

Church growth, Latino style

by Claude Nikondeha –

With over 15 million Hispanics in the western states and approximately half a million additional Hispanics entering the U.S through California and Arizona annually, we have as many Hispanics in the western territory as in all of metropolitan of Mexico City.

A recent Barna* survey revealed only 3% of U.S. Hispanics consider themselves evangelical Christians. This reminds us of Jesus words: “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers few (Luke 10:1-8) and the call to “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Are we praying for laborers to reap the Hispanic harvest? Are we ready to be those laborers?



We need our Hispanic Corps to take this upon themselves and reproduce corps to meet this influx of Hispanic friends. God is pressing the vision of reaching the Hispanics for Christ, to disciple them for leadership and to establish Spanish-speaking, Bible-believing Corps. So where do we begin?

In designing a new corps plant, we need to go back to the early Church in the book of Acts. The church met both in large meetings and in homes (Acts. 2:46; 20:20), and spread primarily by multiplication of home groups, rather than by large, auditorium-based meetings. Jesus’ vision for the world is to “make disciples.” This He clearly stated in Matthew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .” To achieve His vision, Jesus worked closely with twelve men that He mentored to continue His mission on the earth. This mentoring technique can be called the “principle of twelve” or the “Government of the twelve.”

Pastors Cesar and Claudia Castellanos from Bogotá, Colombia first implemented the “principle of twelve” in their congregation. This church has used this discipleship principle to build the largest small group network in the world: 30,000 small groups in a single congregation! The success of this model in this Latino Church could be, in some part, attributed to cultural affinity and fit. Latino and Hispanic cultures value strong extended families, connection to community and close long-term relationships, and these are all elements seen in the Castellanos model for church growth.

This dynamic principle is simple, personal nature and is easy to duplicate. It is not a program, but the development of “fathering” relationships that help every believer become a multiplying leader who can

disciple others. The vision is to make disciples and the goal is for every disciple to be a leader.

This method outlines four steps: attract, gather, disciple, and send. The strategy begins through the process of attracting people through out reach, and gathering them through small home group bible studies. Discipling happens within the context of the home group, and it is these disciples that are then sent to reach out to new people. And then the process starts over again!

To learn more about this model, please contact office of Multi-Cultural Ministries @ 562-491-8448

* Barna Research Group is a full-service marketing research company providing information and analysis regarding cultural trends and the Christian Church since 1984.