

**Report on the Open Dialogue**  
**“Extending the Reach of the Traditional Seminary Classroom”**  
**Session A**

**Global Proclamation Congress for Pastoral Trainers**  
**Bangkok, Thailand**  
**Impact Convention Center, Sapphire 101–102**  
**Monday, June 20, 2016, 5:30–6:45pm**

Report prepared by Jonathan J. Armstrong  
with the assistance of Martha Nehring

jonathan.armstrong@moody.edu  
Associate Professor of Bible and Theology  
Moody Bible Institute – Spokane  
611 East Indiana Avenue  
Spokane, WA 99207  
USA

## **SUMMARY:**

In this first open dialogue, participants discuss the challenge presented at the GPro Congress, namely to increase the capacity of formal pastoral training and to raise the quality of non-formal pastoral training.

As seminaries contemplate increased participation in global pastoral training, the task will be to contextualize not only educational content but also pedagogy for application in non-Western contexts (A4, A7, A8, A10, A11, A12, A13). Institutions of formal pastoral training may be able to learn from institutions of non-formal pastoral training in this regard (A39, A40, A41). Several specific proposals are offered that would lead to greater collaboration between formal and non-formal institutions: standards could be set that would allow graduates of non-formal programs to enter directly into formal programs (A22); faculty in formal institutions could teach regularly in non-formal institutions (A23, A24); formal institutions could proliferate and counsel non-formal institutions (A55, A56, A57).

Significant criticisms of the seminary model of pastoral training are voiced by representatives of both formal and non-formal institutions. The question is raised whether the current crisis in global pastoral training indicates an intrinsic deficiency in the seminary model (A16, A17, A32, A34). The themes and methods of academic theology are not modeled by Jesus in his instruction to his disciples (A42, A43, A53, A54, A106). Seminary programs do not adequately equip students for practical pastoral ministry (A26, A47); the curricula of both formal and non-formal institutions tend to focus on cognitive development to the exclusion of spiritual formation (A51, A52). Formal institutions should aim to multiply leaders, not simply add or graduate individual new leaders (A50, A53, A66). Although the question is raised whether formal institutions have clearly defined objectives (A103, A104), it is maintained that rigorous standards of assessment are in place, and that these standards continue to improve (A107, A108, A110).

Despite these criticisms, the hope is expressed that increased collaboration is feasible and would be deeply beneficial (A36, A37, A38, A69, A70, A93); more extensive involvement in the task of global pastoral training may reinvigorate formal institutions (A63). Urgent appeals to bridge the divide between formal and non-formal institutions are voiced (A46, A49, A98, A99, A101); the need to train large numbers of pastors should become a controlling priority for existing institutions (A60, A61, A62, A88, A89, A102). Underlying the external differences between programs of formal and non-formal pastoral training may be differences in vision concerning the role and office of the pastor, and therefore bridging the divide is a matter of importance for global Christian unity (A105, A106).

Seminaries can contribute significantly to the task of global pastoral training by focusing on forming students and resourcing graduates who will become leaders in non-formal institutions (A19, A27, A28, A50, A74, A75). Teaching faculty in formal institutions should encourage their students to pursue service within non-formal institutions (A77) and should model creativity for their students in their own teaching (A86, A87). Massive innovation (A79, A81) as well as structures of accountability (A82, A83, A84, A85) will be required for new initiatives to succeed.

**TRANSCRIPT:**

**[A1] Jonathan Armstrong (Associate Professor at Moody Bible Institute – Spokane):** I've structured two questions, but we can leave them if they're not fruitful. The first question that I'd like to ask you is: "Do the churches and institutions of theological education that we represent share the mission of the Global Proclamation Congress of Pastoral Trainers?" I assume the answer is "yes," because we're present; but if so, how do our institutions articulate that mission? I think that would be a beneficial exercise just to begin. What exactly is the mission that's being articulated here and how do our institutions reflect that? This is mostly just something to get us chatting.

**[A2]** In 2011, the president of Moody, Paul Nyquist, directed our institution to reflect on six key directives, which I have here for example's sake. "Across the globe, cultures, and generations, Moody will equip people with the truth of God's word using new technology in an agile and innovative community." How do your institutions articulate the mission of reaching out to pastoral trainers? How do we institutionally articulate that?

**[A3] Jack Lewis (Campus Dean of Moody Bible Institute – Spokane):** Or if it's not articulated formally, how would you articulate it? Take a stab at it!

**[A4] Darrell Bock (Executive Director of Cultural Engagement at Dallas Theological Seminary):** I think there is a prior question and that is, "How do we connect with some of the people who do non-formal education in such a way that we serve them, contextualizing what they're doing?" Or in other words, rather than simply delivering what we have and giving it to them and assuming that that fits their context, I'm wondering—and I found myself at the table this morning asking myself—how we discover what the non-formal ministries are to which we could connect and be of service to help them deliver what they are already networked to deliver. And if there were a way to do that, it seems to me then we could be wiser about what kinds of resources they tell us they need, and what kinds of resources we deliver, and how we deliver them, and how we protect ourselves from delivering something that contextually doesn't connect to where they are.

**[A5] Jack Lewis:** It sounds like you want us to be culturally sensitive.

**[A6] Darrell Bock:** Yes.

**[A7] Rick Reed (President of Heritage Theological Seminary):** I had a fascinating conversation with a guy named Randy Barnett. He's with IMB in Africa and they help theological schools. We got talking in one of the parallel track sessions and he was saying that he has a couple PhDs, so he's done the whole formal thing, but now he's working with many African colleges and seminaries, and where he's wrestling with is—I think it was Bobby Gupta who alluded to this today—he's wrestling with the fact that many of the

people that are served by non-formal mechanisms are primarily oral learners. They may be literate in the sense that they can read, but that's not how they learn, that's not how they think. And he's concerned that if we don't contextualize even the pedagogy of what we're doing, we will just package up our own resources and bring it to them and they'll just stay away. They'll vote with their feet and say, "It's not helping us."

**[A8] P. J. Buys (Director of World Reformed Fellowship):** To tie onto what my brother has said about the issue of contextualization [A4, A7], some research has also been done in pedagogics and the difference between field-dependent and field-independent learners and learning styles. There was a dissertation published in Kenya that did extensive research on that. It pointed out that most Africans are field-dependent learners and they've got a field-dependent learning style, while most Western people and Western institutions and Western learners have a field-independent learning style, and that's quite different. And many Western organizations that did not realize that produced materials for non-Western, specifically African, areas, materials that are not suitable for them because they don't meet their learning style.

**[A9] Rick Reed:** Can you clarify what field-dependent and field-independent mean?

**[A10] P. J. Buys:** There is a whole list of things to compare them. I will just say a few for example. For example, what they have discovered in their research is that a field-dependent learner first wants to see an overview of the whole picture that is going to be covered before he can go into small parts of it. On the other hand, a field-independent learner can immediately go into small details. Field-dependent people work best in groups. That ties in with African communalism and worldview. And that's why people who offer distance education have discovered that so many Africans who enroll in distance education and online programs just fail. They can't really work alone. They want to work in groups, while Western people can easily work as individuals. Field-dependent people hate competition. Field-independent people are motivated by competition. The way you put your curricula and teaching materials together is determined by these things, so that outcome of that dissertation was that if you want to serve people in African communities you need to carefully make sure that the material you want to offer to help them must be structured according to field-dependent learning styles. So if you were to Google field-dependent or field-independent learning styles, you would probably easily get a hold of that dissertation that has been published. It's part of the issue of contextualization.

**[A11] Scott Cunningham (Vice President of International Partnerships at Overseas Council):** But the important point is that oftentimes when you think about contextualization, it's only the content that we think about rather than the process as well.

**[A12] P. J. Buys:** Yes, the style.

**[A13] Scott Cunningham:** Yes, so many of the things in high-context cultures in particular require us to think much beyond the content to go into the process and the structure and the interaction and pedagogical issues, the role of the teacher and so forth.

**[A14] Don Davis (Senior Vice President of World Impact):** Notwithstanding the issues that we're talking about—context, style, even content—the question about the mission of the Global Proclamation is about a shortage of laborers in needy fields.

**[A15] Jack Lewis:** A shortage of trained laborers? Or a shortage of laborers, period?

**[A16] Don Davis:** I'll leave that to your imagination. [Laughter] This is what I'm saying about the question that you asked. I'm a product of traditional education. If you look at the variables that affect the speed at which we train laborers—that's the whole focus of this congress, right? It's not an educational congress; it's a missions congress. It's for healthy pastors; it's for healthy churches. I'm looking forward to us talking about the correlation between what we do and healthy churches. Can you connect the dots from what you do to healthy churches? I think that's an open question in academics. At least, if you've discovered the path, I'd like to know what it looks like, so I can imitate you! You can be involved in academics up to your nose and absolutely not be consistent with the mission of the Global Proclamation Congress, it seems to me. For instance, are we training people who actually deploy to help, that results in healthy churches and healthy societies? We as academics like to measure stuff. Can we measure: "Yes, we're actually doing that. This many graduates have done that"?

**[A17]** And some of the variables that kill us are the length of our programs and the speed at which we matriculate people. There's a disconnect between the variables that we're accustomed to—how long our programs are, who gets invited to the classroom, who gets into the classroom, and where they go after they've been in our classroom—and whether they actually produce healthy pastors, churches and societies. And can we tell? I'm not even sure we can tell. I'm trying to make a direct line between what we offer in the classroom and GPro. I'm asking, "Can we do that?" How do you all look at that?

**[A18] Dennis Hollinger (President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary):** We all need more modesty about what we really can accomplish. We would do a terrible job of doing non-formal education at Gordon-Conwell. We haven't hired faculty to do that or have experience in this. So I think as we think about our work with international students, we need to delineate a philosophy of training leaders to train leaders, which means they're going to need to be the ones to really do the best contextualization.

**[A19]** They need to be introduced by us to the very process of contextualization, but when it comes to the specifics in a given setting with given needs, those folks are going to be able to do that much, much better than our own faculty will. We can help them to grapple with contextualization, but I don't think we're well suited to train oral learners, for example. So we simply rest content with what we can do well

and keep that philosophy in mind. We have a number of Chinese students right now, but they're going to be leaders of leaders. The average pastor in China shouldn't be coming from Gordon-Conwell or Trinity or Dallas or any of the other schools represented here, it seems to me, because we're not well-suited for that. So simply recognizing what we can do puts some limitation on what we are doing.

**[A20] Jonathan Armstrong:** Can we take that question and lead out with it? So, recognizing our limitations, what can we do directly to participate in the mission of this congress? I think that was wonderfully stated.

**[A21] Henry Tan (Consultant at Global Leadership Development):** Perhaps the question should be not "What can we do?" but "What should we do?"

**[A22] P. J. Buys:** What I've seen that also works is that when you teach at the pregraduate level you include things in your curriculum like study methods and research methodology. And I have seen students who have started theological training at a level where they hadn't even completed 12th grade, in non-formal training, but we built into their training some preparations for graduate studies and so on. So I have seen students who started below a bachelor's degree level who eventually got a bachelor's degree and eventually got an honors degree and who have now graduated with a master's degree. But in the courses that they did at that lower level certain things were already built in like study methods, basic computer studies, and language proficiency. They were small parts of the work they were doing, like learning to preach and getting a simple survey of the Bible and systematic theology and all that. That was part of the course at that lower level and it prepared students to go further. So that must be the goal: try to get a seamless connection between non-formal lower level training and higher level training. How can we do that more: to develop seamless connections?

**[A23] Manfred Kohl (Special Ambassador at Overseas Council):** I was involved in a project that took place in Brazil. It was a theological seminary that offers master's degrees and doctoral programs. And they came up with the idea that the faculty should be willing to teach lay leaders in a church on Saturdays. And it was, first of all, a shock to every faculty member that this was added to their job description. And they had to learn, and it was a fantastic program. They went to ten cities and in each city they brought together 100 laypeople from the different churches. That was a miracle, too, to bring the elders and the Sunday school leaders and the laypeople together. And they did this every Saturday from 8:00am to 2:00pm, with two breaks, for 50 Saturdays a year.

**[A24]** And then they graduated. Hardly anyone left the program. The Langham Trust gave each one a library of about 25 or 30 books as a graduation gift. It was an excellent, excellent program! And after 10 or 15 Saturdays, the faculty felt very comfortable. They knew the people and the people knew the professors. So from Monday to Friday they were involved in their seminary education and their master and doctoral students, and Saturday they were involved in training the lay leaders. And it was even a kind of marketplace program; it was not just for the church. It can be done, and we should look at

examples from around the world where it takes place, and learn from them. I think we have to be careful of not saying, “Well, don’t come in with the Western stuff.” That is right. It was Brazilians teaching Brazilians. It was academics teaching laypeople. It can be done. Where there is a will there is a way, if we are really committed. Of course they had to change their entire teaching style and their approach, but it was their own people, it was done in their own language, and they had their own material. So I recommend that someone should research good examples from around the world that we can learn from.

**[A25] Joe Handley (President of Asian Access):** It was eye-opening to be at the ICETE meetings last fall. I think several of us here were there. And it was enlightening for me to be a part of Dr. Kohl’s presentation. He has done a couple of major studies on this very issue. And then we had a follow-up meeting with a few of us who are involved in formal and non-formal education, as a starting point. I think it would be good for this group to come into contact with that group and keep that dialogue alive, doing more of this research. That was the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education.

**[A26]** One idea that I believe came out of that was that you [pointing to Malcolm Webber] are working with some theological institutions in India doing this very thing. So you have a model already in motion that could build off of what Manfred [A23, A24] is saying. I think there will be more and more of that. The reason we exist is exactly what you were pointing out in that seminar. There is a gap between going to seminary and being equipped to be a pastor of a church. And so there are all of these groups emerging doing leadership development to help a pastor get to that next stage. We’ve got to work together.

**[A27] Darrell Bock:** What I’m hearing at my table is that there were a lot of people who were formally trained but now have ended up in informal education and are heading up organizations. The question I have is: “Is there a way for us to rally around those folks, almost as consultants?” They know the problems they have in taking what they’re trying to do and delivering what they’re trying to deliver to the people where they’re ministering. They know that side of the problem. What they may need from us is help in ratcheting up the level of what it is they deliver, and to think through some of those aspects.

**[A28]** It seems to me that at least one of the services that we can perform is to be more available to people in those situations. We shouldn’t be worried about how to deliver what we do down at the level at which it’s being delivered on the ground, but we can help the person who understands that level, at the ground, what they’re dealing with. I believe we would have a lot to offer those people because they’re middle men: they understand what they get from us on the one end and they also understand what needs to be delivered on the other end.

**[A29] Manfred Kohl:** Yes, that’s a good point.

**[A30] Keith Edwards (Seminary Director of Church Initiatives at Heritage Theological Seminary):** Is there a database of those people who are involved, or will that be a part of this project?

**[A31] Jonathan Armstrong:** I actually don't know. Ramesh is putting together several databases from this experience.

**[A32] Henry Tan:** My question is: "Are we assuming that the leaders we want to develop on the field or anywhere else must actually have a graduate degree?" I'm asking this question because what we are really trying to do is to develop leaders for the Great Commission and the building of the kingdom. So if we assume that everybody needs to come to the level of a seminary graduate in order to be an effective leader, I want to raise the question: "Is that a good assumption?"

**[A33] Jack Lewis:** I actually don't think we're making that assumption. I think the question would be: "Is there a place that that level of education should influence those people?" As you said, "the trainers of the trainers of the trainers." At some level, how do we impact those people so there is strong theology and strong methodology and so on?

**[A34] Don Davis:** Isn't a conference like this a critique of what we're doing? With so few pastors—I think Ramesh said that if we filled every candidate's spot in every one of our schools and they matriculated successfully, we would still be at only 1% of the pastors who need to be trained. In some ways I think your question is right at the cusp. And I'm not sure that we can assume that there is a direct relationship between what we do and healthy pastors and healthy churches and healthy societies. That's the GPro blurb. That's what we've been listening to. So I'm curious, how do you guys see that?

**[A35]** There's a shortage. It's obvious there's a shortage; so we're not doing very well in that regard. What about the excellences that the Congress is about? That's what the lectures are about: the healthiness of the pastors, the healthiness of the churches, and the healthiness of societies. And I would think that would give us the right, quite literally, to advise those who are the middlemen. Let's say we're really bad at what we do. Do we have a mechanism where we can admit that? It occurs to me that somebody could take what you said, that we're not equipped, and then they could twist that argument and say that we're not relevant, then. If we're not good at the GPro values, then they could say, "Why would you advise anyone?" In some ways the conference itself is a critique on what we're doing.

**[A36] Darrell Bock:** I actually view the conference differently. I think the conference is trying to put together, in combinations, things that have not been brought together because there's a belief that each side has something to bring to the table to make us all more effective. So my take would be that the disconnect is that there is a disconnect. And so we want to pull those pieces together so that the strengths of what each is bringing to the table get in a flow of some kind that would benefit everybody.

**[A37]** I share your concern about whether it is as simple as “Healthy pastors, healthy churches, healthy societies.” I have questions about how healthy churches and healthy societies connect because I think Scripture tells me I can expect unhealthy societies for a long time. But having said that, there’s no doubt, it seems to me, that if pastors do a better job in general and churches do a better job in general, then there will be an impact, even if that impact generates a pushback. There’s still an impact.

**[A38] P. J. Buys:** For me, to answer these question, it is an issue of gifts and talents. For all the years that I’ve been involved in theological education on both the non-formal and the formal level, teaching master’s degrees and Ph.D.’s and so on, the point is to help each student discern his gifts and talents and his calling, pushing him to the utmost. And some will have the gifts and the talents to proceed to a doctoral degree. Some won’t have those gifts and talents, and they are actually the people who are really needed on the grassroots level to plant churches. That’s fine. That’s their calling. But don’t say they’re not good enough because they don’t have a degree. It’s just because those are their own gifts and talents, and because that’s where God has called them and helped them to do that work. I’ve done that on the non-formal level.

**[A39] Dennis Hollinger:** One of the problems as I hear this discussion is that we keep thinking about how we can be a resource to the non-formal side. As I’ve met people throughout the week, the constant question is, “Can you send professors to help teach?” And I keep wondering what kind of mechanisms we can put in place so they can teach us. I think they are asking sets of questions that are very different from the questions we’re asking in the West. Part of what I’d love to see is how to figure out ways that they truly can minister to us and help us grapple with questions that truly are relevant universally.

**[A40] Darrell Bock:** I actually think that Ramesh understands that. And I think that part of what he thinks will emerge out of this is precisely that: that the exchange would go two ways, and that we would be in a better position to teach what we need to be teaching people, in terms of life and the health of the church, as a result of engaging in these kinds of experiences. I think that’s exactly Ramesh’s intention. He hasn’t said it, but I think he’s subversive [laughter], and I think that’s part of what he is after.

**[A41] Manfred Kohl:** We have to be very careful that we who have all the theological expertise don’t look down on the others. Several times already in the past fifteen minutes I have heard phrases like, “on the bottom level,” “on the ground level,” and “we have to bring them up to our level.” I think that whole thinking is completely wrong. They have the same right and the same privilege of saying that they are important just like we are. We are different, and we have to help each other recognize each other. We need to be careful not to look down on others and think that they need our help. We don’t say it, but we’re thinking it. Yes, they do need our help, but we had better learn from them as well and see how we can change and become more relevant. Our churches are becoming smaller and smaller, by and large, if you look at the statistics. We have to find a new model to train leadership. It’s not just the academics who are important. It is the laypeople training who really make a difference.

**[A42]** I'm working on a project right now to look at the teaching of Jesus. He had twelve students who didn't have a college education. They knew how to fish and do carpentry and simple work. And they changed the world. They did not pass the first exam to enter his three-year theological training program. And the question I'm working on right now is: "What did Jesus teach?" I came up with 15 subjects that Jesus taught in his three-year ministry as recorded in the four gospels, and all 15 subjects are not taught anymore today in our seminaries. That will be quite a revolutionary statement when it comes out.

**[A43]** He taught how to be a servant; and we don't teach that any more. He taught how to deal with issues of sharing and giving. All these issues are things we don't teach anymore. We have put together a system wherein we get accredited and we become equal with the world of academia around us and we have lost the opportunity to train the many, many people who need help. I think the Congress is showing that we need hundreds of thousands more than what we are training. How can we do that? A chance to get them into our institutions is not the solution. We must find another way. And we have to come down from our high horse and our belief we are the ones who set the stage and we are the ones who set the agenda. We are not! We are equal partners with the others. How can we deal with that? It's very, very difficult, because our faculty, by and large, have a different understanding of this. They think differently, and that has to be changed.

**[A44] Raymond Lombard (Director of Wheels for God's Word):** I know it's very scary. I was in Cape Town, South Africa. This is the situation that came out in the two discussions we had around my table in the last two days. There were three Indian brothers around my table, where I was a team leader. They said that, in India, they do not have students anymore that are coming to academic theological institutions. We are losing ground, big time. People can't pay, people can't come. So they closed three theological institutions. In South Africa they have the same situation. What's happening is that we're losing ground, big time. And it's not because of the theological institutions; it's just a fact of the world that we live in today. So how are we going to address that?

**[A45]** I also represent Harvesters, a Bible school. We have 30,000 people. I represent the informal training. We have a three-year program. We train 30,000 men of God to become pastors in Africa in 42 nations. We've also done it in the underground church in China where I worked for seven years. Some of them want to go through graduation in August. There are 102 pastors, and each one has his own local church. Some of them support two or three more, and they can't come to a theological institution.

**[A46]** Somewhere there needs to be a bridge. I've been working on this for 21 years on the continent of Africa in 42 nations, and I'm a pastor of a local church. I have this unbelievable burden that we should do something. But our problem is that the theological institutions don't get students any more. For the academic universities, their numbers go down and not up. It's happening in South Africa and in India. I don't know what it's like around the world, since I can only speak for these two observations. I haven't done research on it. This is really scary if you think that only 5% of 2.2 million to 2.4 million pastors have got the right certificate or degree or diploma, and the others don't have any. Not to shoot anything down, but it would be wonderful if we could put something on the table to cross the bridge. This is a real concern to me that involves both sides. It's a real concern, and we really need help.

**[A47] Henry Tan:** I agree with you. I think that this is the focus that we ought to be thinking about. How do we do this? We have a need that the present system cannot fulfill. As Don Davis says [A34], even if everybody becomes a pastor, we cannot fill the need. We cannot have the mentality that we need to ratchet up the training of the people. That's not the idea. We're not trying to get everybody to be like every seminary graduate. The question being asked is: "Are the pastors coming out of seminaries really trained to do the job? Or, are they trained to exegete and exposit and teach, and that's it?" We need to really be thinking about what it is that we are trying to develop.

**[A48]** We need the leaders out there. Whether they get a degree or not is not the question. The question is: "Are they being developed to be the leaders of the congregations that God has given them?" That is the challenge that we have. It is not so much to figure out how the people in formal education can come and ratchet up the non-formal training. The question is how the people in formal education can encourage the people in non-formal education to do more, so that we can actually say that we need both. We need to move forward. We cannot say that our goal is to raise their standards. I'm not sure that's what they're asking. I think they're asking, "Teach me now so that I can be the leader where God has placed me. I've got a church, and I don't know what to do. Let's get going!" And I think if we can all come to think of it in terms of that being the goal, then we can consider how we put our minds together to figure out how to accelerate that.

**[A49]** I think that's the question that we need to discuss. If that's the need out there, then how can we put our heads, our minds, and our resources together to see that need be met? Because it is a dire need. We have 50,000 coming to know the Lord every day. How do we meet that growing need, let alone the 2.4 million right now who are pastoring who don't have any training?

**[A50] Scott Cunningham:** One idea is this: it seems that most of the formal institutions have the mentality of being additive: that is, they believe we can produce more leaders by students coming in and graduating. We're adding them to the pastoral leadership force, rather than thinking in terms of multiplying. How can we train our students to become graduates who in turn can reproduce leadership? So, although we may hope that that happens, or point to examples where it is happening—let's say, this one graduate became a leader of a non-formal church multiplication program—are we really being intentional about this? It seems that this would be one particular area where formal theological educational institutions might have a deeper and broader effect, to think about multiplying rather than adding.

**[A51] Dennis Hollinger:** I think the non-formal side also needs to hear from us about our sense of where we have made mistakes in the past, because as I talk to some of the folks who are doing non-formal education, I'm asking what their approach is and what they are actually doing out there. They're doing some of the very same things we did in formal theological education that we now know were failures, primarily focusing only on the cognitive component of education. And, whether education is formal or non-formal, I think we really have to see pastoral preparation as a formation process. So yes, there is the cognitive side of it, but it also includes spiritual formation and character formation and formation of pastoral identity. And that's done in a very different way. And at least of the people I've talked to,

around my table and at lunch and so forth, so many of them were focusing primarily on content. They're going to have the very same problems we did.

**[A52]** When I was in seminary in 1970, you could have been as far from God as you can imagine, but there was no mechanism for that to show up on the process of theological education. Fortunately, we've made some good shifts in evangelical schools, and we've learned some things over the last several decades. But that's one thing we really do need to pass on; otherwise we'll be repeating the same problems we've had in the past.

**[A53] Malcolm Webber (Executive Director of LeaderSource):** Yes, and Manfred Kohl [A42, A43] shared how, in his study of Jesus' building of his disciples, he identified 15 areas of focus, all of which are not often dealt with today. And the important thing is not only the areas of focus but also the process by which he built their lives. And if we would look at the process by which Jesus built them, which obviously worked very well, even though he only focused on 12, and only 11 of them were successful. They turned the world upside down in a few years. They had the multiplication effect, very dramatically so. But if we look at the process he used and compare it with the process that is used in what we normally think of as training, it's very hard to find even a single point of similarity.

**[A54]** I think these are some of the very deep, difficult, awful questions that we need to be willing to ask ourselves. Also, as we're thinking of what we in formal education have to give to the non-formal, we need to consider what they're asking us for. Are they asking us for stuff, for resources and degrees? Or are they saying to us, "I see your life, and I want to learn from you. I see you know God. You're walking in servanthood and character, and, wow, as I look at your ministry, I see that you are able to lead people and you're changing lives. Can I come along with you as you do it?" What are they asking us for?

**[A55] Don Allsman (Vice President of World Impact):** I can say that we work with a large number of people who, as you are saying, want to be equipped to be pastors or elders and leaders in the church. And when they look at higher education beyond what they're getting, it is mainly for their vocation. It's a ticket to get a job. It's not added value. It's a matter of needing a degree if they're to get a vocation at a certain level. 95% of our students want to be equipped for ministry; 5% want to go on beyond that because they want a vocation. Most of the students are bi-vocational, so they aren't looking to go beyond.

**[A56]** So, I've talked to Fuller Seminary and other Bible colleges and said, "Why don't we work together like a major league baseball team does with a farm club? Why don't you be the major leagues and set up farm clubs, so that you can have a pipeline of students that want to come in to your institution, but you can help train others that are never going to make it to the major leagues? That's something we're exploring with Fuller: to start a Bible institute in Pasadena that can train the urban poor in Pasadena who will be happy to get that training right where they are to pastor where they're already ministering. And then 5% of those will want to go on to Fuller, and Fuller would have this pipeline for new students. So that's one idea: that every institution that offers higher education could set up a Bible institute that's

like a farm club to help create infrastructure and add the value that you can offer but still let it be what is. Many of them will not go beyond that but some will.

**[A57] Keith Edwards:** Is anyone here from Gateway Seminary in San Francisco? They use contextualized leadership development where they've targeted various ethnic communities and based the training in the local churches exactly like this model. If I can ask a second question: is there an equivalent meeting to this among the non-formal trainers at the congress?

**[A58] Jonathan Armstrong:** I don't think so. We've organized this informally! [Laughter]

**[A59] Keith Edwards:** The ones that I've talked to, in a variety of conversations, say that the models that they're following are so diverse. They don't have a model to follow. There's quite a commonality in terms of the approaches that are represented in this room, but among the non-formal educators, many of them are not following any paradigm except what they've wrestled out of Scripture. I wonder if there is an approach for them to follow. It would be quite a group, and I don't know who would be asked to lead it. But from their own struggle, looking at the life of Christ and trying to determine how they can imitate and be like him, there is something that could be garnered from hearing from them. I don't know how that would be achieved; perhaps through GProConneXt.com.

**[A60] Don Davis:** It occurs to me that one of the best things that GPro has done for conversations like this is that it puts the shortage of pastors being trained and their health at the forefront of what we ought to be doing. And I'm not sure if we have really agreed on that yet. What if we were measured by the exponential multiplication of healthy pastors meeting and serving in dark communities? What if that was the standard? All of the other things are great values: academic excellences, research innovation. But all of these other things are lower values.

**[A61]** I think this whole congress is extraordinary because of that point. I would say that it has not emphasized that point enough. I want to drive home that point, that is, the shortage of pastors, the difficulty of raising them up, and their relative health, as the most significant issue for us to talk about. If we really need hundreds of thousands of new pastors, how can our systems bear that up? I think it's a great question! It's provocative. And it can shock us out of what we normally do with our normal application rates and our normal candidates, our normal courses and our normal curriculums. When we're dealing with exponential numbers, with millions more, it makes us ask, "What would we have to do?" I think what would have been great for the GPro Congress is to take the D-Day image and overlay that onto what we're doing.

**[A62]** World War II was arguably one of the most remarkable times, when the entire world was leveraged over a particular idea. I wonder what it would look like if all of us leveraged on a single imperative: not organizational sustainability or academic credibility, but on the reason we exist, which is to exponentially multiply pastors in a dead and dying neo-pagan world. I wonder what that would do for

us. It's like we need something great enough to bind us all. Our institutional goals are too little. I would argue our institutional goals are all additive, to use your language. We say things like, "We're doing well, we're up 2% from last year. We've got a new course, a new program." But what does that mean against the backdrop of GPro?

**[A63] Rick Reed:** I think it's been helpful to see, visibly, how many brothers we've all met from India at this congress. Here's part of the problem: we're from Canada and our church generally is not booming. It's not bursting out the doors. So seminaries like ours trundle along and we're keeping up, in a sense, with the supply and demand for our local context. We're not thinking about India and some of these other places in need. In fact, we're not even set up with our current mechanism to think beyond our immediate context. And our immediate context is not screaming to us that we need hundreds of thousands more pastors. In fact, the ones who come to us aren't even sure if they're going to get a job anyway. So it would be a whole different way of looking at seminaries if we said that, somehow, we are now part of a global operation as opposed to just a local operation.

**[A64] Mark Yarbrough (Vice President for Academic Affairs at Dallas Theological Seminary):** I think that is exactly what Ramesh is doing. I think he's purposefully doing it inductively, so that we have this meeting and we are incredibly disturbed. To piggyback off of what my colleague said, Ramesh is subversive [A40]. There's a plan and he's trying to disturb us, this group right here. I think that's part of the strategy. And by the looks of it, I'd say he's done a good job! [Laughter]

**[A65] Don Davis:** I was disturbed before the group even met!

**[A66] Craig Parro (President of Leadership Resources International):** This group includes some non-formal organizations. Malcolm Webber heads up one, Joe Handley heads up one, and I do too. We're focused on launching movements that are multiplicative in nature. I would say that all three of our organizations have seen some real success in that. So know that there are folks who are working on that already. We have different outcomes that we are all focusing on. Leadership Resources focuses on raising up faithful expositors of the Word from third-grade levels up. Joe's ministry focuses on church planting movements, and Malcolm's focuses on leader development processes to raise up large numbers of leaders in China.

**[A67] Rick Reed:** Are you seeing success in North America?

**[A68] Craig Parro:** We've actually just started to pivot towards North America. When we go overseas, we ask, "Do your pastors need help learning how to faithfully study, teach, and preach the Word?" A lot of hands go up. In North America they wonder why they would need that help. There is a marketing challenge in North America.

**[A69] Jack Lewis:** I think there's something significant in what I just heard you say as you talk about the 3 organizations and that is that each has a narrower focus. Instead of saying, "I have everything that a pastor may need to become everything he should become," you're saying "I have this to add to the mix" and presumably some things to receive as well. But I wonder if we need to be thinking about how each of us can add to the mix rather than saying that we have the whole answer.

**[A70] Craig Parro:** What can justify the existence of a parachurch organization? In my thinking, we need to develop a certain focus, a certain area of expertise that a local church or a network of churches wouldn't be able to develop in their own right. And so we've developed a process that works cross-culturally and cross-educationally to help develop faithful expositors of the Word. We were with a missionary in Kazakhstan a few years ago who said, "You know exactly what I want to be doing. It would take me ten years to figure out how to do it." So I would agree that the goal is developing our pockets of expertise.

**[A71] Jack Lewis:** Ramesh focused on 3 specific areas that he wants to help them grow in. He's not presuming to help them grow in every area of church growth.

**[A72] Craig Parro:** And that's not to say that those areas are unnecessary.

**[A73] Jack Lewis:** Right. It's to say this is what will help them.

**[A74] Darrell Bock:** We need to be careful not to sell ourselves short in terms of what has been produced. Leaders, some of whom are in this room, who went through formal training, creatively decided there are other ways to deliver other than the schools they went to. And thus, you get multiplication. You don't just get the school doing the multiplication; you get people who think in terms of multiplication who are leaders, and they generate these other things that are going on.

**[A75]** The thing that is striking me at my table is that most of the people doing the non-formal work have come out of traditional education and recognize that they can't send everybody to that place, but they can certainly take what they got and give them something. I think that's what Ramesh is trying to stimulate more of—that kind of reproduction. If you get that kind of reproduction, and if you get some kind of cooperation in that, you're going to fan the flame and you're going to get more output in terms of what gets delivered, and you'll get more reach. And Ramesh is trying, with the multiplication model that he has, to stretch us all to go in that direction, consciously, not unconsciously, to make it less ad hoc.

**[A76] Paul Nyquist (President of Moody Global Ministries):** That perhaps means training more but maybe granting fewer degrees.

**[A77] Darrell Bock:** It means letting go a little more. It means that when I release somebody, I release them not to necessarily replicate the way that I do things in my institution but giving them the freedom to be creative in how they deliver it and to affirm that when it happens. It doesn't have to all be like the way we do it in order for it to work.

**[A78] Jack Lewis:** In fact, it probably can't be!

**[A79] Darrell Bock:** So you have to release your people. You have to let God be creative with very creative and very well-intentioned people to let 50,000 or 100,000 different models be out there. The one thing that I have reacted to in what Ramesh has done is that he has looked for the best practices and the worst practices. No, I don't think that's the way to think about this, because everything is so contextualized on a global scale. The way to actually do it is to simply encourage people to be contextually creative and sensitive and to trust that you've given them enough encouragement and that their character is developed well enough that they'll make good and wise choices as they negotiate their way through life.

**[A80] Mark Yarbrough:** I don't disagree with that at all. Do you think that in the formal institutions represented here that this kind of encouragement is not present?

**[A81] Darrell Bock:** Well, if we say that what we have to do is replicate and do more of what we're doing, then regardless of what we're saying with our words, structurally we're still thinking the way we've been thinking. But if instead we say that training doesn't require an institution or a campus or a whole lot of the things that we normally associate with what we do, if we're willing to release all that, then we will create a different vision for the student who graduates. He doesn't need to go out and produce another one of us. He needs to go out and produce something that fits the world he's living in.

**[A82] Dennis Hollinger:** I agree with that, but one concern that I have is that there is a very entrepreneurial spirit here. That's both good and bad. The bad side is the lack of accountability. I've asked some people this week about their ministry, asking them what they're doing and who they are accountable to and if they have any kind of a board. They're really flying free out there. That's disaster in the making.

**[A83] Darrell Bock:** That's right.

**[A84] Dennis Hollinger:** We can critique ourselves a lot, but there's also a lot that we have also learned by working through the formal mechanisms. One of the things we've learned—and I've shared this from folks who have graduated from Gordon-Conwell and they're going back to countries to set up things—

I've said, "Look, these are the things that you have to put in place for your ministries." They're very community-oriented at one level but that doesn't carry over into the way they organize their structures and institutions. So I do think that we need to give a lot more attention to these things.

**[A85] Darrell Bock:** And I think the very fact that many of these people are coming to us and saying, "I still need your help," is an indication that they don't want to fly completely alone. They recognize when they get out there and do what they're doing that they can't do this on their own. They have to have some other kinds of support that can come around them and to whom they can be accountable and someone with whom to discuss some of the things they're wrestling with. And that is the type of support that we're potentially in a position to help give.

**[A86] Henry Tan:** I like the idea of trying to give people the freedom to be creative. But all of us do what we have been taught. Very few really break out of that mold and really begin to be free. The question I have is: "Can the existing schools also be open to God for them to be creative so that then the students can see that, because it's not just upon the students to be creative?" Somewhere along the line we must say that we are learning too. There are many things that we don't know. We are doing some things very well, but there are so many things that we can be growing in, and if we have that same environment, too, as we teach our students, then I can say, "Yes, you will be able to do that."

**[A87]** And, of course, we have the stories where we have a few people who are doing that, but how can we accelerate more? We want to see more creative ways of doing this, so we can actually make a dent. Right now, I don't think we're making the dent that we should be, and it's really a challenge. I'm in that same mold. You lead a school, you try to do this stuff, you see the need, and you try to figure out, "Are we really doing what we're supposed to be doing?" So there are the challenges that are there, and I really would appreciate you thinking along these lines with me and figuring out how we do this.

**[A88] Don Davis:** I don't know about the pragmatics of everything. Everyone is trying to work on their own priorities. You always go back from any congress or convention and you have to look at your calendar and the things you have. Every one of us has loyalties within our own enterprises and the groups that we are a part of. This is why I am so convinced that the Congress is so important. If we can find some tangible way to mobilize around a change of perspective and a shift of loyalties that would make this shortage of laborers the controlling element in what we do, because if we don't make that shift, the tendency is just too great to simply focus on our institutional loyalties: we want *our* schools to make it and do well. We have professional commitments. I'm just talking pragmatically.

**[A89]** The most significant thing about the Congress is its ability to spur us to think differently in light of the need. The need is the way we drive this. In World War II in America, little boys were picking up scrap metal while other boys were forming long lines to join the military. Every single thing in the world was mobilized against the threat of Hitler. We need something great enough to break the centrifugal force of our own interests. And, I don't know how. I guess we could have a perpetual congress! I don't know how to do it, but there is something about the idea of mobilizing around this great, epic, worldwide need. If

the Holy Spirit fell on the earth the way we're praying, we're nowhere near being ready for that. And hopefully that would jettison us to innovate. If we don't find a way to mobilize around some greater vision than ourselves, then the sheer weight of our own interests is going to suck this effort dry. We'll feel this way for a week and then we'll be back to our own institutional and personal goals.

**[A90] Henry Tan:** I agree. I think that we've been too content-driven in our designs many times. You're suggesting to us that we are to be outcome-based.

**[A91] Don Davis:** Yes.

**[A92] Henry Tan:** The outcome is that we need so many pastors.

**[A93] Don Davis:** Yes! Am I reading the Congress wrong when I hear that? The first time I talked to Ramesh, when we were at the US Center for World Missions Frontiers, that was the drive. I believe that we can't do much, but what we're going to do, we're going to do. We're going to add to that number. And, then I can be proud of all of us. The bipolar way of viewing things as formal and informal is a wrong basis to attack this. If the need is that great and the Spirit does move, then we as leaders need to exponentially increase the number of capable people. And then we can innovate around that regardless of what we do. Even if we only do a handful, at least I'm bringing my handful and you all can bring your thousands. I'm always impressed with ministries that can talk about that.

**[A94] Dennis Hollinger:** I have no reason to doubt those numbers, but does anyone have any idea where Ramesh got the data? I'm just curious, ever since I heard him talk about the 5% and the 95%. Does anybody know where it comes from?

**[A95] Craig Parro:** I think he consulted with the folks at Gordon-Conwell. I think there was some triangulation going on. He's been talking to a couple other people as well. I don't know how accurate it is, but he made some good-faith efforts.

**[A96] Darrell Bock:** He has to be close.

**[A97] Craig Parro:** He made good-faith efforts to get at the best estimates possible.

**[A98] Manfred Kohl:** Even if it's half the truth, it's still shocking. I like Don Davis's illustration about D-Day [A61]; we, including myself, are still deciding if we should get involved in the war. We are still miles away from that urgency of D-Day.

**[A99] Jack Lewis:** I think of the Student Volunteer Movement, which started with just a few who prayed and committed, and then it spread like wildfire.

**[A100] Don Davis:** We work among the poorest of the poor. For instance, we offer seminary education in prisons. Think of that: there are millions of prisons. And a Christian is a Christian is a Christian. Every Christian needs pastoral care and spiritual formation. They need good preaching and great worship. I think that we're behind even in serving prison populations. There are believers there, and we have great institutions. What would it mean for us to think creatively about increasing the number of laborers among prisons?

**[A101]** We're actually training life prisoners to minister to their colleagues. They're never getting out. We are providing them with training. It's very interesting to think of a prison as a church-planting environment, but that's what we're doing. What I'm saying is that we're trying to push the envelope for the sake of these numbers. I think that's where our creativity comes in regardless of our institutional loyalty or whether we are formal or informal. I think that's the thing that I like about the Congress.

**[A102]** I want to ask myself, "Are we doing the best we can do to contribute to this number and how can I improve?" I'm proud of all the numbers we have; there should be no blame in this. There should only be challenge and inspiration and some new way to take these numbers seriously. I do think these numbers would create a culture. If we measured the right things, we would quit measuring the wrong things. Pun intended. I mean, if we actually began to measure, would we see that we are actually creating exponentially new numbers of healthy pastors? Maybe that could be something that would bind us together and we could collaborate on things like that.

**[A103] David Bennett (Global Associate Director for Collaboration and Content for the Lausanne Movement):** I work with the Lausanne movement. I have a number of hats to wear in both the formal and non-formal worlds. A question that I have for those who are involved in the formal side of education is this. Several times the statement has been made that we know what we can do well. And I'd be interested to know whether there is a clearly accepted and articulated definition of what that is. I've been through the formal route several times with several degrees, but if you were to ask me what the institution that I graduated from currently defines as "doing well," and how what it does well relates to the realities of the kingdom of God? As Christian institutions we are mainly concerned about what Jesus was concerned about. How do we specifically connect the things that we do well to what Jesus said was important?

**[A104]** I'm not in that fraternity of seminary presidents and academic deans and so forth who are undoubtedly talking about those things together, but I really don't know how that question would be

answered today. I'm on Joe's doctoral committee, but I don't know how we would answer that question of precisely what the institution does well, or what we think we do well in relationship to what was important to Jesus. That's one question that's worth being talked about. I'd love to hear a discussion of that, because then it would be easier to answer the question of how what our institutions are doing relates to the GPro Congress. I think the non-formal side generally could answer much more clearly what they think they do well and how it relates to the Great Commission. I'm not as sure the answer is clear from the formal side.

**[A105]** The second thing is that I think it's important to see whether we have stopped to ask what we mean by a "pastor". I think that even when we talk about how many pastors we are training, those on the formal side tend to think in one set of categories. We tend to think of a certain size of congregation, perhaps, or a certain building. I may be totally wrong, but I think that a lot of what I saw in the majority world is that what is defined as a church, others might call a house church. And the great majority of those pastors are bi-vocational, but they are pastors nonetheless. And whether their congregations are healthy, and how healthy they are, is something that in turn relates to who our audience is, who we are educating. Are we educating only those who become full-time professional pastors? Because I think the seminary has a lot to offer serious men and women of God who want to lead small groups or teach Sunday schools or plant house churches.

**[A106]** There are lots of them as a sheer financial survival market, at least in North America. I don't know whether there are enough people who want to do residential traditional theological education to keep seminaries in business twenty years from now, but there seems to be a growing market for those who want to study for part-time ministry, using the seminary resources but signing up for different kinds of degrees or even non-degree courses. They want to be theologically equipped, but don't necessarily want to be a pastor even in the sense that GPro Congress seems to assume that a pastor is. So those are the two questions of what we mean by "pastor." Is our formal theological education confined to traditional pastors? And what do we think we're good at? And does it relate to what was important to Jesus?

**[A107] Dennis Hollinger:** I'll respond to your last comment but first question: "How do we know that we're really preparing people who are healthy pastors?" All of us who come from accredited institutions hate the accreditation process, but the name of the game in accreditation over the last decade has been assessment, assessment, assessment; "How do you know you're achieving what you say you're doing?" And they don't care what the outcomes are; they just want to know you have outcomes and you're testing it and you're analyzing it.

**[A108]** We just came through the ATS and NEASC accreditation process this fall. One of the things it forced us to do was to look at our M.Div. curriculum and see what the outcomes are and what a healthy pastor really is and to put mechanisms in place to try to test that out. Now, it's never full proof, but one thing it did was to force us to put a mechanism in place whereby every five years we go back to our alumni in light of the six criteria we've set out of what we think a healthy pastor is and we analyze them by having them do a self-analysis. This still doesn't test whether the churches are healthy or not but at

least it puts some kind of a mechanism in place. This is simply to say that, as one who is working from the inside of an educational institution, I think that those things are more in place than they used to be.

**[A109]** And the other part of the question was: “Are we doing more than training full-time pastors?” I think that a lot of us who are working in theological seminaries are. As just one example, we have a center for workplace theology and business ethics, and that has drawn in a lot of people from the business world. Some take courses and some come just for seminars that we do. The other part of it is really awakening future pastors to the realities of the marketplace and the kinds of issues that 80% of the people sitting in the pews are grappling with, issues that most pastors in the past haven’t had any idea about or known how to relate to.

**[A110]** So, I think those things are beginning to happen. If I judge seminary education on the basis of the seminary education I received—and I received a good seminary education; I’m a Trinity graduate—we’re in a very different place now. At least seminaries are moving in that direction. It’s easy to judge seminary education on the basis of where we were twenty or thirty or forty years ago. We’re not there yet, but at least progress is being made.

**[A111] Jack Lewis:** Thanks for pulling this group together. Shall we meet again to finish this discussion?

[The attendees arrange another meeting, and the discussion closes in prayer.]

**LIST OF ATTENDEES:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Institution and Position</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Email</b>
Armstrong, Jonathan	Associate Professor at Moody Bible Institute – Spokane	USA	jonathan.armstrong@moody.edu
Allsman, Don	Vice President of World Impact	USA	dallsman@worldimpact.org
Bennett, David	Global Associate Director for Collaboration and Content for the Lausanne Movement	USA	dwb11235@gmail.com
Bock, Darrell	Executive Director of Cultural Engagement at Dallas Theological Seminary	USA	dbock@dts.edu
Buys, P. J. (Flip)	Director of World Reformed Fellowship	South Africa	buys.flip@gmail.com
Cunningham, Scott	Vice President of International Partnerships at Overseas Council	USA	scott@overseas.org
Davis, Don	Senior VP of World Impact	USA	ddavis@worldimpact.org
Edwards, Keith	Seminary Director of Church Initiatives at Heritage Theological Seminary	Canada	kedwards@heritage-theo.edu
Handley, Joe	President of Asian Access	USA	jhandley@asianaccess.org
Hollinger, Dennis	President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary	USA	dhollinger@gordonconwell.edu
Kohl, Manfred	Special Ambassador at Overseas Council	USA	manfred@overseas.org

Jack Lewis	Campus Dean of Moody Bible Institute – Spokane	USA	jack.lewis@moody.edu
Lombard, Raymond	Director of Wheels for God's Word	South Africa	vekparow@gmail.com
Nyquist, Paul	President of Moody Global Ministries	USA	paul.nyquist@moody.edu
Parro, Craig	President of Leadership Resources International	USA	cparro@leadershipresources.org
Reed, Rick	President of Heritage Theological Seminary	Canada	rreed@heritage-theo.edu
Sisk, Timothy	Professor of Intercultural Studies at Moody Bible Institute	USA	tim.sisk@moody.edu
Tan, Henry	Consultant at Global Leadership Development	USA	henryt@ilc.global
Webber, Malcolm	Executive Director of LeaderSource SGA	USA	malcolm@sgai.org
Yarbrough, Mark	Vice President for Academic Affairs at Dallas Theological Seminary	USA	myarbrough@dts.edu