

Pastoral Training: The Necessity of Multiplying (Disciple-Making) Models
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Introduction

World Hope Ministries International (WHMI) is a Christian ministry engaged in training pastors, growing churches, and transforming communities. Our strategic approach has made WHMI a global leader in delivering basic theological education to pastors in remote or underserved areas and has made it a valuable partner in helping to grow healthy churches and transform communities. WHMI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and is accredited by the ECFA.¹

WHMI provides pastoral training so that mission investment can occur in communities that are growing in their spiritual health. We believe that biblical faithfulness among pastors has a direct impact on the health of churches. While we link nationals with a variety of mission endeavors (evangelism, church planting, economic and community development, etc.), we do so only after we have trained pastors in those communities. This makes WHMI a valuable partner to a wide variety of ministries, including global mission organizations, internationally operating denominations, national organizations, and local associations of churches. Our approach reflects what we have learned. Training pastors and spiritual leaders within a community enriches the value of all other ministry and humanitarian investments.

This paper focuses on two important questions:

- 1) How is the WHMI approach to pastoral training different from other approaches?
- 2) How are existing distribution models alone (online or otherwise) insufficient to address the lack of training in the global church?

The distinguishing mark of WHMI's strategic approach to pastoral training is our focus on *replication* as opposed to *distribution*. Approaching pastoral training as a distribution problem creates a hub-and-spoke strategy. This model says: "We have the resource, and you must come to us to get it." Success using this strategy is determined by how many people access the distribution system and make use of what is offered. In contrast, replication requires a link-and-chain approach, where each link creates new links, which in turn creates more new links in an unending chain of learners. This is the model of biblical disciple-making applied to pastoral training. New learners are not dependent upon a central distribution source. Success in this model is not determined by how many are reached by the source, but by how many are reached by the chain. The hub-and-spoke strategy (a distribution approach) can be effective for getting information dispersed, but it does not require those receiving the training to become the trainers themselves, nor does it create a structure or environment conducive for doing so. Distribution can be a subset of replication. It can enhance the effectiveness of replication, but it cannot replace it. Replication is the model that Paul gives to Timothy: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

For this reason, World Hope Ministries International (WHMI) works from the following key

concepts:

- We deliver theological resources to pastors and church leaders (we are the link to what they need).
- We disciple pastors into biblical understanding (the information becomes contextualized in their setting).
- We provide them a system through which they multiply training to others (graduates become links in the unending chain that continually introduces the information to others who need it).
- We remain a safety net, coaching and encouraging trainees to flourish as they are empowered to extend the chain of training to others, organically adding link to link.

In short, our goal is not to raise up distributors or facilitators who point people to us or our resources. We are raising up teachers, who faithfully raise up other teachers. If communities are not trained by those from within the cultural context, they remain dependent on outsiders. For this reason, we do not allow videos of our lectures to be distributed among nationals. We do not want to be the theological voice most people in a tribe or region hear. We want to raise up nationals to be those voices that are heard. They can do a better job than we because they can more readily contextualize biblical truth in their setting, in their language, among their people. We are doing with theological education what other ministries have finally understood needs to be done with economic development. We do not simply distribute the resource. We disciple students into using the resources to become competent so they can do for others what has been done for them. Therefore, we consider the job of training pastors around the world one of distribution, contextualized learning, and replication. We believe that unless an approach addresses all three of these things, the task fails in some way

We are convinced that unless the Body of Christ makes significant changes in the way we are approaching pastoral training, the situation will not significantly improve. No matter how many hundreds of millions of dollars are invested into theological education, it will not be enough so long as we continue to see distribution models as the primary answer. There are currently estimated to be 3-4 million pastors without any theological training. Addressing a problem this massive requires a more comprehensive approach than merely creating larger distribution models. In the end, although one may have good resources and a distribution plan, if the strategy does not result in the empowerment of those trained to replace us in the process and replicate the training to others, the conditions in the global church will not significantly improve.

BUILDING THE CONCEPT

An approach to theological training should consider the following questions:

- 1) What will be taught?
- 2) How will the information be distributed?
- 3) How will the key concepts be learned so they can be applied?
- 4) Can training be replicated to empower national leaders rather than perpetuate dependency?
- 5) Does this approach honor the concept of pastoral training given in Scripture (those taught become the teachers)?

Each of these will be briefly addressed.

- 1) Identify the information that is to be taught.

There is no one 'right' content. There are multiple possibilities, and many are well-structured and thorough. It must be noted that in a situation where there is such profound need, the content of the training should be prioritized so that the most basic concepts are delivered first and to as many pastors as possible. Other and more advanced training should be added as the need arises. The greatest need is for all pastors to have foundational doctrinal training. To have the largest potential audience, the content of the training should be that which is commonly shared by evangelical Christians. This type of training helps all evangelical pastors identify the limits of what is acceptable, biblical doctrine and, in so doing, gives them the tools necessary to recognize and reject false teaching. This equips pastors to lead their people to do the same. If training is to be used across multiple cultures, it should, as much as possible, avoid spreading culture-based methods. The purpose is not to duplicate methods, or replicate American or Western churches, but to propagate biblical truth. Biblical truth is trans-cultural, whereas methods are not. The training should be as comprehensive as possible, but with an awareness that as it becomes deeper its ability to spread to more people will become limited.

2) Distribute the information to those who need it.

Pastors must have access to the information. The variety of distribution systems includes brick-and-mortar institutions, word of mouth, printed materials, videos, digital resources, etc. Each of these approaches has inherent strengths. They also present obstacles that inhibit their ability to be effective among certain groups (cost, literacy, proximity to access, electricity, dependence on the internet,¹ etc.). The best-case scenario would be to choose a distribution method that can reach the broadest number of those in need, without regard to their language or culture, or whether they are in remote or populated areas, or have means or lack them. The size of the global problem demands a delivery system that becomes more accessible as it proliferates.

3) Ensure the learning environment provides multiple opportunities for clarification. Delivery does not equate with learning. Thus, significant attention must be given to interaction with students. Biblical theology is essential capital for a pastor. To someone who leads a local church, the currency of biblical theology is as important as financial resources are to those seeking to stimulate economic development. In both economic development and theological education, the delivery of resources requires training and mentoring to be useful. For many leaders, learning and applying theology in their context is a new concept. Contextualized learning is essential since the goal is not to replicate American churches but to propagate biblical truth, which will lead to healthy churches, no matter what cultural approach is used. The approach, therefore, must value the empowerment of spiritual leaders from within the community so that learning leads to healthy, culturally appropriate ministry.

4) Pastors and leaders must be able to replicate the training to others.

This concept is essential to avoid keeping nationals dependent. While many of the current resources for training reside in developed nations, developed nations must not solely depend on a hub-and-spoke approach to training (i.e., "We are the fountainhead, and everyone comes to us to get what they need."). Large-scale distribution of information is not the same as biblical replication. As training spreads, those who are trained use the tools with which they were trained, resulting in an easily replicated system of delivery. The approach to training must see the preparation of teachers as a basic reason for its existence.

5) The key concept of training in the New Testament is not institutional; it is relational. Paul's words to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2) provide a key concept of pastoral training: those who have been trained, are to train others, who will then train others, and so on. Any approach that is ultimately used must involve people investing in people. Various approaches to distribution may help make

the whole more efficient, but no innovation should ignore the plain teaching of Scripture that leaders are to engage in raising up other leaders. Any approach that supplants this mandate for efficiency's sake does so in conflict with the clear teaching of the Bible and never builds enough steam to address the global issue.

HOW DOES WHMI'S BIBLE INSTITUTE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1) What do we teach?

The curriculum used by WHMI is foundational, conservative, evangelical. It provides the most basic doctrinal concepts. It is being used among a wide variety of denominations. It seeks to provide limits of orthodoxy without over-prescribing in divisive issues. It focuses on essential biblical truth and seeks to avoid Western methodologies.

2) How do we deliver the information?

In the first iteration, the information is delivered by written notes, explanatory lectures, and discussion by those who already have training. Once trained by WHMI, a percentage of our graduates become teachers. They are provided the same instructor notes used by those who taught them and WHMI walks with them as they open new locations of the Bible Institute, becoming for others a better contextualized delivery system than we were to them.

3) How do we ensure that the key concepts are learned and applied?

While we resist applying Western means of determining learning, evaluation is important. One of the keys to our learning process is relationship. The students are disciplined over time. A local council of leaders oversees each location and is constantly evaluating the effectiveness of the teachers and the understanding of the students. These leaders identify areas where students are not grasping the material from their cultural perspective, providing direct feedback to our staff in Houston. Teachers from the U.S. complete evaluations on each class taught and identify areas where difficult questions are raised. A variety of co-learning formats (including group discussions, field activities, etc.) help students to work through the material with each other. Over the course of study, hundreds of student questions are posed to teachers, who clarify meaning and bolster comprehension and understanding. Finally, all students who graduate must pass minimum standards of testing. The result has been a high degree of quality learning outcomes that are applied within the cultural context.

4) Can training be replicated, empowering national leaders rather than perpetuating dependency?

The key construct of this approach is its ability to be replicated. Mass distribution is not replication. The more successful we become, the less visible we become. In China, for example, the courses are now in their third/fourth generation and we will never see those 'students.' By 2018, about half of all our locations around the world were being taught primarily by nationals that we trained. We are not creating theological colonies; we are growing movements of theological competency that are being significantly led by nationals. We (or those we have trained) coach, encourage, and act as a safety net as needed to ensure successful replication.

5) Does this approach honor the concept of pastoral training outlined in Scripture, in which training is replicated in others?

The engagement of those who have training (or those who receive training) to become trainers, who train others is obedience to 2 Timothy 2:2. That is the work of WHMI's Bible Institute.

COMMENTS ON OTHER RESOURCESA host of resources have been developed in the last 10-15 years. These are intended to meet the need of pastoral training around the world. Many of these

provide excellent content. The issue with each of these, despite their excellence and what they do well, is what they do *not* do. They do not intentionally focus on creating a system in which nationals become the primary teachers, who in turn raise up other teachers to multiply theological competency among their countrymen. As a result, they do not organically break dependency. There is a proportionality between the depth of training and its ability to multiply (breadth). An attempt to provide millions of pastors around the world a formal, college or graduate level education through online resources is unrealistic, unattainable, and unwise. In summary, these resources may be described as follows:

- Even online resources may remain costly. While online delivery of theological education is generally less expensive than a traditional brick-and-mortar approach, much of it remains inaccessible to most pastors in underdeveloped areas or in nations where access to the Internet is highly controlled or limited. Even if an online degree may be accessed by someone in another country, and the cost is a better value when compared to the cost of traditional institutional approaches, it cannot meet the need in places where pastors remain impoverished. Thus, while online degree programs are helpful, they are not suitable as the global solution.
- Many use recorded lectures by leading U.S.-based theologians accompanied by downloadable notes. The approach of having outstanding lecturers record the presentations is not one that is culturally contextualized. If the lecturer remains the one on the video, the nationals never become the teachers. Rather, they serve as distributors or facilitators at best. This preserves a hub-and-spoke approach and does not envision that the voice of the teacher needs to become a national voice as soon as possible. This approach places too little value on replication.
- Many see theological education as the distribution of printed curriculum. Besides the fact that literacy remains an issue in many underdeveloped areas, the use of printed material alone to accomplish the task of pastoral training is hindered by two significant obstacles.
 - 1) Distribution of information does not equate with learning or understanding.
 - 2) Coaching and empowering teachers who will teach others is not an organic component of such an approach. Helping a leader become one who trains other leaders is a discipling process. Distribution of information is a good tool but does not intentionally accomplish the kind of discipleship that results in the replication of more trainers.

Many of the types of resources discussed above are excellent. They cannot, however, provide training for the largest part of the bell curve. They assume internet connectivity, finances, literacy, advanced educational levels, etc. They also approach the problem of global theological education primarily as a distribution problem. This does not mean these resources are not useful—they are. They do not, however, work from the assumption that nationals must become the teachers. In many of these approaches, the voice of the teacher remains an outsider. Even if distribution resources were translated into every tribal language, they would not produce nationals who become the students who then become the teachers. This highlights what we see as key barriers to theological training for the world's pastors and may explain why the problem continues. It is addressed by many organizations; however, there are few who approach theological education with the chief aim of empowering nationals to become the teachers who educate others. That type of approach requires personal interaction; it requires discipleship. If

those to whom materials (print or video) are distributed are never coached and encouraged, it is not likely they will become teachers who raise up other teachers.

CONCLUSION

The WHMI approach is unique, highly effective, and cost efficient. It is an affordable approach that organically replicates, making it possible to envision a world in which all pastors have access to training. It is not merely about the curriculum or how it is distributed. The issue is understanding what can be distributed, contextualized, and replicated so that nationals are raised up and empowered to educate themselves. Christians have delivered theological education to nationals for decades—it has not resulted in replication. Most of these approaches remain built on the hub-and-spoke construct. This continues to communicate to nationals that they cannot do for themselves and that they must remain dependent on others outside of their own cultural context. While we value other resources (institutions, online distribution, etc.), they cannot reach most of the pastors with the greatest need to learn, those in places that are most susceptible to false doctrine, or those where the message of the gospel is often perverted. More tragically, such approaches do not raise up pastors to teach other pastors—they are not designed to multiply. Furthermore, distribution models are dependent on governments to allow them to purchase properties, develop structures, or have open access to websites where resources may be stored. Training nationals within countries is essential in places where Western missionaries are not allowed. Such factors further demonstrate the necessity of nationally run, multiplying approaches to theological education. Above all, distribution approaches to pastoral training do not take a link-and-chain approach where each iteration of training extends the training to reach others. In the end, they are not designed to intentionally accomplish 2 Timothy 2:2. At WHMI, we believe that the concept of multiplication/replication, so essential to the Great Commission, must be equally applied to theological education.

¹ Distribution dependent on the internet remains problematic. The world's poorest and least educated countries remain behind. See <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/09/united-nations-internet-access/406552/>, accessed May 16, 2019.