once their meetings are over, the majority of them come over to us to say hello or to shake our hands. Some of them have even mentioned to us that, “We appreciate the good work that you too are doing for the Lord and we wish you the best in your ministry.” These types of compliments were heard before, but never to the extent and frequency that they are now. This newfound approach of the deacons has made an impact in our lives and on the Latino parishioners because they have also witnessed the change in their lives, as they now acknowledge and greet them by showing the love of God. Accepting some of the cross-cultural principles took a great amount of effort from both groups, and I feel that it was a success due to the positive results shown by both cultural groups. There should not be any more major obstacles preventing the volunteer group from engaging in any future joint events. These observations are a reflection of how the Lord worked in the lives of the volunteers who made a strong effort to step out of their comfort zones. The outcomes encouraged me to set aside my own racial barriers and motivated me to continue ministering with a greater passion. I learned that being segregated congregations has not been, and will never be,

God's will for his people. I am thankful to God for the work that he did in the lives of every person who was an active participant of the activities in the Robbins community.

In reference to the impact in my ministry for the future, it is both promising and exciting. I feel that the Bible study series and the community-wide event served as a foundation for many more similar events for us to build on in the future. In reference to the local church, there should not be any segregation, or indifference among its members. Rather, the church of the living God should reflect its love and mercy towards each other and mostly toward the people in the community and surrounding areas. There was a stronger bond not only between the adults from the church but also among the youth and children from both cultures. My personal perspective is that this kind of transformation from God will draw those in the community who have stopped coming to church because of previous experiences, especially those who need to hear the good news of salvation. I believe that my project impacted the whole church because of the changes that both groups have shown, and the eagerness to be involved in future joint events. As I look at the Anglo and Latino congregations at our church, I can envision many more examples of spiritual unity and anxiously await the opportunity to help guide more members in building bridges and moving towards becoming a cross-cultural church. Amen.

APPENDIX A

MEANS OF EVALUATION

Part of my evaluation was to assess the level of interaction between the culturally mixed groups. I measured the outcomes of the bilingual Bible study and community-wide missionary event by handing out pre-and post-surveys. The pre-surveys for the bilingual Bible study were given on Sunday, September 29, 2013 and the post-surveys were distributed on Sunday, October 27, 2013. To protect the anonymity of the participants, I asked a volunteer from the group to hand out the surveys, to collect them, and to return them to me in an envelope. I followed the same process when distributing the surveys for the community-wide missionary event. The pre-surveys for this event were handed out on Sunday, October 27, 2013 and the post-surveys were taken on Sunday, November 10, 2013. Once all of surveys were gathered, the volunteer returned them to me in an envelope. I encouraged each person to answer as honestly as possible in order to obtain accurate results.

Regarding the surveys, there were a variety of questions connected to the cross-cultural activities that measured the level of participation on a one to one basis. I purposely did not ask the same questions to both groups because of the historical and racial tension in the Anglo congregants and the racial tension experienced by the Latino minority group. I felt that I needed to gauge their progress in a very careful and gradual manner without offending either ethnicity, which was the best way of developing an effective ministry in Robbins, North Carolina. I surveyed the responses to assess those who participated and reviewed their responses for a final analysis.

APENDICE A: PRE-ENCUESTA DESIGNADA PARA EL GRUPO EXPERIMENTAL LATINO

Estudio Bíblico Bilingüe Juan 4:1-26

Por favor tome tiempo para llenar esta encuesta. Todas las encuestas se mantendrán confidenciales. Por favor ponga un círculo en el nivel que esté de acuerdo con referencia a las siguientes declaraciones usando esta escala: 1= *No estoy de acuerdo fuertemente*, 2= *No estoy de acuerdo*, 3= *No estoy de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo*, 4= *De acuerdo*, 5= *De acuerdo fuertemente*.

1. Por favor ponga un círculo en su edad. 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's o más
2. Por favor ponga un círculo en la letra que identifique su género

M

F

3. La Biblia enseña que el amor de Dios es universal.

1

2

3

4

5

4. Dios no hace acepción hacia una cultura en particular.

1

2

3

4

5

5. El Evangelio debe ser proclamado a todas las personas.

1

2

3

4

5

6. Me siento incómodo con gente de diferente etnicidad.

1

2

3

4

5

7. No tengo ningún temor cuando adoro en inglés.

1

2

3

4

5

8. Creo que necesito demostrar el amor de Dios a todas las culturas.

1

2

3

4

5

9. Hablar inglés es mi barrera más grande.

1

2

3

4

5

10. He aprendido a llevarme mejor con gente de otra raza.

1

2

3

4

5

APPENDIX A: PRE-SURVEY DESIGNATED FOR ANGLO EXPERIMENTAL
GROUP

Bilingual Bible Study John 4:1-26

Please take time to fill out this survey. All surveys will be kept confidential. Please circle your level of agreement in reference to the following statements using this scale:
1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree or disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

1. Please circle your age. 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's or more
2. Please circle the letter that identifies your gender.

M

F

3. I am willing to learn about people from another culture.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I feel handicapped because I cannot communicate in Spanish.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Jesus did not show partiality towards the Samaritan woman.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Being in a bilingual Bible study helped me realize that Jesus loves every race.

1 2 3 4 5

7. There should not be a barrier between me and people from another culture.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Impartiality is part of God's essence.

1 2 3 4 5

9. The teaching of the Bible reinforced my concept of unity in diversity.

1 2 3 4 5

10. God created people from different cultural backgrounds.

1 2 3 4 5

APENDICE B: POST-ENCUESTA DESIGNADA PARA EL GRUPO
EXPERIMENTAL LATINO

Estudio Bíblico Bilingüe Juan 4:1-26

Por favor tome tiempo para llenar esta encuesta. Todas las encuestas se mantendrán confidenciales. Por favor ponga un círculo en el su nivel de acuerdo con referencia a las siguientes declaraciones usando esta escala: *1= No estoy de acuerdo fuertemente, 2= No estoy de acuerdo, 3= Ni estoy de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo, 4= De acuerdo, 5= De acuerdo fuertemente.*

1. Por favor ponga un círculo en su edad 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's o más
2. Por favor ponga un círculo en la letra que identifique su género

M

F

3. Durante el estudio bíblico aprendí cómo interactuar con una persona de otra raza.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Dios me enseñó que estaba segregado de mi hermano en Cristo.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Mi fe fue fortalecida por el hecho que Dios es un Dios de unidad en la diversidad.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Aprendí más de otra cultura por medio del estudio bíblico.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Mi participación durante el estudio bíblico me ayudó a vencer los temores raciales.

1 2 3 4 5

8. La interacción con mis hermanos de otra cultura fue de bendición para mi vida.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Mi concepto de mi hermano en Cristo cambió después del estudio bíblico.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B: POST-SURVEY DESIGNATED FOR ANGLO EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Bilingual Bible Study John 4:1-26

Please take time to fill out this survey. All surveys will be kept confidential. Please circle the level of your agreement in reference to the following statements using this scale: 1= *Strongly disagree*, 2= *Disagree*, 3= *Neither agree or disagree*, 4= *Agree*, 5= *Strongly agree*.

1. Please circle your age 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's or more
2. Please circle the letter that identifies your gender

M

F

3. God's word taught me that He is not partial towards mankind.

1 2 3 4 5

4. My doubts were clarified by learning about Jesus' love for the Samaritan woman.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Scripture teaches that there should not be a cultural gap between His people.

1 2 3 4 5

6. The inter-cultural experience taught me that God loves everyone the same way.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I had a different perspective about other races after the bilingual Bible study.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Being in the bilingual Bible study taught me that Christ died for all of humanity.

1 2 3 4 5

9. The fellowship drew me closer to my brothers and sisters in Christ.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I would like to be part of another cross-cultural activity in my church.

1 2 3 4 5

APENDICE C: PRE-ENCUESTA DESIGNADA PARA EL GRUPO EXPERIMENTAL LATINO

Evento Misionero a Nivel Comunidad Noviembre 9, 2013

Por favor tome tiempo para llenar esta encuesta. Todas las encuestas se mantendrán confidenciales. Por favor ponga un círculo en su nivel de acuerdo con referencia a las siguientes declaraciones usando esta escala: 1= *No estoy de acuerdo fuertemente*, 2= *No estoy de acuerdo*, 3= *No estoy de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo*, 4= *De acuerdo*, 5= *De acuerdo fuertemente*.

1. Por favor ponga un círculo en su edad 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's o más
2. Por favor ponga un círculo en la letra que identifique su género

M

F

3. Ser parte del evento misionero me ayudará a crecer en mi fe.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Entre más conozca a mi hermano en Cristo, conviviré más con él.

1 2 3 4 5

5. El evento misionero me animará a tener una mentalidad abierta hacia otra cultura.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Creo que el ser parte del evento será una experiencia positiva para mí.

1 2 3 4 5

7. El participar en el evento misionero me ayudará a respetar más a otras culturas.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Al final del evento tendré mejor concepto de la cultura americana.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Espero que Dios hable a mi vida por medio de las personas en la comunidad.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Aprenderé a amar más a mi hermano de otro trasfondo cultural.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C: PRE-SURVEY DESIGNATED FOR ANGLO EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Community-wide Missionary Event November 9th, 2013

Please take time to fill out this survey. All surveys will be kept confidential. Please circle your level of agreement in reference to the following statements using this scale: *1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree or disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.*

1. Please circle your age 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's or more

2. Please circle the letter that identifies your gender

M

F

3. Being part of the missionary event will strengthen my faith.

1

2

3

4

5

3. Knowing my brother in Christ will encourage me to better fellowship with him.

1

2

3

4

5

4. The event will encourage me to have an open mentality towards another culture.

1

2

3

4

5

5. I anticipate that the event will be a positive experience.

1

2

3

4

5

6. Being part of the event will help me be more respectful towards other cultures.

1

2

3

4

5

7. By the end of the activity I will have a better understanding of the Latino culture.

1

2

3

4

5

8. I anticipate being a blessing to the recipients in the community.

1

2

3

4

5

9. I hope to make a difference in the lives of the needy families in the community.

1

2

3

4

5

10. I will learn more about my brothers/sisters of a different cultural background.

1

2

3

4

5

APENDICE D: POST-ENCUESTA DESIGNADA PARA EL GRUPO EXPERIMENTAL LATINO

Evento Misionero a Nivel Comunidad Noviembre 9, 2013

Por favor tome tiempo para llenar esta encuesta. Todas las encuestas se mantendrán confidenciales. Por favor ponga un círculo en su nivel de acuerdo con referencia a las siguientes declaraciones usando esta escala: *1= No estoy de acuerdo fuertemente, 2= No estoy de acuerdo, 3= Ni estoy de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo, 4= De acuerdo, 5= De acuerdo fuertemente.*

1. Por favor ponga un círculo en su edad 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's o más
2. Por favor ponga un círculo en la letra que identifique su género

M

F

3. Ser parte del evento me animó a valorar las diferencias culturales.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Estoy dispuesto a involucrarme en eventos misioneros en el futuro.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Me sentí satisfecho al ministrar a la gente necesitada de otras etnicidades.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Mi participación en el evento misionero fortaleció mi fe.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Tuve la oportunidad de conocer un poco a mi hermano en Cristo de otra cultura.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Al participar en el evento misionero aprendí a ser misionero en mi comunidad.

1 2 3 4 5

9. El evento misionero me motivó a ser mejor testigo de Jesucristo.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Mis relaciones mejoraron con mi hermano en Cristo por el evento misionero.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX D: POST-SURVEY DESIGNATED FOR ANGLO EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Community-wide Missionary Event November 9th, 2013

Please take time to fill out this survey. All surveys will be kept confidential. Please circle your level of agreement in reference to the following statements using this scale: *1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree or disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree.*

1. Please circle your age 20's 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's 80's or more

2. Please circle the letter that identifies your gender

M

F

3. The missionary event helped me see through the cultural lenses of others.

1

2

3

4

5

3. I felt blessed working in unity with my brothers in Christ from another culture.

1

2

3

4

5

4. I learned to respect people from other ethnicities.

1

2

3

4

5

5. I thank God for being part of the missionary event.

1

2

3

4

5

6. I had the opportunity to get to know some of my brothers in Christ.

1

2

3

4

5

7. I learned more about unity in diversity through the missionary event.

1

2

3

4

5

8. I was blessed by helping others in the community.

1

2

3

4

5

9. I shared the love of God as I worked in the community.

1

2

3

4

5

10. I felt satisfied helping others and working with other ethnicities.

1

2

3

4

5

APPENDIX B

ADVERTISEMENTS

Weekly bulletin inserts

OPPORTUNITITIES FOR THE WEEK OF September 15, 2013

Sun/15	10:00 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Homecoming Service
	7:00 PM	Northern Moore Crusade
Mon/16	7:00 PM	Northern Moore Crusade
Tues/17	11:00 AM	Harris Day Baptist Women
	6:30-8:00 PM	Lighthouse Recovery Program
	7:00 PM	Northern Moore Crusade
Wed/18	7:00 PM	Northern Moore Crusade

WELCOME
TO OUR
CHURCH FAMILY!

Micah Evans
205 Fletcher Road
Robbins NC 27325

**Jimmy, Mindy,
Casey & Cara Rouse**
612 Rushwood Road
Robbins NC 27325



A Special
THANK YOU

Dear Friends,
Thank you so much for the
LOVELY breakfast get together!
What a thoughtful and wonderful
thing to do! The food was
beautiful and delicious! You guys
are the greatest! We love you and
are going to miss you so much.
Love and Blessings, Fran & Walter

2 BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES!



Beth Moore Bible Study on James led by Carol Blake: Sundays at 6:00 PM beginning September 22. Open to women & men – please contact Carol or the church office.

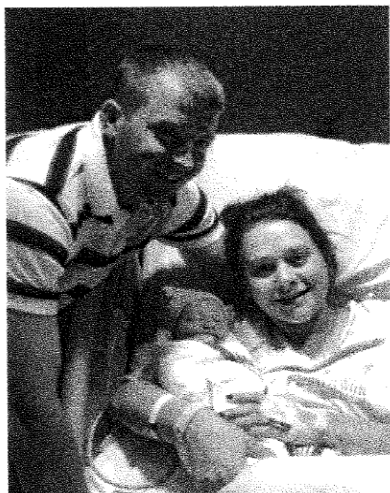
Bilingual Bible Study led by Ernesto Robledo on Sunday Evenings in October, 6:00-7:30 in the fellowship hall. This group will also participate in the community-wide missionary event on November 9. Ernesto needs 4 more people from First Baptist along with 6 from the Hispanic Church. *This is very important to Ernesto's work on his Thesis for obtaining his doctorate degree. Please let Ernesto know if you can participate.*

*Coming Sundays
in October*

**Lunch &
Learn**



Stay for lunch after church then
a workshop on how to be a
better music reader.



Congratulations
to Micah & Paige Evans upon the
birth of a son, Malachi Brady Evans
on September 18, 2013.
We extend a big congratulations to
Grandparents, Mickey & Penny Brown
and Uncles, Jackson & Will also!
(and Great-Aunt Wendy Brady too!)

MY HOPE AMERICA

WITH BILLY GRAHAM

NOVEMBER 2013

*A unique mass evangelistic
opportunity that will combine the
impact of video programs with the
power of personal relationships.*

Wednesday Prayer Meetings:
Matthew Training:

*Prayerful Preparation has begun
with people committed to pray
for the lost*

www.MyHopeWithBillyGraham.org



"Moore Hope Billy Graham"

POSTPONED!

The Beth Moore Bible Study
on James has been postponed.
Please let Carol Blake know if
you are interested in this study.

You are invited to a **Bilingual
Bible Study** led by Ernesto
Ropledo on Sunday Evenings
in October, 6:00-7:30 in the
fellowship hall. This group
will also participate in the
community-wide missionary
event on November 9.

Ernesto needs 4 more people
from First Baptist along with
6 from the Hispanic Church.

*This is important to Ernesto's
work on his Thesis for obtaining
his doctorate degree.*

*Please let Ernesto know if
you can participate.*



**Breakfast
next Sunday
at 9:30 A.M.**

BUDGET SUMMARY

Weekly Budget...\$5,537.06

Received last Sunday:

Budget Offering: \$3,429.00

Sanders House: \$180.00

JUST AROUND THE CORNER!



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD
(sponsored by our youth)

Now is a good time to start collecting items for shoeboxes! We will have boxes available in October. THE YOUTH HAVE CHALLENGED US TO 150 BOXES!

Last year we received 113.

This year marks the 20th anniversary for Samaritan's Purse' ministry of handing out gift-filled shoe boxes to children in Jesus' Name! THANK YOU for your participation over the years!

RED BOX PRISON MINISTRY
(sponsored by WMU)

Start collecting bags of individually wrapped hard candy! (No chocolate or soft candy please) We will have a box available in the front foyer for donations. These will be turned in to the Associational Center by Nov. 8.

We will observe the ordinance of **The Lord's Supper** next Sunday during the morning service.

POSTPONED!

The Beth Moore Bible Study on James has been postponed. Please let Carol Blake know if you are interested in this study.

You are invited to a **Bilingual Bible Study** led by Ernesto Robledo on Sunday Evenings in October, 6:00-7:30 in the fellowship hall. This group will also participate in the community-wide missionary event on November 9. Ernesto needs 4 more people from First Baptist along with 6 from the Hispanic Church.

Please let Ernesto know if you can participate.



Candlelight Vigil for Blaise McNair

Monday, September 30
7:00 PM

Next to Lake House Restaurant
in Seven Lakes

(Candles are not provided
— donations are appreciated)

They ask that you pray for Blaise even if you cannot attend vigil.

**MY HOPE
AMERICA**

WITH BILLY GRAHAM

NOVEMBER 2013

www.MyHopeWithBillyGraham.org



"Moore Hope Billy Graham"

BUDGET SUMMARY

Weekly Budget... \$5,537.06

Received last Sunday:

Budget Offering: \$3,471.67

Sanders House: \$25.00

Ministry to the Mustangs: \$58.00

Bilingual articles in monthly newsletters

Apparently to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. That is, there was an escape of water fluid from the sac surrounding the heart, giving postmortem evidence that Our Lord died not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure (a broken heart) due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Thus we have had our glimpse -- including the medical evidence -- of that epitome of evil which man has exhibited toward Man and toward God. It has been a terrible sight, and more than enough to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have the great sequel in the infinite mercy of God toward man -- at once the miracle of the atonement (at one ment) and the expectation of the triumphant Easter morning." (read the entire article online)

http://www.cbn.com/SpiritualLife/OnlineDiscipleship/easter/A_Physician's_View_of_the_Crucifixion_of_Jesus_Christ.aspx

What a Savior! In Him, Pastor Kenneth



Greg Pilson
Associate Pastor
of Youth & Music
gregsing@embarqmail.com

Greg's Notes

CHOIR NOTES: *Come and join the Adult Choir!* We welcome those who love to sing His praises. We are now working on many new selections for the Easter season. We are singing at the Community Easter service at Tabernacle Methodist Church on Sunday, March 24 at 6 pm. It's not too late to join the Choir as we prepare for this service. We meet on Wednesday evenings following Bible Study and Youth at 7 pm.

YOUTH NOTES: The Youth had a great time in February at the Senior Adult Banquet. Our Hee Haw atmosphere proved to be fun and exhilarating as the youth dressed that part and took the role of servant to our Seniors. It was a fun filled night as the youth performed skits, sang songs, danced and joked with the crowd.

Also in February, WinterJam was a great worshipful experience as many Christian artists came together to present the gospel through music and preaching. Our youth had a great time singing and praising His name.



UPCOMING EVENTS: **CAMP CASWELL JUNE 17-22, 2013** Plans are under way for Camp Caswell this summer! All youth that are rising 7th graders through 12th grade are welcome to come with us (there will also be classes for college students). Each youth will need to pay \$100.00 total deposit for the camp. Our annual BarBQ fundraiser and scholarships will make up the difference. Your payments can be broken down by 4 monthly payments of \$25 beginning in February. (February, March, April, May) Camp Caswell is a great investment in the spiritual lives of our youth. If you would like to donate money for youth scholarships, please see Greg or Ina. **YOUTH RALLY, March 16** at Browns Chapel Church Scott Ferguson will be the speaker, games and lunch provided for all participants, 9:00 am until 3:00 pm. **Youth will be working at the Heavenly Treasures Store on Saturday, March 23** in downtown Robbins from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm.

HISPANIC CHURCH

It's a blessing being a servant of the Lord. He continues to work in our lives according to His will. His power is seen in the lives of the parishioners who come to worship and learn about His word. We are excited because our attendance continues to be steady and most of all God is fulfilling his purpose in us. We are also excited because we started the discipleship ministry with the new believers. As I have visited, I have seen that they are eager to learn about the basic steps to grow in their Christian walk with the Lord. God has been doing amazing things as he continues to touch the lives of those who are willing to be sensible to His voice. Please continue to pray for the parishioners so that they can be able to face and overcome any obstacle in their lives.

Sincerely: Pastor Ernesto Robledo



Ernesto & Irma Robledo
Associate Pastors of
Hispanic Ministries

IGLESIA HISPANA

Es una bendición ser un siervo del Señor. El continúa obrando en nuestras vidas de acuerdo a su voluntad. Su poder se ve en las vidas de las personas que vienen a adorarlo y para aprender de su palabra. Estamos motivados porque la asistencia continua estable y más que todo Dios está cumpliendo su propósito en nosotros. Estamos motivados porque hemos iniciado el ministerio de discipulado con los nuevos creyentes. Al visitar, he visto que ellos están ansiosos para aprender sobre los pasos básicos para crecer en su caminar con el Señor. Dios ha hecho cosas admirables al continuar tocando las vidas de los que son sensibles a su voz. Por favor continúen orando por los que asisten a la Iglesia para que tengan la habilidad de enfrentar y vencer cualquier obstáculo en sus vidas.

Sinceramente: Pastor Ernesto Robledo



**May Peace, Love, Joy and Happiness be yours as we
celebrate the
birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!
—Pastor Kenneth & Sherri, Pastor Ernesto & Irma, Greg &
Betsy,
Steven & Ina, James & Lisa**

APPENDIX C

BILINGUAL BIBLE STUDY

Weekly Bilingual Bible Study

For the benefit of the Latino congregants and since they were new believers, I used the Bilingual Bible Contemporary English Version (CEV) specifically for this event. The definition of the terms are not part of my notes. They were used as a brief introductory explanation of my first Bible study.

Note. Spanish translation in parenthesis.

Building Bridges through Bilingual Bible Study Week I

The Samaritan Woman: Her culture John 4:1-9 October 6, 2013

(Construyendo puentes por medio del Estudio Bíblico bilingüe Semana I)

(La Samaritana: Su cultura Juan 4:1-9 Octubre 6, 2013)

Multi-cultural - Of or including several cultures of ethnic groups.⁵⁹ (*Multicultural* – De o incluyendo varias culturas o grupos étnicos). *Multi-ethnic*-Of or including a variety of ethnic groups.⁶⁰ (*Multiétnico* – De o incluyendo una variedad de grupos étnicos). *Cross-cultural* - Comparing or dealing with different cultures.⁶¹ (*Cruze-cultural* – Comparando o tratando con diferentes culturas).

Judea, Galilee, and Samaria vs.3-4/Judea, (Galilea y Samaria vs. 3-4)

Judea v.3a/(Judea v.3^a). Small region part of Palestine/(Pequeña región parte de Palestina). Galilee v. 3c / Located on northern part of Palestine/ (Galilea v.3c/. Ubicada al norte de Palestina). After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 Galilee became center of Judaism (Después de la caída de Jerusalén en A.D. 70 Galilea se convirtió en el centro de Judaísmo).

Samaria, v.4b / (Samaria). v4b, The Capital of Israel. It was the residence and burial place of Omri King of Israel (I Kings 16:23-28) / (I Reyes 16:23-28). (Era la capital de Israel. Lugar de Residencia y sepultura de Omri Rey de Israel). Samaritans claimed to be descendants of the tribe of Joseph. They obeyed the Torah. (Los Samaritanos decían que eran descendientes de la tribu de José. Obedecían al Tora)

He had to go through Samaria v.4 (CEV) / (Tenía que pasar por Samaria v.4) (TLA)

Going through Samaria was the shortest route from Judea to Galilee. The typical Jew did not travel that route to avoid any contact with Samaritans. (Pasar por Samaria

⁵⁹ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Fourth Edition. New York, New York, Bantam Dell. A Division of Random House, Inc. 2004), 557.

⁶⁰ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 557.

⁶¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 210.

era la ruta más corta de Judea a Galilea. El judío típico no viajaba por esa ruta para evitar cualquier contacto con los Samaritanos).

Sychar and Jacob's well v.5/ (Sicar y el pozo de Jacob v.5)

Sychar – a village in Samaria where Jacob's well was located. Jacob bought a piece of land Genesis 33:17-19 He gave it to his son Joseph before he died Genesis 48:21-22

(*Sicar* – un pueblo de Samaria donde estaba el pozo de Jacob. Jacob compró esa propiedad Génesis 33:17-19/ Se la dio a su hijo José antes de morir Génesis 48:21-22).

It was noon v.6c / (Eran como las doce del día v.6c) (CEV) / (TLA)

In Samaritan culture water collection was the responsibility of women. Wells were the place where women were avoided or met. Historically, water collection was done either early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid the heat. The Samaritan woman went to collect water at noon because she had a bad reputation. (En la cultura Samaritana las mujeres eran responsables de buscar el agua. Los pozos eran los lugares donde se evadía a las mujeres o donde se reunían. Históricamente, el agua se colectaba temprano en la mañana o en la tarde para evitar la calor. La Samaritana fue por agua al medio día porque tenía mala reputación).

Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other v.9c/ (Los Judíos no

se llevaban bien con los de Samaria v.9c) (CEV)/ (TLA)

In 538 B.C.E Cyrus king of Persia Issued a decree allowing Jews to return home and build their temple II Chronicles 36:22-23. When the Jews returned from exile in Babylon, the Samaritans offered to help them build their temple, but the Jews refused their offer Ezra 4:2-3. The Samaritans refused to worship in Jerusalem and built a temple on Mount Gerizim C. 400 B. C.⁶² When this was burned by the Jews, C. 128 B. C. the relationships between the two groups worsened.⁶³ (538 B. C. E. Ciro rey de Persia dio orden permitiendo a los Judíos regresar a casa y construyeran el templo en Jerusalén II Crónicas 36:22-23. Cuando los Judíos regresaron de Babilonia, los Samaritanos ofrecieron su ayuda para construir el templo, pero los Judíos la rechazaron Esdras 4:2-3. Los Samaritanos se negaron adorar en Jerusalén y construyeron su templo en el Monte Gerizim C. 400 B. C. C. 128 B. C. los Judíos quemaron el templo y las relaciones entre Judíos y Samaritanos empeoraron).

⁶² Morris Leon. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John*, Revised Edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 227.

⁶³ Morris, 227.

Building Bridges Through Bilingual Bible Study week II

The Samaritan Woman: Her fears John 4:10-11 October 13, 2013

(Construyendo puentes por medio del estudio bíblico bilingüe semana II)

(La Samaritana: Sus temores Juan 4:10-11 Octubre 13, 2013)

You don't know what God wants to give you v. 10a (CEV)/(Tú no sabes lo que Dios quiere darte v. 10a) (TLA)

In his book, *Church: Growth and Culture*, Dr. Daniel Sánchez introduces a movement called *Contextualization* that has influenced the development of ecclesiastic strategies to proclaim the gospel. He defines the term as “The process by which the relevance of the gospel is demonstrated in a socio-cultural context.”⁶⁴ (En su libro, *Iglesia: Crecimiento y Cultura*, el Dr. Daniel Sánchez introduce un movimiento llamado Contextualización que ha influido en el desarrollo de estrategias eclesísticas para proclamar el evangelio. El define el término como, “El proceso por medio del cual la relevancia del evangelio es demostrada en un contexto socio-cultural.”)

In order to present the gospel effectively to the Samaritan woman, Jesus used a second unique method that Dr. Daniel Sanchez calls *Cosmovisión* which is “The way to perceive things the way of thinking, expressing, the way to behave, and religious background.”⁶⁵ The two elements that form the basis for the entire discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman: The first part of the discussion will concentrate on the living water, and who it is who is speaking.⁶⁶ Jesus used common language, water and thirst. Jesus crossed three major barriers: *Racial*, *Sexual* and *Religious*.

(Para presentar el evangelio efectivamente a la mujer Samaritana, Jesucristo utilizó un segundo método que el Dr. Daniel Sánchez llama *Cosmovisión* que es, “La forma en que se perciben las cosas, la manera de pensar, expresar, la forma de comportarse y el trasfondo religioso.” Dos elementos que forman el fundamento para el diálogo completo entre Jesucristo y la mujer Samaritana. La primera parte del diálogo se concentra en el agua viva y quién es el que está hablando. Jesucristo utilizó lenguaje común, agua y sed. El cruzó tres barreras mayores: *Racial*, *Sexual* y *Religiosa*).

Racial – Jews did not tolerate Samaritans because they corrupted their purity by mixing with other races (II Kings 17:24). *Sexual* – Rabbis did not tolerate a man talking to a woman in public, not even their wives. Jesus was between a rock and a hard place. He was in a strange setting, at an unusual hour, and with a woman who had a bad

⁶⁴ Daniel Sanchez, *Church: Growth and Culture*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993), 7.

⁶⁵ Daniel Sanchez, *Church: Growth and Culture*, (Booklet, Christian Education and Research Agency, Inc. Literary Right, 1993), 3.

⁶⁶ Maloney, J. Francis and Harrington J. Daniel, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, Volume 4, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 117.

reputation. *Religious* – Samaritans worshipped God in Mount Gerizim because Deuteronomy 27:4 identified Mount Ebal besides Mount Gerizim as the place to build an altar.

(*Racial* – Los judíos no toleraban a los Samaritanos porque corrompieron su pureza al mezclarse con otras razas (II Reyes 17:24). *Sexual* – Los Rabies no toleraban que un hombre hablara en público con una mujer, ni siquiera sus esposas. Jesucristo estaba entre la espada y la pared. Él estaba en un lugar extraño, en una hora inusual y con una mujer que tenía mala reputación. *Religiosa* – Los Samaritanos adoraban a Dios en el Monte Gerizim porque Deuteronomio 27:4 identificaba al Monte Ebal al lado del Monte Gerizim como el lugar para construir un altar).

Where are you going to get this life-giving water? V. 11b (CEV)/ (¿Cómo vas a darme esa agua?) v.11 (TLA)

The Samaritan woman had an earthly understanding. Living water was precious, valued, and according to rabbinic law, was the only water that could be used in ritual washings to make pure unclean worshippers. She knew the location of every water source. Everyone knew Shechem had no rivers or streams.⁶⁷

La Samaritana tenía un nivel de entendimiento terrenal. El agua viva era preciosa y valorada y de acuerdo a la ley rabínica era la única agua que podía utilizarse en lavados rituales para limpiar a los adoradores que no estaban limpios. Ella conocía el lugar de todo recurso de agua. Todos sabían que Siquem no tenía ríos ni arroyos.

⁶⁷ Burge M. Gary. *The NIV Application Commentary to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), 143.

Building Bridges Through bilingual Bible Study Week III

The Samaritan Woman: Her Tradition John 4:12-18 October 20th, 2013

(Construyendo puentes por medio del estudio bíblico bilingüe semana II)

(La Samaritana: Su tradición Juan 4:12-18 Octubre 20, 2013)

Tradition- “The handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction.”⁶⁸ (*Tradición* – “El pasar información, creencias, y costumbres de palabra o ejemplo de una generación a otra sin instrucción escrita”).

Our ancestor Jacob v.112a (CEV)/ (Nuestro antepasado Jacob v.12^a) (TLA)

Genesis 33:19, Joshua 24:32/ (Génesis 33:19, Josué 24:32)

“Are you greater than Jacob?” v.12c (CEV)/ “(¿Acaso es usted más importante que Jacob?” v.12c)

The Samaritan woman was deeply rooted in her own tradition. She could not imagine that Jesus could be greater than Jacob.⁶⁹ (La Mujer Samaritana estaba muy arraigada en su propia tradición. De acuerdo a su tradición, no había nadie mejor que Jacob).

Jesus broke three traditions by his friendly conversation: (Jesucristo destruyó tres tradiciones por medio de su conversación amigable): 1) A man could not speak to a woman in public/(Un hombre no podía hablar con una mujer en público). 2) Jews and Samaritans did not get along with each other/(Judíos y Samaritanos no se llevaban bien). 3) A Jew could not take a cup of water from a Samaritan woman because she was considered unclean/(Un Judío no podía aceptar un vaso de agua de una mujer Samaritana porque era considerada impura).

“Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again” vs. 13-14/ “(Cualquiera que bebe del agua de este pozo vuelve a tener sed” vs. 13-14)

Jesus makes the connection between living water and salvation. Jesus transcends *the person, the place, and the time*.⁷⁰ (Jesús hace la conexión entre el agua viva y la salvación. Jesucristo sobrepasa a *la persona, el lugar y el tiempo*.)

⁶⁸ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. (Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2001), 1247

⁶⁹ Maloney, 118.

⁷⁰ Maloney, 118.

“Sir, please give me a drink of that water” v.15 (CEV) / “(Señor, deme usted de esa agua” v.15) (TLA)

The Samaritan woman assumes that Jesus’ offer of living water will save her long and dusty trips to the well, whereas he is actually promising the refreshing, cleansing water of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹

Jesus leads the Samaritan woman from *a need* through *curiosity*, to *desire*. Despite that, she still did not recognize Jesus’ identity. (La mujer Samaritana asumió que la oferta de Jesús del agua viva le evitaría los largos viajes polvorosos al pozo, pero él le estaba prometiendo el agua fresca y limpia del Espíritu Santo. Por medio de la conversación amigable, Jesucristo guio a la mujer Samaritana de una *necesidad* a la *curiosidad*, al *deseo*. A pesar de eso, ella todavía no reconoció la identidad de Jesucristo).

“Go bring your husband” v.16 (CEV) / “(Ve a llamar a tu esposo” v.16) (TLA)

Jesus did not want to talk about her personal life. He wanted her to share the discovery of living water with her family. His request to bring her husband leads to the topic of her immoral life.

Jewish teachers allowed a woman to marry up to three times. The Samaritan woman had exceeded the limit. Despite that, Jesus did not judge her. (Jesucristo no quiso hablar de la vida personal de ella. Él quería que ella compartiera el descubrimiento del agua viva con su familia.).

(La petición de Jesucristo los llevó al tema de la vida inmoral. Los rabíes permitían que una mujer se casara tres veces. La Samaritana había sobrepasado el límite. A pesar de eso, Jesucristo no la juzgó).

“I don’t have a husband” v.17 (CEV) / “(No tengo esposo” v.17) (TLA)

Jesus makes a transition from the gift of water to her marital status. Jesus compliments the Samaritan woman for telling the truth. She admitted that she was living a sinful life. (Jesucristo hace una transición del regalo de agua viva a su estatus matrimonial. Jesucristo complementó a la Samaritana por decir la verdad. Ella reconoció que estaba viviendo una vida de pecado).

⁷¹ Paul J. Achtemeier, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge/UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 189.

Building Bridges Through Bilingual Bible Study Week IV

The Samaritan Woman: Her Misconceptions John 4:19-26 October 27, 2013

(Construyendo puentes por medio del estudio bíblico bilingüe semana IV)

(La Samaritana: Sus conceptos equivocados Juan 4:19-26)

“Sir, I can see that you are a Prophet” vs. 19-20 (CEV) / “(Senor, me parece que usted es un Profeta” vs. 19-20) (TLA)

The Samaritan woman changed the subject of the conversation. By doing so, she talked about the biggest controversy between Jews and Samaritans; where was the right place to worship God: Gerizim or Jerusalem?

Samaritans only believed in the Pentateuch. Their only Prophet was Moses, Deuteronomy 18:14-18. They built their temple on Mount Gerizim C. 400 B. C. It was destroyed in 128 B. C. and they continued to worship on the sacred site, Deuteronomy 27:2-4. Salomon built the temple in Jerusalem 957 A. C., II Chronicles 6:6.

It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 A. C. because it was the place of blessing when Israel crossed the Jordan River.

(La mujer Samaritana cambió el tema de la conversación. Al hacerlo, tocó el tema más controversial entre Judíos y Samaritanos, ¿dónde es el lugar correcto para adorar a Dios? ¿Gerizim? ¿O Jerusalén? Los Samaritanos solo creían en el Pentateuco. Su único profeta era Moisés, Deuteronomio 18:14-18. Construyeron el templo en el Monte Gerizim C. 400 B. C).

(Fue destruido en 128 B. C. y siguieron adorando en el lugar sagrado, Deuteronomio 27:2-4. Salomón construyó el templo en Jerusalén 957 A. C., II Crónicas 6:6). (Y fue destruido por los Babilonios en el año 587 A. C. Lo hicieron porque era el lugar de bendición cuando Israel cruzó el río Jordán).

“Believe me the time is coming” vs. 21-22(CEV)/ “(Creeme mujer, pronto llegará el tiempo vs. 21-22) (TLA)

Three interpretations of the term hour: 1) *Hour* – “it refers to Jesus’ glorification (death and resurrection).”⁷² 2) “A *cataclysm* change will occur in worship when Jesus comes to the cross, offering himself as sacrifice.”⁷³ 3) *Eschatological hour* – “the

⁷² Burge, 147.

⁷³ Burge, 147.

eschatological hour, initiating a new age of the kingdom of God-- when worship of the Father will be tied to one place.”⁷⁴

In the future neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem will be the place of worship, both places will be replaced in the new age. Jesus was going to take the place of the temple.

(Tres interpretaciones de la palabra hora: 1) *Hora* – se refiere a la glorificación de Jesucristo (muerte y resurrección). 2) “Un *cataclismo* habrá un cambio en la adoración cuando Jesús venga en la cruz, ofreciéndose a sí mismo como sacrificio.” 3) *Hora escatológica* – “la hora escatológica, iniciará una nueva era del reino de Dios cuando la adoración al Padre se una a un lugar).”

(En el futuro ni Gerizim ni Jerusalén serán el lugar de adoración, los dos serán reemplazados en la nueva era. Jesucristo tomará el lugar del templo).

“By using us God Will save the world” v.22c (CEV) / “(Porque el Salvador saldrá de los Judíos” v. 22c) (TLA)

According to the Old Testament, God chose the Israelites (Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2). He chose them to be witnesses of His wonders to all nations. The Israelites were unfaithful to God and He included every people from every nation to be His chosen people (John 1:11-13).

(De acuerdo al Antiguo Testamento, Dios escogió a los Israelitas (Deuteronomio 7:6, 14:2). Dios los escogió para que fueran testigos de sus maravillas a todas las naciones. Los Israelitas fueron infieles a él, y Dios incluyó a todas las personas de todas las naciones para ser su pueblo escogido), (Juan 1:11-13).

“But a time is coming, and it is already here” v. 23a (CEV) / “(Pero se acerca el tiempo” v. 23a) (TLA)

True worship is no longer defined by a place. A form of worship reflects and is shaped by the character of God. Disagreements between Jews and Samaritans will end. The new place for true worship is already present in the person of Jesus Christ. True worship is led by the Holy Spirit and not by tradition. Therefore, true worshippers will worship in freedom

(La verdadera adoración ya no está definida por un lugar. La forma de adoración se refleja y está formada por el carácter de Dios. Los desacuerdos entre Judíos y Samaritanos se acabarán).

(El lugar nuevo para la verdadera adoración está presente en la persona de Jesucristo. La verdadera adoración está dirigida por el Espíritu Santo y no por la tradición. Por lo tanto, los verdaderos adoradores adoran con libertad).

⁷⁴ Beasley – Murray, George R. *John*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 6 (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 61.

God is spirit v.24^a (CEV) / (Dios es espíritu v. 24^a) (TLA)

God's nature is totally different than the material world. The essential nature of God is spiritual. Jesus is talking about the life-giving activity of God, which refers to the divine nature of God. (La naturaleza de Dios es muy diferente al mundo material. La naturaleza principal de Dios es espiritual. Jesucristo está hablando de la actividad de Dios que da vida. Se refiere a la naturaleza divina de Dios).

"I know that the Messiah will come" v.25a (CEV) / "(Yo sé que va a venir el Mesías

v. 25^a) (TLA)

Messiah – the anointed one/ (*Mesías* – el ungido). In the Old Testament an anointed one was a person chosen by God, and a representative of God (I Samuel 16:12-13). (En el Antiguo Testamento un ungido era una persona escogida por Dios y era su representante), (I Samuel 16:12-13).

"I am that one" v.26^a (CEV) / "(Yo soy el Mesías" v. 26a) (TLA)

"In words of simple dignity Jesus discloses the truth of his person."⁷⁵ Jesus reveals his true divine identity. It's an open expression of his deity. "When Jesus speaks the 'I am' in v. 26, these words make explicit connections with the divine name of Exodus 3:14."⁷⁶ It means God's absolute being.

"(En palabras simples de dignidad Jesucristo comparte la verdad de su persona." Jesucristo revela su verdadera identidad divina. Es una expresión abierta de su deidad. "Cuando Jesucristo habla de 'Yo soy' en el v. 26 estas palabras hacen conexiones explícitas con el nombre divino de Exodo 3:14." Significa el ser absoluto de Dios).

⁷⁵ Morris, 241.

⁷⁶ Gail R. O'Day, *Luke John*, In NIB the New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volume, Volume 9, (Nashville, Tennessee. Abingdon Press, 1995), 568.


Bilingual PowerPoint Week I: October 6, 2013

Multicultural

Of or including several cultures
or ethnic groups

Multicultural

De o incluyendo varias culturas o
grupos etnicos




Multiethnic

Of or including a variety of
ethnic group

Multietnico

De o incluyendo una variedad de
grupos etnicos



CROSS-CULTURAL

Comparing or dealing with
different cultures

CRUZE-CULTURAL

Comparando o tratando con
diferentes culturas



**Building bridges through bilingual
Bible study. The Samaritan
Woman: Her culture John 4:1-9**

**Construyendo puentes por medio
del estudio biblico bilingüe. La
Mujer Samaritana:
Su cultura Juan 4:1-9**



Judea, vs. 3a(Judea vs. 3a)

- ▶ Small region part of Palestine
(Pequeña región parte de
Palestina).




Galilee v. 3c (Galilea v. 3c)


- ▶ Located on northern part of
Palestine (Ubicada al Norte de
Palestina).



Samaria, v. 4b (Samaria). v4b

- ▶ The Capital of Israel. It was the residence and burial place of Omri King of Israel (I Kings 16:23-28) (I Reyes 16:23-28). (Era la capital de Israel. Lugar de Residencia y sepultura de Omri Rey de Israel).
- 

Samaria, v.4b (Samaria . v4b)

- ▶ Samaritans claimed to be descendants of the tribe of Joseph. They obeyed the Torah. (Los Samaritanos decían que eran descendientes de la tribu de José. Obedecían el Tora)
- 

He had to go through Samaria v.4

Tenía que pasar por
Samaria v.4



Sychar and Jacob's well v.5

Sicár y el pozo de Jacob v.5



It was noon v.6c

Era cómo las doce del día
v.6c



Jews and Samaritans won't have
anything to do with each other 9c

Los Judíos no se llevaban
bién con los Samaritanos
v.9c



538 B.C.E.

Cyrus king of Persia issued
decree allowing Jews to return
home to build their temple II
Chronicles 36:22-23

**538 B.C.E**

Ciro rey de Persia dió orden
permitiendo a los Judíos que
regresaran a casa a construir el
templo II Cronicas 36:22-23



Bilingual PowerPoint Week II: October 13, 2013

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH
BILINGUAL BIBLE STUDY. THE
SAMARITAN WOMAN: HER FEARS
JOHN 4:10-11

Construyendo puentes por
medio del estudio bíblico
bilingüe. La Mujer
Samaritana: Sus temores Juan
4:10-11

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT GOD
WANTS TO GIVE YOU V.10A (CEV)

Tu no sabes lo que Dios
quiere darte v.10a (TLA)

Contextualization

“The process by which the relevance
of the gospel is demonstrated in a
socio-cultural context.”

Dr. Daniel Sanchez

Contextualización

“El proceso por medio del cual la relevancia del evangelio es demostrada en un contexto socio-cultural.”

Dr. Daniel Sanchez

COSMOVISION

Cosmovision

JESUS USED COMMON LANGUAGE

Jesucristo utilizó lenguaje
común

JESUS CROSSED THREE BARRIERS: RACIAL, SEXUAL, RELIGIOUS


Jesucristo cruzó tres
barreras:
Racial, Sexual, Religiosa

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO GET
THIS LIFE-GIVING WATER? V.11B
(CEV)

¿Como va a darme esa
agua? v.11b (TLA)

Bilingual PowerPoint Week III: October 20, 2013

**BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH
BILINGUAL BIBLE STUDY (III)
THE SAMARITAN WOMAN: HER
TRADITION JOHN 4:12-18**



**Contruyendo puentes por
medio del estudio Bíblico
bilingüe. La Mujer
Samaritana: Su tradición
Juan 4:12-18**

TRADITION

**“THE HANDING DOWN OF
INFORMATION, BELIEFS, AND CUSTOMS
BY WORD OF MOUTH OR BY EXAMPLE
FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER
WITHOUT WRITTEN INSTRUCTION.”**

MERRIAN-WEBSTER’S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY

TRADICIÓN


**“EL PASAR INFORMACIÓN,
CREENCIAS, Y COSTUMBRES DE
PALABRA O DE EJEMPLO DE UNA
GENERACIÓN A OTRA SIN
INSTRUCCIÓN ESCRITA.”**

MERRIAM-WEBSTER’S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY



OUR ANCESTOR JACOB v.12A


Nuestro antepasado Jacob v.12a



ARE YOU GREATER THAN JACOB? v.12C


**¿Acaso es usted mas
importante que Jacob?
v.12c**

**EVERYONE WHO DRINKS THIS
WATER WILL GET THIRSTY
AGAIN vs.13-14 (CEV)**



**Cualquiera que bebe del
agua de este pozo vuelve
a tener sed vs.13-14
(TLA)**

**“SIR, PLEASE GIVE ME A DRINK
OF THAT WATER.” v.15**



**“Señor, deme usted de esa
agua.” v.15**

“GO BRING YOUR HUSBAND.”

v.16

**“Ve a llamar a tu esposo y
regresa aqui con el.” v.16**

“I DON’T HAVE A HUSBAND.”

v.17

“No tengo esposo.” v.17

Bilingual PowerPoint Week IV: October 27, 2013

Building bridges through bilingual
Bible study John 4:19-26
The Samaritan Woman: Her
misconceptions

Construyendo puentes por
medio del estudio Bíblico
bilingüe Juan 4:19-26 La
mujer Samaritana: Sus
conceptos equivocados

“Sir, I can see that you are a
prophet” vs. 19-20 (CEV)

“Señor, me parece que usted es un
Profeta” vs.19-20 (TLA)

“Believe me the time is coming”
vs.21-22 (CEV)

“Créeme, mujer, pronto llegará el
tiempo” vs.21-22 (TLA)

The hour
Cataclysm
Eschatology

La hora
Cataclismo
Escatología

“By using us God will save the
world” v.22c (CEV)

“Porque el Salvador saldrá
de lo Judíos” v.22c (TLA)

“But this time is coming, and it is
already here” v.23a (CEV)

“Pero llega la hora, y es
ahora mismo” v.23a (DHH)

“God is spirit” v.24a (CEV)

“Dios es espíritu” v.24a (TLA)

“I know that the Messiah will
come” v.25a (CEV)

“Yo se que va a venir el
Mesías” v.25a (TLA)

“I am that one” v.26a (CEV)

“Yo soy el Mesías” v.26a (TLA)

APPENDIX D

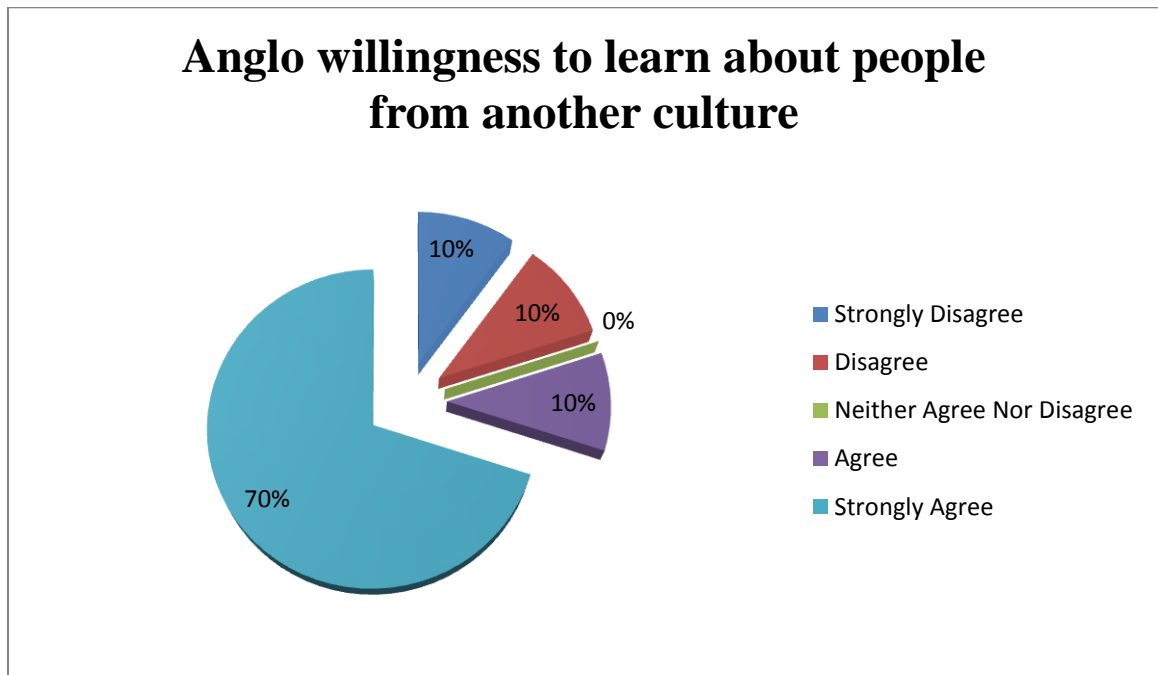
QUANTITATIVE DATA

Participants' information

Participants' gender breakdown					
	Latino male	Latino female	Anglo male	Anglo female	Total
Pre-Bible study survey	6	7	6	6	25
Post-Bible study survey	6	6	5	7	24
Pre community-wide survey	8	2	6	1	17
Post community-wide survey	12	2	6	1	21
Community-wide attendees	12	2	6	1	21

Fig 1: This chart explains the gender makeup of those participants that were able to submit their surveys. Some participants arrived late or had to leave early from an event and were unable to complete their surveys. In analyzing this information, one can observe from the numbers totaled in the right column that the average attendance for the events fluctuated right around the anticipated number of volunteers. It is interesting to note how the ratio from male to female participants varied from the Bible study series to the community-wide event. There were a higher number of males that attended the outdoor event as opposed to the indoor Bible study. There were also a much higher number of females involved during the Bible studies than the community-wide event.

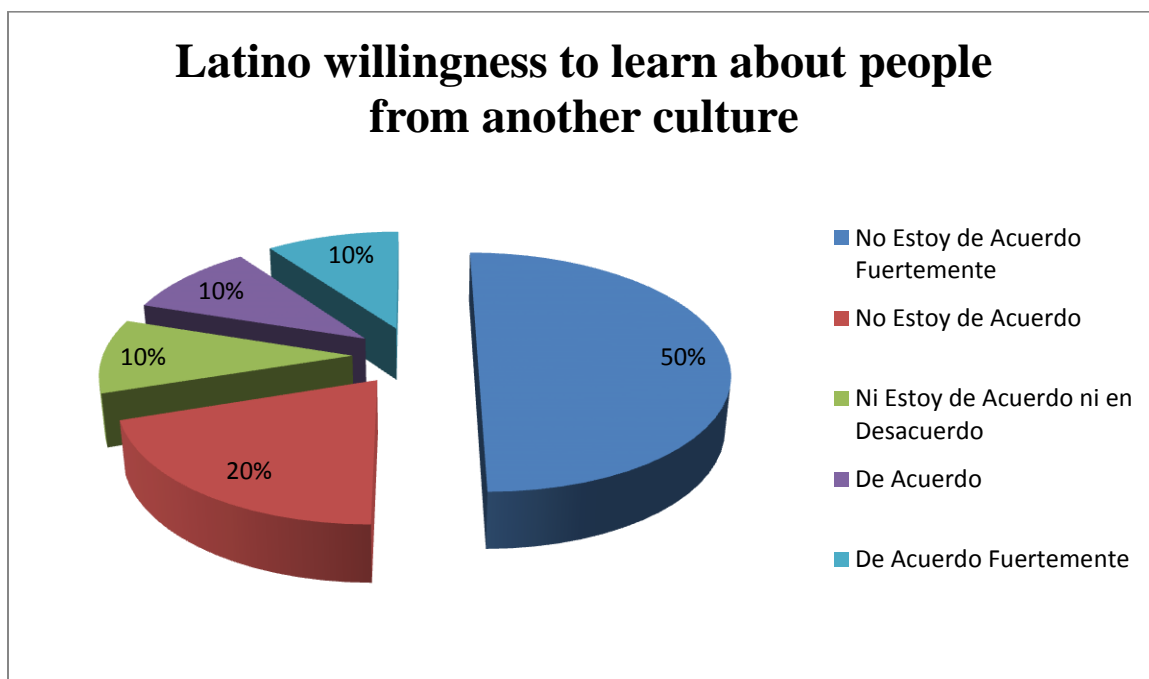
Pre-Bible Study



Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	0
Agree	1
Strongly Agree	7
Total	10

Figure 2: This chart shows that 10% of the Anglo experimental group was not in full agreement on wanting to learn about people from another culture. They were somewhat hesitant prior to the Bible study due to the fact that they were never encouraged to step out of their comfort zones. The simple fact that they were still willing to participate in this event was a big step for them. There was another 10% of the Anglo group that strongly disagreed with wanting to interact with the Latinos and decided to remain within

their own traditional context. This population accounts for the member that attended the first Bible study and never returned. 10% of the Anglo participants agreed on learning about a different culture by interacting with their brothers and sisters in Christ without much of a problem. However, 70% of those polled demonstrated a strong desire to overcome their language barriers and learn from another ethnicity as they strongly agreed. Their openness amazed me considering the fact that they had had negative experiences in different settings in the past. The positive results can be a unique model for the future of both congregations and for others in the community and throughout the state as well. I learned that there were no limits as to what God can do within his people as they join their efforts in prayer, love, and compassion.



No Estoy de Acuerdo Fuertemente	5
No Estoy de Acuerdo	2
Ni Estoy de Acuerdo ni en Desacuerdo	1
De Acuerdo	1
De Acuerdo Fuertemente	1
Total	10

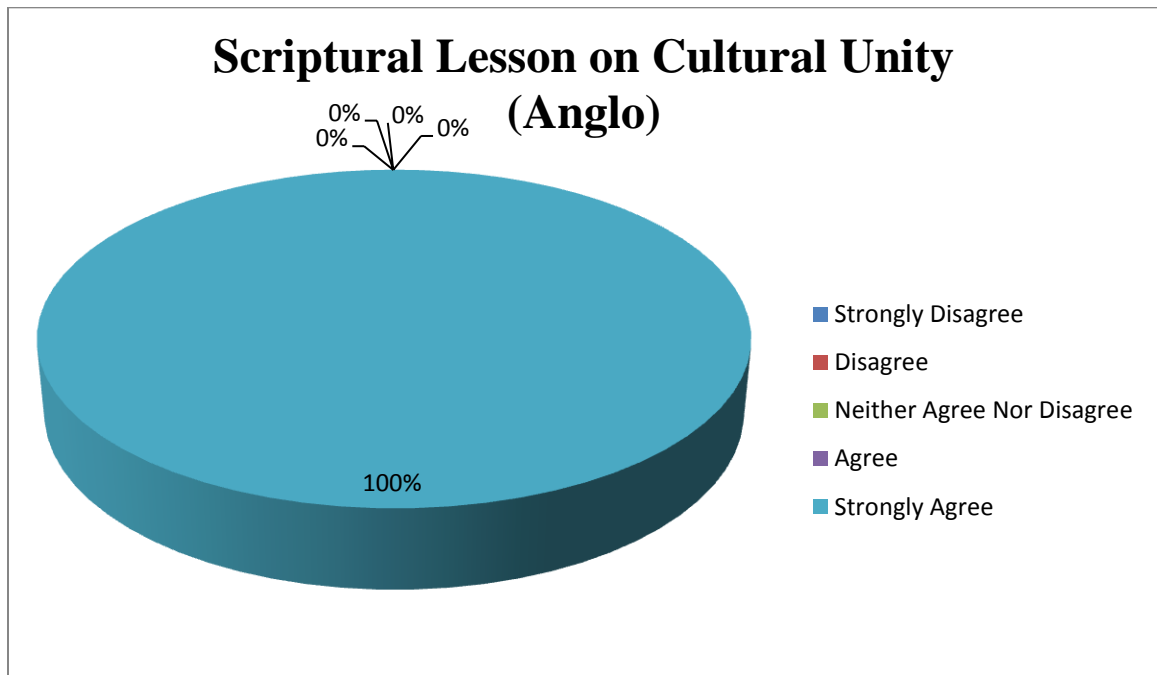
Figure 3: The chart above reflects the willingness of the Latino experimental group to learn about people from another ethnic background. 20% of the Latino parishioners disagreed with the desire to interact with another culture. This figure shows the hesitancy and nervousness that some in the group felt prior to interacting with the other culture. 10% of the Latino experimental group neither demonstrated to be in agreement nor disagreement because they felt that by doing so, they would not compromise with any side in regards to interacting with a different cultural group. These results showed several important elements. First, it gave me a broader perspective in reference to how much desire the Latino had towards setting aside their cultural context. It was amazing to see participants go far beyond their customary daily life as they reached and touched their Anglo brothers and sisters by being a part of the same event in the same exact setting. The other element was that the Latino experimental group was able to overcome cultural and language barriers.

Despite the fact that Latino congregants felt nervous, motivated, and fearful, parishioners went ahead and participated willingly in order to learn about the word of God. The other 10% showed that the Latino congregation was somewhat determined to learn from a different racial group. This percentage was interesting because it was not the norm for the Latino participants to show any desire to engage in an ongoing learning

experience that would take them to a whole different context. Their willingness demonstrated that they set their cultural differences aside and were devoted to enter into an unfamiliar environment by being part of one unified group that was ready to listen and obey God's commandments while his word was being taught. The remaining 10% of the Latino participants showed a strong agreement in reference to learn about people from another ethnicity. This percentage proved the determination of the Latino group to continue moving forward by being somewhat open minded towards the Anglo participants.

The remaining 50% of the Latino congregation strongly disagreed on not learning about a different ethnicity. I was shocked because I was expecting a bit more willingness from them instead of being close minded. At the same time, it reflected their worldview and their perspective about how they thought, felt, and lived even though they were part of the family of God.

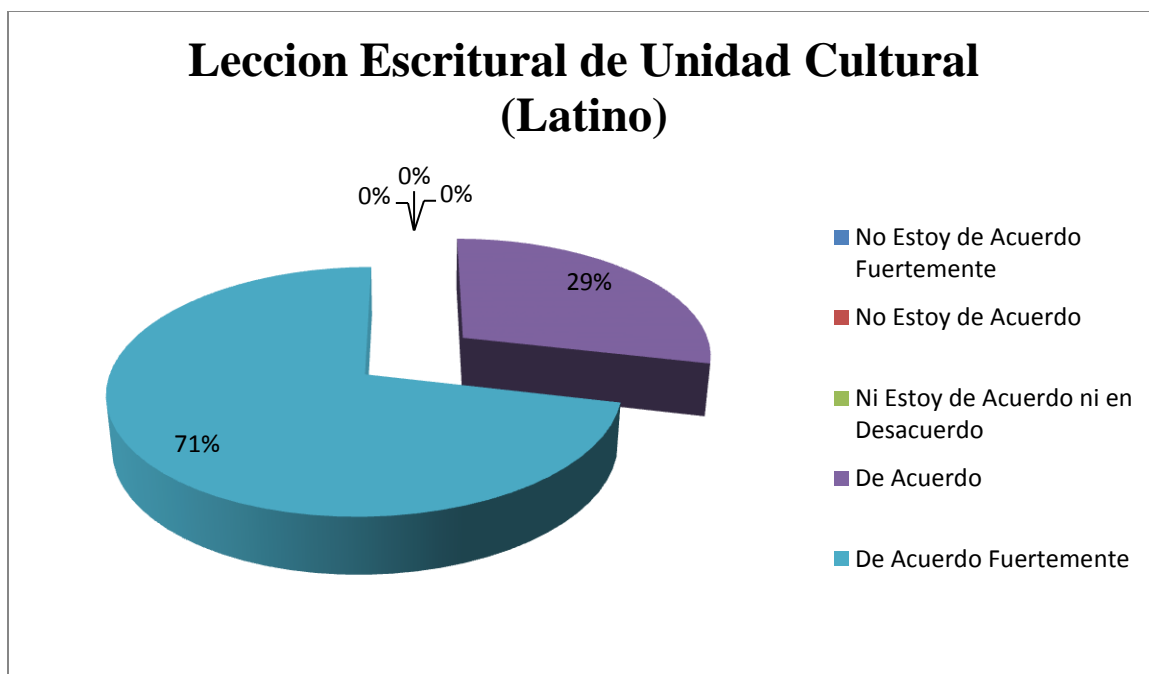
Post Bible Study



Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	0
Agree	0
Strongly Agree	7
Total	7

Figure 4: The chart above shows 100% Bible-based cultural unity from the Anglo experimental group. The Anglo congregants strongly agreed on cultural unity based on the Bible. The result was due to the fact that they did not allow their cultural differences to hinder their interactions with parishioners from another cultural background. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit led them to reflect Christian unity rooted in Scripture. The decision of the Anglo group was a reflection of their strong Biblical conviction that assured them that it had always been God's commandment to live and interact in

harmony as human beings. The evidence was clear that their position was definitely not based on their emotions, but rather, on what the Word of God taught. In addition, the percentage displayed that the Anglo experimental group showed spiritual maturity in such a way that they overcame their own cultural fears and barriers. The total percentage not only reflected the unity of the Anglo participants, but also demonstrated that God was in control of their lives.



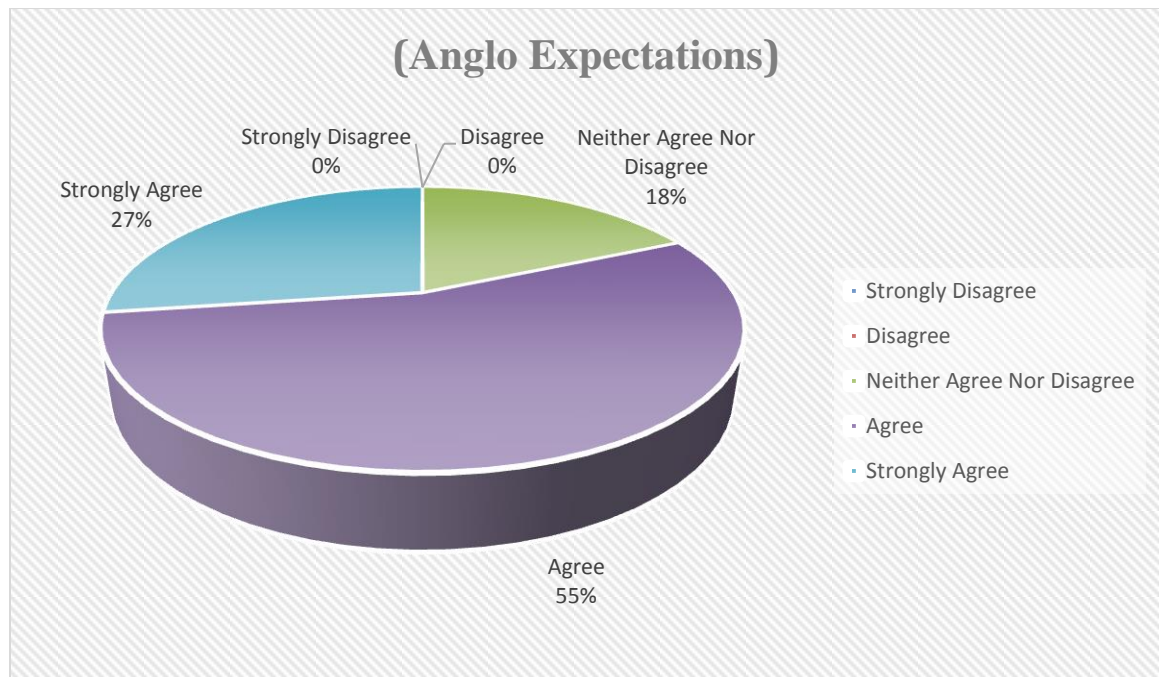
No Estoy de Acuerdo Fuertemente	0
No Estoy de Acuerdo	0
Ni Estoy de Acuerdo ni en Desacuerdo	0
De Acuerdo	2
De Acuerdo Fuertemente	5
Total	7

Figure 5: The chart above demonstrates the outcome of the Latino participants which was much different. Only 29% agreed to the cultural unity based on the Bible. One of the reasons that the percentage was low was due to their previous negative experiences in different settings. Another factor was that they had not been exposed to the interactions with people from a different racial background. Instead, they had been accustomed to live, work, and play among those individuals who shared their own language and culture.

However, 71% of Latinos who strongly agreed on to experience cultural unity based on Scripture was much greater. The data is a reflection that the majority was

determined to participate without much fear even though the other 29% agreed on being full participants. As I reviewed the percentages of both activities, I noticed that the Anglo congregants overcame their cultural fears and did not hesitate to embrace the Latino group. I think that this is due to the fact that each ethnicity is different when it comes to intentionally interacting with another one. I learned to respect both cultures and, at the same time, be a blessing to them in order to encourage them to advance even further in their relationships with each other.

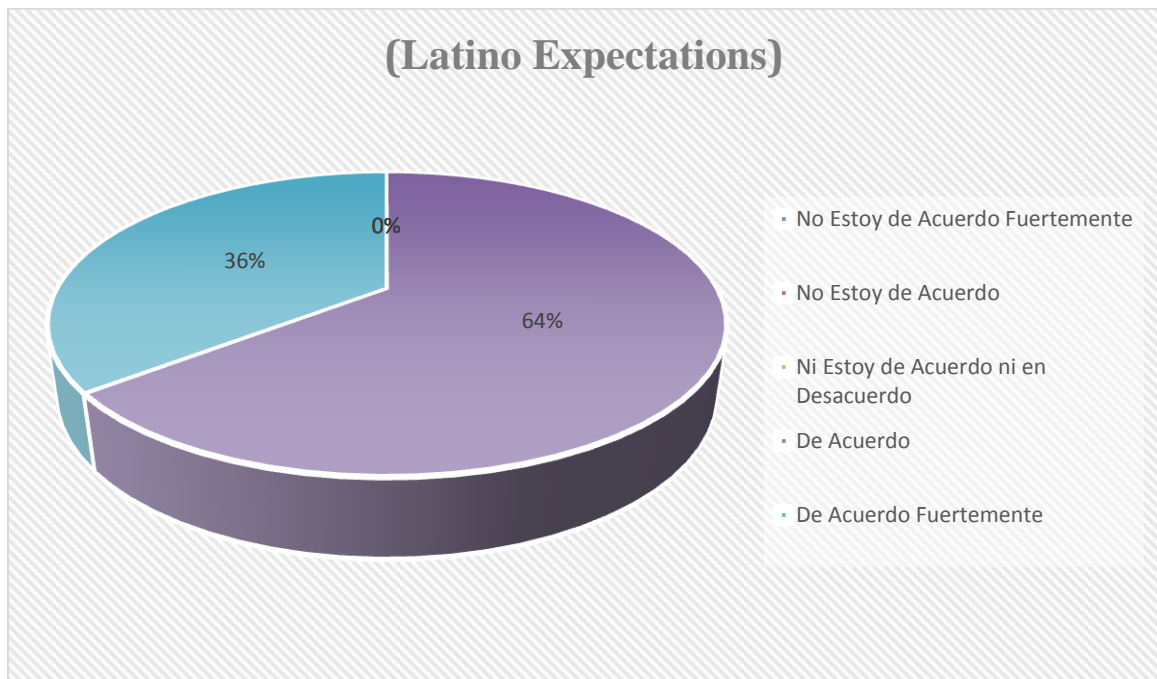
Pre Community-Wide Event



Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	2
Agree	6
Strongly Agree	3
Total	11

Fig. 6: The information presented in the chart above reflects the Anglo participants' expectations of their interactions with Latinos and its effect on their perspective towards another culture. In looking at this information, one can immediately notice that 18% of volunteers demonstrated a more neutral response to their expected results. This indicates that they had little to no expectations for a change in their lives prior to the event. 55% of

the Anglos responded that they agreed that there would be some kind of change to their perception of the other culture. This was a sign that these volunteers at least expected to come away with a positive change in their views. Interestingly enough, there were 27% of the participants who strongly agreed and were optimistic about the impact their interactions with the Latino culture would have on them.

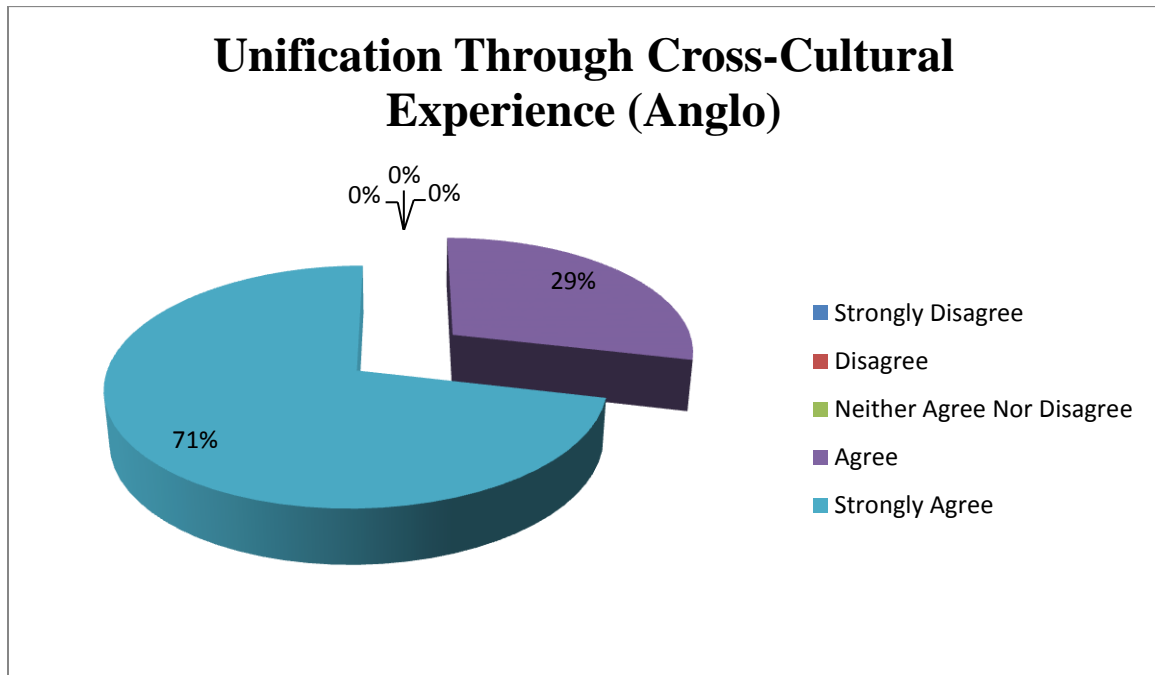


No Estoy de Acuerdo Fuertemente	0
No Estoy de Acuerdo	0
Ni Estoy de Acuerdo ni en Desacuerdo	0
De Acuerdo	9
De Acuerdo Fuertemente	5
Total	14

Fig 7: In looking at the results of these surveys, it is easy to notice that all of the Latino participants had positive expectations of their interactions with the Anglo culture. 64% of the volunteers responded that they agreed that the event would change their

perspective of the other culture. The remaining 36% answered that they strongly agreed that interacting with the Anglos during the event would result in a positive change in their lives. This is interesting to note because it reflects the optimism of the Latino participants after participating in the four-week Bible study, which also suggests a change in their perceptions of the other culture.

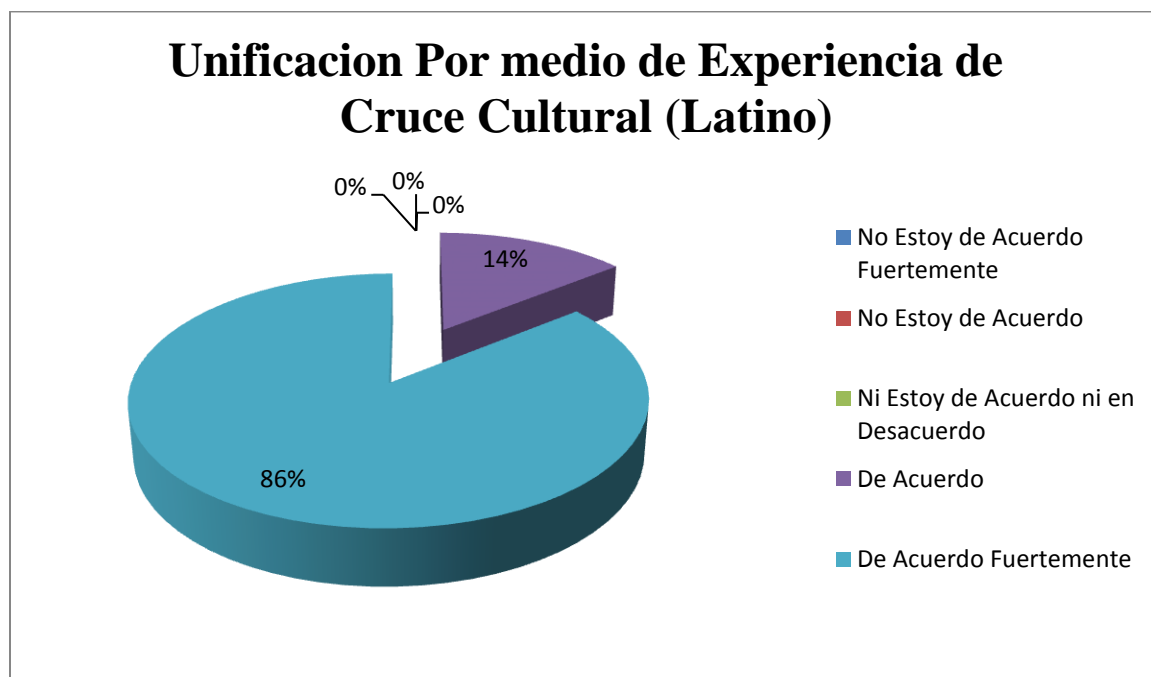
Post Community-Wide Missionary Event



Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	0
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	5
Total	7

Figure 8: The chart above gives the percentage of cross-cultural unification experience of the Anglo group. 29% agreed to be part of unification through a cross-cultural experience. The greater amount, 71%, showed a stronger desire as they strongly agreed to be in unison about the unification through a cross-cultural experience. This group displayed not only the willingness to overcome their cultural context but also a strong

sense of unity for the common good of humanity. They did not pay much attention to the color of the skin of those being served in the community. Instead, they were able to see through the eyes of mercy and compassion just like Christ did in the Bible.



No Estoy de Acuerdo Fuertemente	0
No Estoy de Acuerdo	0
Ni Estoy de Acuerdo ni en Desacuerdo	0
De Acuerdo	1
De Acuerdo Fuertemente	6
Total	7

Figure 9: The chart above demonstrates the total percentages of the Latino unification through a cross-cultural experience. The first 14% reflects the level of determination from Latino parishioners by agreeing on being in unison through the event in which they

were part of. The percentage is not the total representation that was expected from this particular group. However, there are some significant elements that contributed to their decision. One element was that perhaps they did not fully understand the specific purpose of the activities. When I looked at the surveys, I realized that maybe I should have explained the logistics of the commitment in a more detailed manner. The truth of the matter is that they were probably not consistent in their thoughts when they had to process the information given to them. My conclusion is that they went ahead and decided to commit themselves based on what they thought it would be instead of what was really expected from them.

On the other hand, the 86% reflects the Latino participants strongly agreed on unity through a cross-cultural experience. As opposed to the previous percentages, this outcome is evidence that there was definitely much progress on their willingness. Therefore, the results demonstrate their assured commitment and determination in regards to engaging in a deeper level of unification through a cross-cultural experience. The percentage also shows that the Latino group was not uncertain on taking the step of faith and be involved in a life-changing ongoing event.

APPENDIX E
QUALITATIVE DATA

Participants' Comments

I participated in the community wide missionary event with the Robbins Baptist Church in Robbins, NC. This event was led by Pastor Ernesto Robledo and included members from both the Hispanic and Anglo congregations. At first I was a little nervous as to how I would work alongside people from the Anglo congregation as well as some of the Hispanic members. This nervousness was quickly replaced by teamwork and friendship. As we split up into blended groups, I was able to get to know some of the other members and become more comfortable as the time passed. Everyone was willing to lend a helping hand and give an encouraging word. It was a lot of fun raking and blowing leaves, trimming branches, placing pine straw, and watching a young man climb a tree in order to take down a loose branch. By the time we reached the final house everyone was asking the same question, "When can we do this again?"

Other than the comradery that was built, one of the more gratifying experiences of the project was the genuine joy that the residence who we were helping showed. They were very excited to have so many people willing to help. One elderly lady was so grateful that she invited everyone into her home for some refreshments and fried apple pies. Overall I feel this was a very rewarding experience and look forward to participating in something like it again.

bueno Fue una linda Experiencias
poder alludar a los demas hermanos
y poder compartir nuestras culturas
juntos y brindarles nuestra alluda
a los que nesesitan por que dios
asi lo quiere y por que todos somos
hijos de dios

y seria una buena idea bolver
a alludar a los hermanos de la
higlesia no solo a ellos si no
a cual quier persona que lo necesite
para poder desirles que dios esta
esperando por ellos.

TRABAJAR JUNTAMENTE CON NUESTROS
HERMANOS AMERICANOS FUE UNA VERDADERA
EXPERIENCIA Y APRENDI A CONVIVIR Y HA
HECHO COMPANERISMO CON ELLOS
Y HE APRENDIDO HACER AMIGOS Y EH ENCONTRADO
QUE SON MUY BUENAS PERSONAS
YO TAMBIEN ME EH DADO LA OPORTUNIDAD
GRACIAS A DIOS POR ELLOS SE QUE
TODOS SOMOS HIJOS DE DIOS
POR QUE BUSCAMOS UN MISMO DIOS
UNA MISMA MORADA CELESTIAL
POR QUE JESUCRISTO ES SALVADOR

Y MURIO Y RESUSITO POR TODOS NOSOTROS
Y EL DESEA QUE NO HAGAMOS DIFERENCIA
POR QUE EL ES UN MISMO DIOS PARA TODOS
NOSOTROS.

Our church was lucky enough to help people in the community who needed yardwork done, but couldn't because of age. All of the people I worked with were hispanic or they were people in the church that I didn't know, It was great that we ~~could~~ could come together for a common cause, I really enjoyed that day and I'm hoping we can get together again very soon.

yo ese día que trabajamos en Unión
me senti contento por que todos
trabajamos y le doy Gracias Adios
espero ver otro día de eso

As lead pastor of FBC Robbins, I found the Latino/Anglo community mission project rewarding and uniting.

One home project yielded some interesting conversation. The lady of the home, whose husband is institutionalized with a chronic muscle disease, was gone on vacation and did not know that we would be cleaning her gutters, raking flower beds, trimming low limbs over the drive, and weed eating. When she returned home she stood in her yard and cried tears of gratitude.

When we arrived that morning to do the work we did not know that we were being watched. Her mother who lives across the road knew her daughter was on vacation, so she was watching her home closely. She watched us work, coordinate, communicate, translate, join hands and pray. Like ants on a sugar cube the team transformed the yard. A few weeks later this watchful mother described for me how she watched and thought about this event. Then she said, "I wish I had a church like yours, where people of all kinds can work together, love each other and serve the community. My church never goes into the community to help." These words of appreciation were sad but rewarding.

I'm not sure I fully understand, but in some way, unity was strengthened in this community project. Each Sunday and Wednesday I greet some of our Spanish speaking worshippers, often in my broken Spanish with a big smile of course. However, it was the community mission project that allowed me, even forced me, to learn personal names. We quickly found that in order to complete a work assignment we had to communicate. A smile was not enough. Even bi-lingual worship was not enough, though foundational and informative for us all, the key to accomplishing the task was to get to know one another. Discovering what tools we could share and what skill sets we could offer was a unifying process.

My hope is that we can be more intentional about offering more opportunities for Latino / Anglo to bond and build relational bridges through hands on tasks.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Kenneth C. McNeill, D. Min.

BRIDGING THE GAP IMPACT

This DMIN project implement by Rev. Ernesto Robledo comes at a strategic time for First Baptist Church of Robbins. At least 15 years have past, since the first efforts to intentionally reach into the Hispanic community, in and around Robbins, N.C. The work has been slow but a foundation of relationships between Anglo and Latino residents has gradually evolved.

This project brought not only specific issues to the surface in a timely manner. Some of these are.....

1. Cultural Awareness

A week or so after the project implementation I hear our Anglo Chairman of Deacons say, "Now I know why our Hispanic friends don't worry about what time we get started. In their culture they are more in tune with relationships not just tasks or goals."

Another Anglo person shared his appreciation for one of the special Mexican dishes that were prepared.

2. Friendship Cultivation

The oldest Anglo lady, now 86, who attended the workshop said, "You know pastor they are just like we are. They have the same needs we do. I love them even more now and I think our church family should do more stuff together with them."

3. Honest Worship

One Anglo retired marine said, "I have traveled all my life and spent time with many kinds of people in the world and it seemed so good, here at home, to worship with them. To hear both English and Spanish being used blest me. I believe our church honors God more, when we are blended."

4. Spiritual Gratification

Some who attended the workshop have wanted to help Ernesto and Irma personally. But they were not sure how they could help. The project gave them the perfect opportunity to plug in, interact, and to make their desire to help a reality.

5. Pastoral Observation

The issues identified above came out of informal conversations that I as Pastor was privileged to hear. These statements and responses reminded me to be

more intentional about surveying the congregation and keeping the door open for Multi-cultural worship and social opportunities.

Respectfully Submitted, Pastor Kenneth C. McNeill, D.Min.

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