

mission:world

NEWS

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PASTORS

By Stan Scroggins

Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator

bmaglobal.org

In 1976 the Baptist Missionary Association Bible College in the Philippines began training the first Filipino pastors. The college has gone through many changes, most recently achieving CHED (Commission of Higher Education) accreditation. In addition to offering degrees in theology and pastoral leadership, the institution also provides training in religious education and music. The most recent program addition is cross cultural church planting to prepare Filipinos to take the gospel to all of Asia Pacific.

Today, closing in on 50 years of training pastors and missionaries, the Baptist Missionary Association Bible College can be proud of training over 90% of all pastors of the Baptist Missionary Association of the Philippines. As alumni these men share a sense of connection, tradition, and heritage that uniquely binds them together.

As educational institutions grow they will invariably and of necessity need to also grow their financial base. The number one way to do this is by adding programs and degrees, bringing in new students and therefore a new financial stream. But history has proven that in doing so the institution slowly and almost imperceptibly loses the vision of its original mandate: “training missionaries and pastors.” Today when one thinks of Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and even Oxford University, it is not theology and divinity training that comes to mind, which was exactly the purpose and intention for the founding of each of these great universities.

Revelation 2:17 begins Jesus’ admonitions to the seven churches of Asia, the first one to the Church at Ephesus. In a 2017 article, Got Questions Ministry explained the Ephesians’ dilemma like this: “Surrounded by paganism and false teachers, the Ephesian church would have had ample opportunity to correct false doctrine and confront heretical teachers. If they did so for any reason other than love for Christ and a passion for His truth, however, they would have lost their way.” In other words they would have “lost their first love.” Many Christian ministries and institutions are no doubt doing good and important work focusing on education, feeding programs, health programs, housing, all of which are basically attempting to alleviate the human condition. But, too often these ministries have “lost their first love”—the saving of souls, disciple making and church planting.

Training the next generation of pastors and missionaries must be the highest of priorities, especially for missionary sending organizations like BMA Global. The modern and renewed focus of disciple making is the key, but even more important is to which institution the mandate to do so is given. Mark Dever, celebrated founder 9Marks, avowed, “Seminaries are not made to make pastors. Churches make pastors.”

Training the next generation of pastors and missionaries in the Philippines is a church mandated responsibility. Care must be given to remember that the Baptist Missionary Association Bible College is a tool, an exceptionally good tool, available to Filipino churches to assist them in their preparation of their missionaries and their church planters.

How can the local Filipino church fulfill her mandate to raise up the next generation of pastors and missionaries? Here are a few suggestions, which many Filipino churches already do.

First, avoid the idea of making it the responsibility of the college to call preachers. God does the calling, churches do the sending. Send students who have been vetted, prayed over, and proven within the local congregation. Make it a priority to send students who have a confirmed call to ministry.

Second, provide informal training and internship experiences. Give young men opportunities to read, prepare expositional sermons, preach locally with constructive critique, sit in on decision making, sit in on pastoral counseling, and make pastoral visits.

Third, support the students you send for training. Training is expensive, so invest in the ministry of training students by supporting those you send. Today it is ever so easy to stay in contact with students at school. Contact them and pray with them.

Next, let it be known to the congregation the challenges students face: traveling far from home, home sickness, financial needs, material needs.

Fifth, don’t overlook mistakes, but don’t crucify the student who made them.

Lastly, let the local church be a student’s first class room. Let them see the best and the worst. Don’t let a prospective pastor make the same mistakes his sending church has made.

The best ministry preparation takes place where there is a partnership between the Bible College and the local church. The Bible College merely puts on the finishing touches to the young men the local church has invested in and already trained and mentored. Some things are learned in the classroom. Some things are learned in the local church.

Many churches in the Philippines are doing good work “raising up the next generation of pastors.” May God bless these and touch the heart of every pastor and congregation to do the same.



mission:world

NEWS

INVESTING IN LOCAL PASTORS GLOBALLY

By Charlie Costa

BMA Global Middle East Coordinator

bmaglobal.org

The dictionary defines the word invest as “to expend money with the expectation of achieving a profit or material result by putting it into financial plans, shares, or property or by using it to develop a commercial venture; to devote one’s time, effort, or energy to a particular undertaking with the expectation of a worthwhile result.”

Interestingly enough, the definition gives us more than the meaning of the words: It allows us greater insight into important realities when it comes to investment. If that is the case with investing in material things, how much more important is it to invest in people?

Please note the cost. Good investing is costly. It is the willingness to pay what it takes to achieve the desired result. Many times, the return is not immediate. Many times, it is not what we are expecting. Yet the willingness to pay what it takes is incarnational. Remember the investment in Calvary.

Pause for a moment and think about that. Was the return on investment quick and as expected?

This brings me to the second issue of not only cost but attitude. Patience is a virtue and also an attitude. Commitment to others and their success is also an attitude. It does take patience, effort, and energy to achieve the end result.

So with these facts in mind, the Middle East team held the very first Middle East-wide Baptist pastors conference last September in Lebanon. Forty-two pastors and their wives attended from Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. BMA Global President John David Smith and BMA Global Vice President of Strategy and Training Larry Barker led the conference using the “Recharge” material translated into Arabic. At the same time, a parallel women’s conference was also held with Shelby Barker as the primary speaker.

Both conferences were a huge success as pastors listened, interacted, and asked questions.



The wealth of Bro. Larry’s and Dr. Smith’s experiences enriched the discussions. Breaktime chats brought to the surface issues that have hindered the work of these pastors for years.

Have all the issues in our region been resolved? Has the return on investment been achieved? Not by a long shot. The journey of a thousand miles starts with one step. We are on the right track, but patience is needed.

There was a monetary cost, and the people of our Middle East churches provided that. There was also the cost involved of commitment, effort, and energy that Bro. Larry, Shelby and Dr. Smith paid. Ultimately, nothing of worth is free. (I see you nodding your head in agreement.)

I know the pastors will not forget that experience; in fact we are being asked to make this a recurring event. Maybe the best summary of it all is what one of those pastors said to me following one of the sessions: “Could you please ask Bro. Larry and Dr. Smith not to stop?”

Case closed.

mission:world

NEWS

LEADING BROKEN PEOPLE WITH A BROKEN PAST

By Brian Risner
Missionary to Romania
bmaglobal.org

I can close my eyes and recall the day perfectly: Dirty little black feet running everywhere, kicking up little puffs of dust as they zoomed by me. Their little bare feet were everywhere you looked. Nothing seemed to faze them, not even the golfball-size gravel they were darting across.

I stood in the center of the gypsy village with emotions bouncing around inside my chest. I stood still and took in the scene around me. The moment seemed unreal. I couldn't believe all that was going on.

I could see a kid carrying a puppy by the neck.

I could hear babies crying in the background and a mother yelling at someone.

I snapped out of my trance as a large crowd gathered around our ministry team, and we started singing worship songs. I prayed a small prayer asking God to speak through me as I preached his Word. Today, there was no five-point sermon, just the gospel message.

It would be difficult, but I would pray for the leadership necessary to show them Christ.

As I looked at the faces of children and adults, I could see them being drawn to the gospel. I presented the story of Jesus' sacrificial love for us as simply and clearly as possible. I was explaining the gospel to broken people with challenging and hard lives. They were people of few possessions and even less hope. My heart ached for them; I watched tears swell up in the eyes of some of them.

I desperately wanted them to hear and understand the gospel message I was sharing.

I desired to help them get out of the physical, emotional, and spiritual bondage that they were dealing with.

Despite a complete lack of leadership in the village, over the years we watched God as he changed many hearts in that tiny little gypsy village. Multiple people made professions of faith. Week after week, we watched as the children came to our children's program. It was not the average Sunday morning children's program by a long shot. We had kids running in and out of the little shed that we used for a classroom. We even had kids literally swinging from the rafters. One day we had two little boys bring their small fish with them to the program. The crazy thing was that the fish was still alive and moving in their little hands. They were so proud of their treasure!

But even when we thought no one was listening, there were several who were. We started to see a change in some of their behaviors. And our motto became, "It's not a sprint. It's a marathon." It was a true blessing to watch how the love of Jesus changed their lives.

My passion for the lost increased during that time. I started looking at the people with the eyes of Jesus. I would tell people that until they had "Jesus' eyes," they could not clearly see the big picture.

I thank God for enabling me to lead those who never had strong-yet-gentle leadership and giving me passion for the broken people of Romania and around the world. And I pray for Him to raise up more leaders from the Roma.

The harvest is ripe, but the workers are few, so, as I like to say, "Let's roll!"





TOPIC: ONLINE CULTURE

By Yalanda Merrell
Lifeworld
lifeworld.org

In 1994, hosts on the Today Show were asking the question “What is the internet?” It was so new to the general public that no one really knew the capabilities of the world wide web. And now, 30 years later, it’s developed its own culture, one that is unique and diverse in every way possible. It’s shaped the way we do business, communicate, advertise, and where we get our information. It’s where the people are. Everyone has access to the internet and it’s where we go for everything. Who uses a handheld dictionary or encyclopedia anymore when you can tap a few words into Google and have your answer in seconds? From song lyrics, to vacation plans, to answers to the tough questions in life, the bottom line is, people are going to the internet for answers.



And if it’s where the people are, then that’s where the gospel needs to go, too.

At Lifeworld, we’ve created a digital discipleship tool to introduce people to what it means to be a follower of Christ, show them what it looks like to follow Him daily, and connect them to a

local discipling church. FOLLOW is an easy to use tool that allows someone to learn about Jesus on their own, with a group, or can even be used by a church to walk someone through the journey of discipleship.

When we began dreaming about what FOLLOW would look like, how it could be used, and who it would reach, we knew there would be challenges. In this culture, people move on quickly. It’s said that you have to catch them or hook them within 3-7 seconds. That’s fast! What could we possibly say to them to get them to hear the gospel and learn how to follow Christ in that short of time? We start with where they are.

They are online for a reason. They are searching for something, maybe answers to tough questions like “What happens when you die?” or “Why do bad things happen to good people?” or “How do I find true happiness?”. While the world has lots



Scan the code to go to follow.lifeworld.org

of answers, we can point them to the One true and living God that provides hope, healing, and peace, even when we don’t know all the answers.

Do you want to know more about the online culture? Just ask your kids or your grandkids. It’s a place full of hurting people struggling with addiction, fear, doubt, worry, and suicide. It’s a culture that thrives on influencers and the amount of likes or subscribers you have. It’s fickle and those you consider your biggest fans can turn on you in a second, and the fall is fast, furious and unforgiving. God has given us a great opportunity to speak into their lives – to grab them by the virtual hand and walk with them, showing them the way to Jesus. To be a light in the darkness. To point them to truth in the midst of deep fakes and virtual reality. What an incredible time to be a part of God’s Great Commission, to take His name to the ends of the earth via the “information highway”.

Will you pray with us for FOLLOW? That God would be glorified through every video watched, every article read, every button clicked, every conversation that takes place and every person who makes that decision to follow Jesus with their lives every day. And that more of our churches would join us to become disciple-makers. Go to follow.lifeworld.org to learn more.

