

# **“Dallas Gathering”**

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## **SUMMARY:**

Manfred Kohl began this dialogue by inviting Brad Smith to provide a summary of how Bakke Graduate University is seeking to bridge the gap between formal and non-formal credentialing (5-6). Following this, Kohl describes the tendency of theologians to stubbornly hold their views and be averse to change (9-10). They conduct many conversations, but those conversations do not cause change (9-11, 13-14). He posits that: (I) Theologians need to become more future oriented rather than be focused primarily on the past (12); (II) A leader should be selected who will organize and represent the conference efforts to other ministries, organizations, and institutions (16); (III) Formal theological institutions are too set in their ways to be changed, so the goal should not be to change them (16). To conclude, Kohl challenges each of the conference participants to take deliberate action toward reaching important goals (17-18).

The prevalent topic of this dialogue is: Who will coordinate and lead this movement (37, 39-40, 48-53, 57, 64)?

Participants expressed a desire for the following characteristics in a candidate for leadership: (I) Theological astute (24, 73); (II) Flexible to commit fully to this mission (50-53, 56-57). Kohl recommended that Jonathan Armstrong be considered as candidate (73), leading participants to discuss the possibility of Armstrong filling this leadership role (73-95). While in a formal, accredited institution, Armstrong has the opportunity and resources to guide the mission of the collective. Bryan O'Neal affirmed Moody Bible Institute's support of Armstrong, and shared details of Moody's vision to provide resources to the global church (92-93).

Darrell Bock recommended that the mission and message of this movement should be defined (20, 24). This belief is shared by other participants, who believe that the message must be clearly articulated in order to go out to potential partners (31, 33, 36, 56). Partnerships with other institutions, formal and non-formal, could provide the necessary manpower, materials, and money for this movement (26, 31-33).

**[1] Manfred Kohl:** I'd like to share a little with you. Two days ago, when I had just arrived here, a friend of mine who I had not seen for a while—Dr. Brad Smith—showed up and we talked. He wanted to know why I was here, why I've come to Dallas. I shared with him and showed him an outline. I asked him, "What could you do?" I always ask people, "What contribution can you make? How much money will you give?" That's usually an opening statement. I expect that they won't pay anyway, so then I have to say that. Well, he doesn't have too much money—that I know of. He's looking for it for his university. But he came up with an idea. And I said, "Why don't you come on Saturday? I invite you. Since I'm speaking, I'll give you a few minutes to share about your contribution." That is why he's here—a big shot, a president of a university, like the bishop and some others. I thought he could just share for a few minutes, if that is all right. You can tell me afterwards that I overstepped my bounds, which makes no difference anyway.

**[2] Brad Smith:** Manfred, thank you. I don't know that I have a whole lot to share. In terms of a big shot, these two guys actually were my professors, so you must be bigger shots, if that's the case.

**[3] Manfred Kohl:** The next generation's always more important than the old one.

**[4] Ramesh Richard:** God doesn't want any more big shots; He just wants small shots who keep on shooting.

**[5] Brad Smith:** Something just very short. Actually, the vision for what we did comes out of this school right here. I was asked with a group of other people to start what they call The Center for Christian Leadership here, which was designed to help a formal organization to adjust and change. We were supposed to be the skunkworks for Dallas Seminary. A guy of the name of Howard Hendricks, who was preaching over here with his arms raised up, was my boss. We did a lot of research as to how that happens. During the timing of this school, it didn't work out. So, Bakke Graduate University was started to try to create some kind of a bridge which is a little unusual. We're not a seminary; we're a university specifically to make connections between places that haven't been connected. We have a college of business, a college of urban studies, and a college of theology. We're not big. We've trained about 1000 graduates—800 are doctoral—but about 600,000 people through non-formal or certificate learning. The reason why that seems to be helpful—I'll be honest with you, I'm not an academic. When Charles Ryrie was here when I first got here—the guy who wrote the Bible, at least my Bible says that—he said, "If you cannot explain theology to an eight-year-old, you don't understand it." I think that is so critical, especially cross-culturally. Our task is to try to do that. When I first started this, I had come out of a group called Leadership Network, which is not academic, and was working only in the United States. Our founder, Peter Drucker, wanted me to go elsewhere, and that process is why I left. One of the things he said is that when you create these things, what's happening is that in the rest of the world there are people who do want to have credentials. I was not interested in credentialing, but I did find a couple key people to help us when we founded Urban Associates. They said, "Brad, what's happening to us is that we are in organizations where we started doing formal training, and the leaders"—this was particularly in World Vision,

Compassion, and some others like that—“actually stopped it because they found out if we got a degree, we would leave the organization and we’d start our own.” And we said that’s kind of the point, to start something indigenous. One of them said it feels like another colonization from the West, by not giving us those credentials. And so, that’s why we’re doing it. I would have to say it’s helpful in some cases but hurtful in other cases. I’ve had to negotiate very hard with accreditation, and two of our graduates have actually formed a non-formal accreditation, and we are very supportive of that.

[6] I’d say the key things we watch out for that kill formal schools is the way they have committees that take authority but no responsibility and accountability. We have no committees. It helps that one of our founders, Dennis Bakke, wrote a book called, “Joy at Work,” that basically talks about having no committees. I kind of get criticized for that in various places, including commissions. I just say, “That’s my founder and that’s our vision.” I also discovered in this school here, when I was trying to work with an accreditation system—I was new in a committee—and we wanted to work with some local churches that had more power. The accreditation committee here said, “You can’t do that.” Well, I was young, I didn’t know, and I wrote them. They came back and said, “If your mission statement says this is what your mission is, you can do it.” So, I showed that to the committee, and they got very mad at me for writing. I thought, okay, this is not about accreditation. In our mission statement, I actually had the word *innovative*, so whenever I get hammered, I’d go, “You’re asking me to violate my mission statement that says ‘innovative delivered throughout the rest of the world.’ By doing it, you’re asking me to violate the very thing you’re asking me to do.” By putting that phrase in our mission statement, that’s helped me out of weird meetings. I think we are really just a niche. What we find for pastors working in urban settings is there’s a different way you have to train them. Partly, this comes out of Matthew 10:16—shrewdness and innocence—there’s a shrewdness that’s required to navigate that environment. And, it’s partly out of how to steward power, money, and sex, because that’s often not treated well. It goes into prosperity gospel, or it goes into a kind of separatism. In an accredited setting, that just doesn’t work. I think there’s a little bit of a niche that we do in that area. But we’re not set up at all to do the kind of scale that you guys are talking about, though we would love to learn and help. I guess the final thing is: we can be a tool you can use. That’s really how I would put it. You’re saying, I can have the name *University* on a certificate, or a piece of paper, realizing accreditation doesn’t look at anything we do, and doesn’t care if we put our name on a piece of paper that’s a certificate or whatever, as long as that’s not eventually going toward credit. We have a lot of people that use us, and on their certificate is their name, their logo, and it has a university name. We have found that’s been very helpful in terms of opening doors and we’re happy to do that. It has to have some value stuff, of course, but in terms of all the weird things going through committees, it doesn’t have to do that. We don’t have to work through accreditation. Though, the standards that we have would probably be the same as the standards you have here, as well. That’s the short version. We’re here to serve and help, and we feel like the mission you are on is something very exciting and we can be a small tool to help you to do it.

**[7] Ramesh Richard:** Thank you, Brad. I was hoping to have Brad speak later, but I'm glad to give it to him now.

**[8] Manfred Kohl:** Thank you. I got quite excited that there is a possibility that people can get involved in some of our training programs and at the end they could get a certificate that has the name and seal of a fully recognized university as a certificate. Talk with him. There are some good possibilities.

**[9]** I put together a couple notes after the congress in Bangkok. I got quite excited that there is someone who is taking an aim at the 80-or-70-or-60 percent of the leadership in the church that have little or no education. I come from the world of formal theological training. I have been involved over the last 50 years in theological training in way or another, and the last 25 years with an organization that is only helping theological seminaries and theological institutions. Someone is keeping records of what I'm doing, and I can tell you that I have visited 471 theological seminaries around the world. I don't think there is another person who can make that claim. I have seen the best, and I have seen the opposite. Probably one half of all the seminaries I have visited would honor God better by closing up, but they hang on there and keep going. I was asked just recently to share about the 50 years of my life involved in theological education: what did I learn, what did I see, what is the solution, what is my recommendation. I worked on that, but I won't give you that speech. I discovered that theologians are—we, as I am a theologian, too—are a very special species. We have problems with hearing and understanding. We theologians have to hear something five times before we hear it. It's amazing. We go to conferences and conferences and conferences, and we don't hear what they say. At least, we don't do what they recommend. So, we hear, and it's just, "So what?" Then we hear it another four or five times before it even makes sense. We're still not doing it; that's a different story. And we hang on to our way of doing things. It doesn't matter. We are right and no one else can tell me that I should change something. The system we develop in our theological school, including all this stuff here, gets so complicated. Quite often, I feel that the Holy Spirit doesn't understand it either, it's so complicated. Why don't we make it simple? I think that statement was beautiful: if you cannot explain theology to an eight-year-old, forget it. Go home; close shop. I have seen theological schools, I have seen conferences. They won't change. *Change* is the word that theologians avoid with every power that they have. They don't want to change.

**[10]** When I look at all the other areas of higher learning—the area of law, the area of medicine, the area of technology, it doesn't matter what it is—they change virtually every ten years. They rethink what is needed and what is relevant for today. They don't change the Bible, they don't change the essence, but everything is changing. You look at the field of medicine. I'll give you a little bit of an example in a moment. Theology! Our seminaries are basically the same in the last 200 years. We name a few things differently, and make the presentation a little more practical, but we have not changed. We still have the four courses on Jeremiah, we have three courses on the Gospels, we have two courses on the Psalms, an introduction, and we have church history. This year is 500 years since the Reformation. I'm sure you know that there were 95 theses that Luther put on the church wall. Who in the world cares if it's 95 or 59? You could go to Heaven

even without knowing that. I had to memorize half of them. For what? I wish that they would have taught me something that I could use. Are we willing to change, my friends? It's a big issue, and you cannot just answer it easily.

**[11]** A few years ago, I went to the eye doctor because I had a little bit of difficulty with reading. My intake was getting darker and darker, so I went in to a specialist, a professor of a medical university. He examined me and said, "Dr. Kohl, you have a big problem. You have a very rare sickness that behind your eye is a kind of a skin that is growing from the outside. It is getting more and more to the middle, and if it's in the middle, you're blind. Somehow we have to cut that skin behind your eye." Gee, was I shocked. So I said, "How do we do that?" He said, "Well, you have to come to the hospital, to the eye clinic, and we have to open your eye on the side, go behind your eye, and try to get it out. It's very complicated. You will be out of commission for one-to-two weeks." Then I met with a young eye doctor. He was originally from Pakistan, and was even a Muslim. He said, "You know, I just went to a conference in Dallas, and there was a guy who told me a completely new way of dealing with the problem that you have." I said, "Oh?" He said, "I am practicing what I learned in that conference." To make the story a little bit shorter—and I hope your breakfast is already settled because it is a little bit gruesome. He said, "We have developed a new technique." I said, "What is it?" He said, "Well, we developed a needle that we put straight into your eye, and in that needle is a mechanism where a little scraper comes out. So, when we put that needle in your eye, that scraper scrapes the skin around it and sucks it out." Gee! You know, it's nice to talk about someone else's eyes, but man, it hits you! We know about having faith and about using the old wineskin and the old cistern, and start something new. I know all that. That guy is a young doctor who went to just one conference where he learned that and saw it. He didn't go to 55 conferences like we do. We usually go four times a year to a conference that don't change anything. I don't know many hundreds of conferences I have visited that didn't change my thinking or my actions. Anyway, I said, "How do we go about it?" He said, "Well, I designed a kind of a bench, and there you put your head because you cannot move. And so, we squeeze you in there so you cannot move whatsoever and then I take that needle and go in and get that thing out." Well I prayed about it, and I—nervous is the wrong term. I literally went to the bathroom and emptied myself because I could see the danger. He squeezed me there in this mechanism, and he put a needle into me eye. All the way in. I saw how it came. And so, he put that thing in, and then he—I won't share all the details. I was just told afterwards that he had scraped all around, and sucked out the skin. And so, he opened the machine, then he said, "You can go home now." I said, "Is it over?" He said, "Yeah, it's finished." Two weeks later, I had to go to that machine again and get the other eye fixed. It taught me that in other areas of higher learning, people come up with new ideas, better ideas, how to change things, how to make it better or easier, and more cost effective. I didn't have to go for ten days into the hospital. It was amazing how that young doctor did that. Today, he is making a mint. He has a practice with six rooms where he deals with people from all over the East Coast. I learned a lesson.

**[12]** Are we willing to do something so radical? Are we willing to change something? No, not we theologians. Heavens no. The Bible is the same thing. Of course, it is. No one wants to change one single term of the Scripture, but the way we present it. I discovered in our theological

schools that 95% of everything that we do is looking backwards. We talk about what happened 50 years ago, and what happened with Wesley, and with the Awakening, and the Reformation, and the Middle Ages, and the Early Church, and the prophets. We go all the way back—we don't even know how far. Then just for a few moments, we think about just the next four weeks, and the next three months, and the next four years, and the next ten years. Our students learn how to look backwards. Of course, we have to learn from the past. But if you analyze Paul, and you analyze Jesus, half of everything they did was looking forward. Even in his prayer: Your Kingdom come. Future oriented. Not so much the past, and "Oh, I like Luther, and I just published an article about Luther and the Reformation." I believe in church history. I'm a church historian. I studied under George Williams, the famous church historian at Harvard University. I was his assistant for several years. But I learned that we have to change and think about tomorrow.

**[13]** I am involved in Lausanne, as an example. I was involved from the beginning, even before the first meeting in Lausanne took place. Then I was at the Lausanne meeting, so I'm one of the dinosaurs around here. I have been at every Lausanne meeting. How much money and how much time and how much effort have they put in with the manifesto and the Cape Town commitment, and all of these wonderful, wonderful documents, and wonderful ideas? What has changed? Has the church been better? Have we increased in evangelistic outreach? What have we done to follow up? Have we done all the things we talked about? At Lausanne, I was responsible for a special program of summarizing what happened in the whole day at the Lausanne conference in Cape Town, and to make it one hour and send it out to 800 different colleges. You helped us. You were one of the team. Fantastic people. I was a little bit responsible for all that. 800 partners around the world. That's very hard for you to believe, it's even hard for me to believe, that all 800 numbers have never been used. They don't even know where they are. They don't know their name or contact or anything anymore. We talk and we talk, but there's very little action. Whatever your opinion is of the president of the United States, he said many people have talked, and we are doing something. If you do something, of course you make very many mistakes. But at least you do something.

**[14]** I'll give you another illustration. Yesterday I showed you that book of the research I did in the Philippines. It was a fantastic time for one year to interview one thousand graduates from seminaries out in the ministry and churches and parachurch organizations and teachings. We ask them 46 questions; they're all in the back of the book. Let me summarize. Fascinating story. There were two questions. The first question asked is: How would you give a short explanation of the time you spent in seminary? Far over 95% said it was the best time they spent in their lives. They had time to read, time to go to the library, they learned a lot, they learned about their character, they found their spouse. Quite many are very happy. On and on, they gave a long list. Then we asked them the question: Of all the things you learned in the seminary—the three or four or five years—how much did it help you to do the job that you do right now? Over 90% said very little or nothing. You went for four years and learned and learned, and now you have a job as an executive, or city mission pastor, or as a missionary, and the stuff you learned you cannot use? I had the chance together with a whole team to present that to the theologians and to the teachers. They were shocked. Absolutely nothing was changed. Nothing

in the last ten years. We talked and talked. We even talked a lot yesterday. Are we changing something? Are we doing something? Are we serious? I want a way out. I hope and pray that the outcome of our meeting is not just writing it all down, to write it away. I question whether that is helpful, for who in the world is reading that? I don't, but maybe some of you like to read all of the minutes. A summary of one page is probably sufficient. I gave you one page of what I hope is the outcome. I did it over Christmas vacation and I was really relaxed when I wrote that, otherwise it would probably be much smaller. With my background and my upbringing, I don't have a gift like you of speaking through the flower. I usually say it straight. If someone is an idiot, I tell them so, because he already knows it. I just call it out. He should know that I know it.

**[15]** I believe we are on the cutting edge of something very important. I believe that we can muster our efforts and deal with the 70-or-60-or-50 percent of the people who have to be reached. I think it can be done. Not so complicated, but organize ourselves in a very simple way. I spoke with some leaders of foundations, who are some of my friends. Many told me we are not supporting formal theological education anymore. We have given millions, but nothing anymore, because nothing has changed. It's still the same. We want to invest in something that produces results, something exciting. I told you I was in Central African Republic ten days ago. It's the last place you want to go. It's very hard to get in there. You pray from the moment you arrive on how to get out of there. It is very, very difficult. I have been there so many times for The Bangui Evangelical School of Theology. It's one of the leading French-speaking seminaries in all of Africa. There are more French-speaking countries in Africa than English-speaking countries. It's a key school. They decided that the last semester of the program is focusing on training all the future graduates how to train laypeople and how to train village pastors. They cut out some of the other stuff, which was an absolute civil war with the faculty. The Old Testament man wants to teach his four courses in Old Testament, and the New Testament man wants to teach everything, and the church historian says you must take all three courses in history. You can read it in a book. These little things, you can get everything from a book. But they talked, and they changed, and they now have one whole semester of training. They have a fantastic program. They also made a very unique decision which I'd like to teach everyone. They have a board. I had a seminar for the board members, which I do quite often around the world. They made a decision about a bylaw. The faculty and the board have to visit every graduate from the school once a year. So, faculty has to take about two months a year off to visit all the graduates out there, and counsel with them and cry with them and help them with their marriage and with their discouragement and tell them to be more humble if they're high up, whatever it is. Fantastic ministry! It's more important than sitting in a classroom or standing in front of them.

**[16]** What we need here is something new, something exciting, something simple, to help them provide proper, biblically sound training for the people in ministry. To use the word *pastor*—in some countries, the word pastor doesn't make sense. We have to come up with something new. We are smart enough to come up with some new idea. Look at TOPIC and what it stands for. Don't make it so complicated. Just make it simple and come up with something new and creative. Select a leader who can organize that, who can help us, who will go around and ask these foundations to invest in what we are doing, because what we are doing will make and will

have an effect. We are thinking about the future, not so much about what happened. Get all the facts together so we know what's out there, in every region, who is doing what. Fifteen years ago, in the organization that Chris and I belong to, Overseas Council, and our chief here was on the board for a while, we did an analysis asking: How many theological institutions are in the world? We came up with 7500 plus in the world. We had the name of the institution and the location and the president—the whole thing—and then we discovered every month we had to change so many it was hopeless. You go to Nigeria, and a hundred new schools start every week. What is out there? Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could know everything that is going on in Africa? Who is doing what? Bring the African leaders together. You cannot do that globally easily. All the ones in Latin America, all the ones in the Middle East. There are some good programs in the Middle East, not just the one great program we heard about from Elam. I'm a part of them and I believe in them but there are others. They're even in Russia and in Europe. In North America, there are many programs. But don't try to change the theological institution. Not even God can do it anymore, so give it up. They are so wonderfully set and they have a very beautiful machinery of what to teach and what not to teach and accreditation and so many years and so many degrees. It's all settled. I believe the debate is already 2000 years old. In the Early Church, they asked, "Is our focus on Jerusalem and the church? Or, is our focus on Athens and the academia?" We have to find a way of bringing the things together, and not one should dominate the other. But they should be equally represented and we have to get back.

**[17]** Some years ago, I had a privilege when I was teaching in a college. One of the students was Billy Graham's daughter, and so I had a chance to meet with Billy Graham a couple of times. Not just him out there; it was just the two of us. One time I asked him, "Dr. Graham, what's the most important thing that you could recommend to me as a young leader?" He paused for a moment, not too long, and then he said, "Young man, you have to learn the difference between the important and the unimportant." I thought it was the most stupid answer he could give me. He walked away, and after three steps, he turned around and said, "And by the way, do the important first." That's all he said. My friend, it was probably the best advice of my life. Now I share it with you. Every person has to make somewhere between 65 and 75 decisions a day. Every morning, the decision is, "Do I get up or do I turn around and have another snooze?" It's a major decision, at least in my life. Do I have tea now or a little bit later? And so on. If half of these kinds of decisions are good, you're really flying high. Are we doing the most important thing first? Or, do we waste our time on unimportant stuff? I'm not saying that they're both day and night: I recommend every afternoon an hour and a half nap. It's very helpful. When you get older, you'll wish you had done it. Your nerve cells will tell you that.

**[18]** I'd like to challenge all of us. I think that, since we are in Texas, we can say that we have to take the bull by the horns. I can say that, yeah? Huge horns, I saw. There's a story, and I close with that. The story of Luke 24. I remember the two people going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. I believe it was a man and his wife going home, but it doesn't matter. The seven steps, beautiful story, beautiful. But then, there's one point in verse 33, when they just experienced the Lord. They saw him. I mean, what a tremendous joy: the Lord in your midst, in your home, then "Wow! He disappeared!" They were just overwhelmed. It was just absolutely fantastic. They were smiling from ear to ear, and crying tears of joy. But then it says something very unique

and we usually overlook that. We have some Greek scholars here so they can check that phrase. It's like when you go to the doctor, and the doctor says you need a shot, and you put your sleeve up and the doctor says, "No, no, no, not in your arm. It goes in your behind so pull your pants down." Then the doctor gives it, and oh! That shot! You feel it. That's exactly the phrase used here. They jumped up immediately and ran all the way back Jerusalem. No one travels through the night. They had to go and tell others that Christ is alive and there is hope! May the Holy Spirit give each one of you a shot where it hurts, so that we do something. That's the end, by the way.

**[19] Ramesh Richard:** You grow from life and grow from experience. I think we've heard some very sober things, in terms of formal pastoral training and theological education, and some heavy matters. Manfred has a heart of gold and has mentored so many. We are very grateful for your presence. In his paper to us, he had three outcomes. One was to evaluate the possibility of a structure. The second, in my opinion, is the most important one today, which is to discuss how we can find a full-time director for such a program. Bishop Michael Baker, at the end of his last page, had the same thing at the very end. It said: leadership. We know that much of the front part of it was already being done over twenty years. It was this last matter. My need for discernment right now is for whether we maximally pursue a full-time director now. We're going to minimally keep TOPIC alive because we think that the content, events, and partnerships that come out of the GPro Congress is maintained by a TOPIC catalytic group, like Jason and Otto Kladensky, and a few others we can keep on adding. But, is it now that we do it? Is it when we ever find the person that we've been looking for the last six years that we do it? It's always been the view of RREACH that TOPIC manages to follow the GPro Congress, except God has not allowed that to happen. TOPIC has refused to die, however. In 2015, we got together and we wanted to close it down. We said, "No, we'll wait till the congress to see if somebody will emerge." TOPIC does not need to exist, and yet it has a neutral feel. It has presence in some countries—about five areas of the world. In a couple of countries, it's a grand success. In a couple of countries, it's dead. We don't know how to keep it going. But Manfred, on his own, says it seems like there is another vehicle already in place. And so, we thought we'd entertain this concept today and spend the resources to have you come. I want to really deeply thank you for coming in the gift of time and money and energies. This is not an easy moment for us. There's an old song, a Wesleyan song which goes, "A charge to keep I have." Do you remember that one? "A God to glorify, a never-dying soul to save. Fitted for the sky," or something like that. To serve the, what? Present age. This calling to fulfill. I am grateful for your unbelievable availability and presence. Since we are looking for and sensing what God might be saying to us, I would like to open it up for any ideas or reflections of the last twenty-six hours. Do you sense any patterns, any thoughts, any leadership by God's Spirit, in the collective here? So, Scriptural, it could be strategic, organizational, but any thoughts that you would like to bring to us. I'm just opening it up.

**[20] Darrell Bock:** I want to go directly to Manfred's piece and talk about some of the suggestions he got before he wrapped it up in the end. I think these are concrete and I think they'll help us. Two points in particular. Under the middle of the second page, one is he says—before I think we get to leadership, we've got to get to where we are and what that should be—

he's got here a listing of the most important programs and things connected. We actually need to know who we are, I think, before we know how to move ahead. And I actually think we also can. One of the ways we can link is to challenge schools that have the capability and give the time for people to do some of this work, to give it over to this. There is kind of a message-out filter that I think is necessary in which we make people aware of the nature of the problem that we're talking about and we're feeling so intensely. We have to do a better job of communicating that clearly. I'm connected to some formals in some ways. I think D.Min programs, where you have people who have some global vision or that are built internationally already, have the potential to help us do some of these things, if they're properly supervised. The supervision probably has to come up internal and external, from within the school and outside the school, people are working.

**[21] Manfred Kohl:** Before you get to the second one, I think you are absolutely right. We can use, or we should use, people in each region to do the research and to ask some faculty member to have some doctoral students to have their dissertation, their research, on what is going on.

**[22] Darrell Bock:** That's right, and the point would be that the reason you have the supervision, internal and external, is that you want to create the networks that you need to be able to move beyond what the results are, and begin to build towards those. Strategically, you're thinking about not only the content of whatever it is that you're doing but the way which you bring people together to continue the conversation once you get the results of that research.

**[23] Manfred Kohl:** However, before you start, you must have a clear outline of what you want. Otherwise you get all stuff from Africa that's completely different from China.

**[24] Darrell Bock:** Exactly right. That's where I'm going next. The next thing that I think is important, of what he says is important, is in point C. It says the leaders of these non-formal and informal programs should work together to develop a concept of what is essential, what is appropriate, what are the basic requirements, how can they work together, how can they evaluate and help each other. I'd summarize this as: essential, appropriate, basics, working together, and assessments. And so, my deep feeling, listening to this, and I hate to say it because I'm not a promoter of meetings, but there needs to be probably another conversation just about that. Just about that, where we sit down and we say, before we look for a leader, before we think about what the organization should be, we've got to help frame a picture of what it is exactly we are focused on. The important thing first is to work on that. My last word is a plea, and that is: Don't sell some eccentric Ph.D short. Most the people in this room have some formal training but we are eccentric because we have a heart for the globe that we're trying to bring our training to. Whoever ends up in this slot has to be extremely theologically savvy. It's going to have to be someone who can navigate this. The people that you will catalyze in this conversation, on one side you have the potential to move the most content, the most quickly to people, if they get this, will be people who I will refer to as hybrids or mutants. I think that, although institutionally you've got institutions that are often locked in and won't change,

you have people on many campuses who are not locked in. Those are your potential long-term resources. Particularly if they are young enough to give decades to the challenge because that is what it is going to take, long-term.

**[25] Ramesh Richards:** Great comments, Darrell. Thank you so much. We need a leader to bring the next meetings together as well. Raymond?

**[26] Raymond Lombard:** Brother Ramesh, I have felt this morning like Daniel in the lion's den, in a certain sense, but actually more like King Darius when he couldn't sleep. I woke up at 2:00 AM this morning. I haven't slept yet. From 2:00 AM to 5:00 AM, I was really praying and thinking through what has happened here. In my thinking, I was trying to analyze why we came together, what we want to achieve, and where we want to go, in the most simple way, to put it on paper for myself to have peace in my heart. If we say that, this initiative operates from the premise to accomplish or to fulfill or to give adherence to two scriptures: Matthew 24:14, that the gospel of this Kingdom will be preached to all the world as a witness to all the nations, and secondly, Matthew 28:19, go and make disciples. If we all shared that, knowing that the vehicle through which we will operate will be evangelism, church planting, and theological training or education, if we go that direction, the result will be we will see an integration of evangelism, multiple church planting, and ongoing theological training and education, because there still much desired effects that we all are looking for and will be brought into play when we use this way of thinking. Number one, pastors who are currently in ministry, who do not have any form of formal or non-formal training, are brought intentionally into a training program. Secondly, these pastors are becoming voluntary help leaders. He will have a group of disciples and pastors with him, in turn, become intentionally trainers of disciples or student-pastors—whatever you want to call it—for multiplication of church planting. If that is the result we are looking for, inevitably what will happen? We will see salvations of souls globally, around the world. Secondly, we will see multiple new church planting efforts globally. Thirdly, basic theological training or education, depending on how you look at it, on a non-formal basis of pastors currently ministering will take place immediately as well as future disciple student-pastors globally. So, we actually have a double-barreled gun. We don't shoot randomly but we shoot with intention, and that is to see workers accomplish the task that we have at hand. To my mind, what we need is three things: more manpower, more material, more money. Call it the *Three M's*. First, more manpower. I looked in brother Manfred's document. I studied this—Dr. Manfred Kohl, Darrell Bock, Dr. Ramesh, yourself, and Jonathan and Michael—and I studied it again the last three hours, between 2:00 AM to 5:00 AM. In my mind, when I look at everything said here, there are three M's that come to mind. We need more manpower, more materials, and more money. It's as simple as that. Without manpower, without material money, the job can't be done. So, if we send more manpower, we need someone who will spearhead TOPIC, or for the sake of it, a new organization that you will just call another name. I don't know. Will we stay at TOPIC? I don't have a problem at all if we use TOPIC. If your question earlier today was what we will put in place of this, as Dr. Manfred asks for, then that person knows it is about spearheading, making sure there is material available, and that money is raised to accomplish our goal.

**[27] Manfred Kohl:** I think you are absolutely right, my brother. However, I think that this is before that. You cannot start something without knowing what is already there. We must have a fact-finding operation as soon as possible. We must have that in different regions, and that is not an easy job, I tell you. It is a major job. You have French-speaking Africa, English-speaking Africa. You have Spanish Central America, you have Portuguese Central America. We need someone who will find out what is there, who is in charge, and who the people are that we need to contact. If that is established, then we can say these are the things that should be done. But first we must have a fact-finding mission. It can be not a painful assignment, but it could be the most joyful assignment that God already allows us to do, which is tremendous. I hope that I did not come across as negative this morning. God is doing a fantastic job in spite of all of our silliness. God smiles. God is not so much angry up there. He sits in His chair and laughs at us and says, “Man, I hope they learn soon.” We should celebrate. We should be happy of what’s going on, but we must have the facts. As soon as we have the facts—I think for the reason of what the facts are, we need a meeting of the right people not to report what they’re doing, but to get the facts. For every continent, we should have maybe two people or three people selected who know how to do it.

**[28] Darrell Bock:** Manfred, what do you think? I know that there are already groups doing a little of this already, and in some cases, a lot. But what I don’t know is whether they’re asking the specific questions that we’re asking. I’m thinking of Todd Johnson’s project, for example. He’s got a lot of numbers and statistics, but I don’t know if he’s asking the questions that we’re asking.

**[29] Manfred Kohl:** Yeah, I don’t think he’s asking these questions. I think he is already so locked in that he would not even be able to open a new field for us.

**[30] Ramesh Richard:** RREACH did commission Todd Johnson three years ago or four years ago, just to find every pastoral training initiative in the world.

**[31] Darrell Bock:** The question that I’m asking, before we even get to whoever that group of people is—and this is why I think we need another meeting to follow-up—we need to determine what the questions are that we want pursued, and then figure out the best way to get to that information. In the meantime, you’re getting a message out about why this is so important to the churches and communities that we’re talking about. What I’m saying is that there’s a fourth M: message. Then you begin to look for the kind of people. I don’t think this is going to be led by one person. I think you’re going to need an army of like-minded people. Eventually you’re going to have someone who leads it, but you’re going to have to have an army of like-minded people who understand what we’re talking about. They’ve got to be mobilizers, visionaries, and communicators. They’ve got to be global in perspective and they’ve got to have a way to connect people. They’re really teambuilders.

**[32] Raymond Lombard:** That’s more manpower.

**[33] Darrell Bock:** That's right. That's your manpower subset. But to get there, they've got to have a message to carry not only in terms of the need but in terms of how to begin to even formulate how to meet that need on the scale that we're talking about.

**[34] Jonathan Armstrong:** May I underscore that, too? Dr. Kohl, I almost always deeply agree with what you're saying and learn so much from you. Here it seems to me that the problem is too complicated to apply a peer research methodology. So, if you don't know what's out there, how are we supposed to know? You are the one person in the world who would know what's out there. The infrastructure, even for theological journals and networks, are a part of the problem. It would take another lifetime, or two or three, to actually figure out and to lock down the information. Could we put some sort of innovative strategy in place, maybe where we find projects that are succeeding and maybe study those and figure out what the principles are that are working?

**[35] Manfred Kohl:** In a sense, we're doing that through the GPro Commission so this is good discussion affirming a couple things. The ambassadorial piece is a messaging piece. We probably have two-, three-thousand people there now. We may want to narrow it. The operation units we're looking at can be given the questions if we can put the questions together.

**[36] Darrell Bock:** Part of the exposure is making people aware of the nature of the actual environments that you're talking about, because most people who can fund it are not aware of the level that we are talking about. We were talking about eighth-graders or earlier. Okay, that may be generous. Thinking through what it means to communicate theological education in context in which some people haven't had any exposure to education at all—those kinds of questions. That's why I'm saying there's a message side of this that is manna to get people mobilized and to get people to the interest and manpower and money and energy that this is going to take to pull off. But, I think snapshots of what those environments are, are very important to gather so that people get a feel how different an environment this is that we're talking about.

**[37] Ramesh Richard:** I'm still asking, operationally, who will gather, who will be the mobilizers? I mean, we're still talking about what needs to be done. Who will get the message out? Who puts the message together?

**[38] Chad Causey:** Since we're in Texas, we can use a gun metaphor and it's allowed. So, we're talking about "ready, fire, aim" versus "ready, aim, fire." I think what you're saying is that we have to kind of jump in because too much aiming—in a centered set versus a bounded set, the idea is not creating the boundaries but creating the center for people to grow. But to pull that off, Darrell—and you know where I'm going to go on this—if we know our need, and we know our vision, and we have a pretty good statement of our mission statement, the next step in this is to ask: Who is our customer and what does our customer value? If you don't do that, you start trying to create a centered set without understanding it exactly. I don't think it's formal institutions. I don't think it's actually the pastor already on the ground. I think it's the trainer

pastors, and this is what Ramesh has said. So, in order to focus the “ready, fire, aim,” you have to know who your customer is. Out of all the trainers of pastors, figure out which group you will most focus on and then you fire at that, then you start aiming based upon results. It sounds like at this point we’re at, the question is who’s the customer and what do they value? The reason we use that phrase—it’s a Peter Drucker phrase—is it helps us to think about if we reach out there, we need to know who would respond. I guess, Ramesh, if you had to focus down on, who is the customer?

**[39] Ramesh Richard:** We’ve gone through the whole process. A lot of this stuff has been written out and documented, but operationally and organizationally, the question is: Who serves in shepherding this process? Any other ideas, comments, or reflections?

**[40] Manfred Kohl:** I understand what you said, but if you wait until we have all the facts together and then select the right person, we will never get it. We need someone now who gives guidelines now for finding the right people to gather the right facts. Someone has to be the king point. That person must have some funds. Everyone has chipped in here. We cannot do that for the next six months. You can help to go to some foundation to get some couple of a hundred thousand dollars to get a thing going then have someone, with a proper help, to go to every region and meet with the right people to get the facts together.

**[41] Ramesh Richard:** I’ll go with you, my friend, to any foundation that you want.

**[42] Manfred Kohl:** Whatever has to be done can be done. We have something exciting going, my friends. God brought us together for a purpose. We just need some courage to step off the map and do something.

**[43] Darrell Bock:** That person might not be the person who ends up ultimately leading everything because that’s a different skill set.

**[44] Manfred Kohl:** It might be the right person.

**[45] Darrell Bock:** It might be but it might not be. That’s the only point that I’m making. The skill set that you’re talking about to do this foundational layer is not necessarily—in fact, I’d honestly be surprised if it’d be the same person who ends up having to lead what comes out of that because you’re talking about a completely different skill set on the other end, it seems to me.

**[46] Ramesh Richard:** Great. What else might be your reflections?

**[47] Darrell Bock:** Ramesh, if you’re done all this work, if it exists, then the question is: Where is it? I mean, one of the other things that is huge in this conversation is efficiency and a lack of redundancy. You don’t need to go back to reinvent the wheel if you’ve already got the wagon rolling. If this information exists and if you’ve worked through those questions, then that’s

something at least this group ought to interact with, to see if we just go or if there is just a touch more to fine tune.

**[48] Manfred Kohl:** My two wonderful ladies here could go to the Middle East and make contact with the twelve countries of the Middle East and ask the right person, “What is going on in your country in terms of training? Please ask around, take it serious, and give us an answer within four weeks.” Then they could gather what they have from the Middle East—hardly a part-time job for maybe two or three months—then they would have a summary of what is in the Middle East. Someone has to tell them first what they need, and that has to be established. Then these two ladies, either themselves or some staff member in the organization or a young convert, would write to Palestine, to Israel, to Jordan, to Egypt, to find the right person to give them the information they need. That could be just one part of the world. In every part of the world we have to look for someone who would do that and we need someone to coordinate all that.

**[49] Jason Tan:** With the GPro Commission, we have this strategy, a similar strategy, already in mind. We just need to add questions, if you want to do that. We need to budget for those. We call it “country operating units.” We can take them in, for example, as part of the country operating unit for GPro. They can help us gather information that we need for GPro but they can also gather information for TOPIC. We are actually looking for people around the world that we can partner with for the GPro Commission to do exactly the same thing. So, there is a structure to do that. We can take that in, and maybe we can suggest, since this thing came up as well as part of Dr. Manfred’s burden, maybe he can serve us as ambassador for TOPIC, for example, and then bring in more key players into the table. Then after a few months, we can bring them in all together again so we can broaden our group, and then we can have a more powerful mandate later on after a few years to restart TOPIC, and get a facilitator later. But right now, we need a point person that we can say, this person is really the one taking serious providing leadership for TOPIC, and then GPro Commission can come in and provide some of those things that you need for information. Then we can actually slide down GPro Commission to TOPIC, if that needs to be done later on. We can form a team for TOPIC, for Dr. Kohl, and we will be needing actually support of everybody. If you know other people working in certain areas where we can use them as country operating units or regional operating units, who provide information, that would be helpful. But we are gathering this data and we are poised to develop these country operating units in the next four years. We have all the particulars within the budgets and the number of people we need to run the country operation units.

**[50] Manfred Kohl:** I appreciate what you said until the statement of four years. If we don’t get that thing done within the next four to six months, forget it. I mean, we have to really keep the ball rolling and not plan for half a decade. There are younger people, the students or young professors who could do it; you don’t need a man who is 75 years old. I’m on the wait out. What I do here I have to do for several other organizations. I have just been chosen by Lausanne to challenge them and to change things. I’m the one who gives the whole movement the first push. That’s what I did, that’s why we’re here. We met and I said, “Let’s go to Texas and look for that bull and haul him by the horn.” We did fantastic with what has been

accomplished so far. Now we need someone who takes it to the next step. Next week, they'll send some letters, ask who the key people are in each region, how can they reach them, where can they get their names and addresses. That person has to write to them and contact them and get some more details, and we want to have an answer by the first of April, not October. Forget that. If they don't do that within the next six weeks, it will not be done. We must have some update and come together—as a small group, it doesn't have to be such a large group—and keep the thing going. I'm a little bit hesitant of big machinery. It's got to be a small group of five or six with one leader who is committed to put full time his effort in there, who is set free from his job to do that.

**[51] Ramesh Richard:** And supported by the job.

**[52] Darrell Bock:** Is there money available to acquire that person?

**[53] Manfred Kohl:** Or, we find funds to have him go completely free.

**[54] Ramesh Richard:** Any other comments or reflections?

**[55] Michael Baker:** I'd like to respond. I always start with the big picture and shrink things into its smallest terms to provide me with clarity and also strategic direction and to keep it simple. When I got the invitation to come to this event, I didn't know anybody at the table. I didn't know any of you, other than I met Manfred one time, and I apologize I had forgotten about that. I've been immensely challenged and blessed. If I didn't come for anything but what Manfred said earlier this morning, then my trip has been very worthwhile. I go back to what the purpose of this meeting was, and it was about pastoral training that grew out of a question that came from last June that said we need more pastors—better trained, focused pastors. I came because I had a sense of urgency within my tribe, the importance and the value. I've sat at this table and I've listened to a lot of—I felt like I was in a faculty meeting at times with my crew, and that's important because it's been very heartfelt dialogue that provides the purity of our theological position as to what we're talking about. I have been really overwhelmed by the practitioners who are doing things that have been represented around this table. I didn't know what Jim was doing, and I've got a lot of educators in schools that are down there. I'm thinking about where in the world—we don't even know each other. Then I hear these two ladies. I had absolutely no idea what the dimension of reaching into the heart of Iran. I told my wife on the phone last night, "There are two gals who I don't know." I said, "Boy, if you're talking about commitment, and you're living in one country reaching into another country trying to find a way to carry the Gospel, that's about as much Great Commission as I know." I hear my dear friend, Raymond, who is talking about all that's going on. We're of the same organization and we haven't even made connection until this meeting. It's amazing the level of connectivity that I have experienced. So, it's been enriching to me. I've been very impressed with the personnel from Moody and the commitment to cutting edge—either in technology or in the production of expanding their dimensions beyond Chicago. Chad, we're in the same organization. I hadn't even met Chad, and I know his family connections. He's very, very bright—and we haven't even

heard much out of Chad in this meeting—but very bright, and represents the thinking and the direction for the future.

**[56]** And so, we talk that we're going to come here today, and we're trying to get a handle on some structure to move us forward. I concur, it is about information, information, information, before you can make quality decisions. I do think it ought to be simple, but based on my experience, we've got to get a little more definitive than my brother who I haven't really met articulated just a few moments ago. That is, what is our mission statement? That's why we exist. So, it's about the who, what, when, where, and why. I mean, that's about as simple as a communication paradigm that you can get at. But I also know that the pace of the leader is the pace of the group, and all of us around this table are very busy. For us to say that we are going to have a bunch more meetings is just going to, I think, slow the process down. There are going to be a lot. Those meetings are going to occur if the process is moving forward. I made a statement yesterday that for us, it's a longitudinal process, and that's what this has got to be. The leader has got to be sensitive to what this is all about and bought in to what the purpose is, who understood about last June, about how this meeting came into focus, about why the various players here around this table, and there's a lot more players at large. I think we've got to have someone to lead the process. Now, that means the research, that means that the information gathering, that means that all of the things that you've articulated just a few moments ago, I believe all those run concurrent in the process. If we fall into the trap of the hierarchical structure, we're going to watch this down the vine, and I won't be back because I got a lot to do, but I believe in what we are talking about. I have things that down the vine. In fact, we meet all the time because we talk it to death. I believe we need to talk, and I think we ought to have the conversations, but I think they ought to be meaningful and focused. I probably am not going to be a part of that, but other people who are not even in this room are going to be a part of helping that process come. That's what I heard you talking about, keeping it focused on those elements.

**[57]** With TOPIC, I don't know that much about TOPIC other than what I've heard here. I've heard you talk about that it almost died. If it needs to be revitalized, then great, revitalize it. If that's the track to run on, wonderful. I don't have any dog in the hunt on that. If it's not working, don't do it. Call it something else. Reinvent it. Give it a new name. Make it fresh. Take an innovative approach and be proactive. Whenever we took our break, the Lord impressed on me—you said share any Scriptures—for me, this is an important one and I couldn't get away from it. It's in Second Peter, chapter one, and goes down to verse ten. It says to give diligence, urgent, to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall. An entrance shall be ministered that you abundantly enter into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus. That's the promise to me. I think we ought to be urgent about this. If we don't, I promise you, I think it'll be gone and we'll just say, "Boy, it was a really great meeting. I learned an awful lot. I met a lot of wonderful people." It'll just be history. If we're serious about this, and we all bring something to the table—I can tell you, these ladies are going back to do what they've been doing and expand it—you're going to do the same thing. Raymond, if we wait for four other meetings and six more months, he's going to have trained another five thousand pastors. And Jim is going to find those other six supporters that he's got, and I'm

going to be all over the world engaging our people in an enrichment module. We got to have partners, and we've got to have some buy-in, but you've got to have somebody to lead the process. Jesus understood. He didn't figure it all out with all twelve disciples. He got them, and they went, and they figured it out along the way, and that's what we call the New Testament. I would encourage us to focus on getting someone. I don't know how you're going to do that. I don't know of any authority. I don't have any authority, I'm just here as a guest of this meeting. I don't know who makes that decision, but I do think you've got to have a leader who can help coordinate the efforts and run concurrently all the things that we've talked about.

**[58] Ramesh Richard:** I think that's the theme which is coming up today.

**[59] Michael Baker:** If we don't then we've just had a great exercise. I'm sorry, but that's my transparent statement.

**[60] Manfred Kohl:** Now I know why they call you Bishop.

**[61] Ramesh Richard:** You know what the difference is between a bishop and God? God doesn't think He's a bishop.

**[62] Michael Baker:** I don't either [laughter].

**[63] Chad Causey:** Just trying to think simply, it seems to me that what we need is rapid follow-up with a meeting of the right people for message clarification, personnel selection, and the next steps. That rapid follow-up is to not make this extended out.

**[64] Ramesh Richard:** But we need a coordinator for the rapid follow-up for the next steps and next questions, so if we don't have that coordinator, it's not going to happen. We will continue what we need to, and that may have some duct tape over what needs to get done.

**[65] Michael Baker:** Who's going to help me here? Who's going to make a choice of a coordinator? Who has the authority to do that?

**[66] Manfred Kohl:** We do. You and I. Everyone.

**[67] Brad Smith:** Is the assumption that this is about rebuilding TOPIC?

**[68] Ramesh Richard:** Not necessarily.

**[69] Brad Smith:** I think that's kind of a key. We're at a crossroads. If it is about rebuilding TOPIC, and if the paperwork is already put together with the mission and customer and all of that, then that allows us to move as far as what Darrell said we need to do before somebody is selected. But if it's not about going the TOPIC route, then we've got to back up and do some other stuff. My assumption is: if TOPIC has already got a history, why did you all want to close it in 2015?

**[70] Ramesh Richard:** We didn't have a leader. We had a guy who came in, and fourteen months later he raised sixteen dollars.

**[71] Brad Smith:** We're joining, to some degree, something you've been working on for a while. Would it be your preference that TOPIC continue? Do you feel like that you've done some pretty good work on the basics—so it would be your personal preference and calling that TOPIC should continue—and this is about helping TOPIC find a leader? I don't mean to put you in a corner, but it does help us to make a decision if we do that.

**[72] Ramesh Richard:** Brad, I think that's the key issue, but is there somebody here who is sensing some desire? It goes: desire-capacity-process. Some desire at the minimal level to be the TOPIC catalyst, at the mid-level to be the international facilitator, or the highest level, which is executive director. Executive director means you run strategy, you raise money, and you form the relationships.

**[73] Manfred Kohl:** I believe that we should start at the top and begin with a full-time director. Some of us who know the ways of the foundation will ask to get financial underwriting. We need money—there's no question about it. I personally believe that we need a new name, but that name is not important. It can be added. I felt it would be better to have something that is not known to have died twice already, though I know that Lazarus came back. Still, it is much better to have something new, fresh, and exciting. I thought it better to have the name of something new—a new beginning, a fresh start. Let me share with you some news from this morning. I prayed about it, and then had breakfast this morning with a familiar candidate. Of course, he has to go back and think about it, pray, and talk to his wife and all his connections. I thought Jonathan would be the right man to lead us, at least for a period of the next three to five years. I talked with leadership of Moody, if they could think in terms like that. I think there are possibilities. I am willing to help, but please remember first of all, I am at the end of the world—which is wonderful in the summer. You are all invited to visit me for one day, and you would never leave afterwards. Right now, we have two meters of snow. I am getting older. I am willing to help and put all the effort in because I believe in it. I believe it is something that is cutting-edge. I want to do the things that really make a difference. I want to make a mark in life that no one can erase. All of us should do that. Following Billy Graham's idea, that is one of the most important things. Not just important, but the most important thing. I am willing to help and to assist, and so are you. Everyone else should make a commitment. My friend, we will help you, we are behind you, we will support you. It has to be a younger leader, someone with energy who has vision, who has theological background, who has been involved in what we are doing. You know all the work he has done. He has already put one-third of his time in helping us. I don't want to put him on the spot. I just wanted to share with you all because we are family. We are all praying, "God, give us insight." I thought that would be a solution.

**[74] Ramesh Richard:** Jonathan does have leadership capabilities, as we can tell. He may be the eccentric Ph.D that Darrell talked about. One of my great commitments at RREACH has been

never to poach from somebody else unless they are sent to us. Unless that is the case, we don't think it would be integrity to talk to them.

**[75] Darrell Bock:** There's a younger guy who just finished seminary. He's been working in these kinds of areas and is trying to get his ministry launched. He could be a support for Jonathan. He's got energy. He's got initiative. He's entrepreneurial in the way he goes about things. He's one of our former students and has been out a couple years. I could try and contact him to see if he might be interested.

**[76] Ramesh Richard:** I think I need to hear from Bryan because in a sense. Bryan is his boss. This is someone with implications for your desires, Bryan. I know you're not in authority to make executive decisions, but can we hear from you?

**[77] Bryan O'Neal:** I suppose at some point we might want to hear from Jonathan.

**[78] Jonathan Armstrong:** You first, Bryan.

**[79] Bryan O'Neal:** Independently of this conversation, we at Moody have recognized Jonathan's call and vision to this end. We have already taken steps internally to free him up for this work. It might take a bit of work on this process—to this project specifically. We've already seen Jonathan's direction towards an external service to the local church. The other unanswered questions are structural. David raised issues of power and politics, and all of those things, which are awkward to be worked out, but not knowing whether this meeting would go to any productive end, or whether it might be a great deal of affirmation, or taking stock of what's currently going on, and without knowing how the Lord directs Jonathan in his personal life which is also key to answering those questions. Our intent is to free Jonathan to serve the global church. We have mentioned it internally, structurally, maybe in similar ways that Dallas Seminary has permitted the free-agency use of the two of you to be directed to a particular work. I'm not sure of the degree of autonomy by which you do that work, or what the relationship is to the seminary, but Jonathan is one of our very best professors, and strongest and best minds with a vision for what the church is going to look like in the next 50, 100, or 200 years. Therefore, we're willing to say to Jonathan—I don't know what it means to the rest of you, but to Jonathan—you can carve out a ministry niche in service and leadership to the global church in terms of theological education. What that looks like in interfacing structurally in TOPIC, or whether it's based internally, we don't presume to make those kinds of judgments. Philosophically, I suspect that we're going to do something like that, whether you all do or not. We're going to affirm Jonathan and Moody's contributing to some leadership to this movement.

**[80] Ramesh Richard:** Very encouraging to hear this, I think. Jonathan, go ahead.

**[81] Jonathan Armstrong:** First and foremost, I'm deeply grateful for what you're doing. It is making a difference, and it is changing institutions. This is one example of how the GPro Congress is changing institutions. Myself, my wife, and family were totally sold to this mission—

as we've come to understand it—since June. The questions in my mind, that I wish to pursue with this change in Moody, is it seems that the broader, formal group is about to go through very radical change. Before we come to this stage of solidifying protocols for the informal, I think we're about to see the other side of the ship totally turn over. I am interested to see what I can do in terms of alternate classroom models at Moody—bringing that model to our other classrooms, and seeing what we can do to extend the existing institution. What Raymond said about us needing more manpower and part of the underused resources will be bringing this message back to our own circuit of institutions. I'm hoping that one of these things I can do at this new position within Moody is: Can I energize that route from the existing student bodies? As an example, these dialogues that Darrell Bock has been leading have been spread among our own students, and that type of interaction is talk but it's not purely talk. It's changing the lives of future students who are currently orienting towards this new agenda. That would be my opening statement. Dr. Kohl, we would be open to receive a partial mandate. We are obviously limited in that the Center would be technically associated with Moody, although technically we are starting with a fresh sheet of paper. We're ready to take on some new assignments.

**[82] Manfred Kohl:** I have talked this morning with Jonathan and with the responsible person for him. I think we need someone who will step out from his present job and be full-time with an enormous responsibility. We are not just talking about helping one institution or some classrooms. We're talking about hundreds and hundreds of projects, organizations, and experiments. The sky is the limit. Actually, the sky is not even the limit because we go there. It's incredible. Incredible. I see something that you cannot even put your arms around anymore, it's so big. You cannot do it half-hearted or try it out a little bit. After discussing and praying with family—his wife and everyone else whom he considers—this person says, "Okay, the first of April I will completely be free to do that. That will be my new job. We will look for financial undergirding, so that everything is solid and above ground, and committed." That person starts the fundraising for his ministry and begins a team. There will be a group of advisers. Some of us would be willing to get together after four weeks of this job. At the end of April, we will meet and give some guidance. That's the way I would see it. That's the way I would pray for it.

**[83] Ramesh Richard:** I heard yesterday that we start with what we have. We will receive your partial mandate with your full intentionality of prayer, with you and Gerlinde, and see if this something that God places on your heart. Do bring your entire internship group, and Darrel Bock and I will with our interns. With the GPro Commission, I will shepherd you through the process and anything that is needed. If the funding can be found—maybe we each have some funding as well—we shall see what can be done.

**[84] Darrell Bock:** I may also have a gal who could help in this. She is trying to figure out her life and wanted to go overseas, but I think would be plugged into this kind of a vision. I've worked with her at the center. She's in the process of pursuing a Ph.D, but she said she wants to grow wise with what she's doing. So, there might be a group of young people who could be put together for this who could see it as a life mission.

**[85] Ramesh Richard:** And yet I think that we need this point person. Maybe first as coordinator and if this grows into the full executive director role.

**[86] Jonathan Armstrong:** Is there some way that we can serve with this new initiative at Moody as a placeholder until this is built? What we can do in this regard?

**[87] Ramesh Richard:** I don't know that that's the question we're camping on at the stables right now, Jonathan. I think that the direction that this is going right now is the person or coordinator or the executive leader. Any other comments?

**[88] Manfred Kohl:** I think we should pause here for a moment and have a word of prayer. That one or two would really pray that the right decision is being made and that Jonathan would have peace of mind and all the concerned worries the Lord knows about it and knows the best way. Just imagine, who would be called to do that. I mean he's already prepared in the discussion, but it's a major decision. I tell you, we would help you to be squeezed into that block, but the decision really has to be from your heart and your family so I recommend that two people would pray for wisdom and guidance and especially to calm our friend down, that he has peace.

**[89] Ramesh Richard:** Just before that, maybe someone else is being led to say, "I want to do that and I don't want to complain?"

**[90] Manfred Kohl:** I asked the two ladies here, and they're looking for husbands. So, if you have any person who is looking for a good wife, I can recommend both.

**[91] Ramesh Richard:** Any other comments from this morning? Any kinds of reflection or input?

**[92] Michael Baker:** May I just speak as a follow up to what I heard from the President at Moody? Being in the roles in which I am serving, I could see great value in a partnership. It's still maintaining a strong sense of urgency, and all the things we've talked about doing can be done, but it's a matter of immediacy. I'm looking at this strictly objectively for a second. Here's someone who is in a strategic location in a position at Moody right now. For them to make some kind of a major change at this point in a semester and academic year, with all the other elements that are a part of accreditation—all those issues. An abrupt transition could be a serious challenge. To hear that Moody is thinking with vision about a global perspective, it intrigues me to say, as the chancellor of education for our church and also the president of our seminary, that we'll be interested to be engaged in the process in ways as well. Two, I've got numbers of D.Min students who can be involved in that process. I'm sure that could be the case with others, where it's not a matter of money, but it's a matter of us taking what we have and utilizing it, and that becomes the first portion of partnerships. I do have some thoughts that it might need some freshness in the name, and a name that people focus on that gives it this approach, because I've watched us; every time we've talked about TOPIC, we consume time explaining why something has happened in the past. We don't need that. I think you could take everything that's you've got—I know it's a 501c3, and you could fix that—take everything that

you've got and develop it. I don't know. It may be a unique center that is in a partnership. I just know that whenever you have the right formulas, you're going to have to work through that process, but you can still maintain the urgency like you were talking about, Dr. Kohl, of doing something now and today, and you can still do all of that, but it still provides that strong undergirding of Moody, as well as what I heard them talking about: the commitment to that kind of focus in the future

**[93] Bryan O'Neal** That's true for what we're intending and willing to do. I mean, we come in abstract and our contribution, if you will, is this man's time, right? Which we pay a salary, and benefits and what not, and there's freedom and there's also accountability in a context like that. We just want to find out if it works. I think that the reason that collectively we're confident, hopefully, is that we're confident in Jonathan—that he is faithful to Moody and its mission, and doesn't see any conflict between Moody and its mission, and this group and its mission. We wouldn't imagine that there would be some circumstance where he would have to make a decision between the two in order to be successful. If it did ever come to some conflict in mission between these two things, then Jonathan, in his integrity, would have to make a personal choice in that context. We all have our histories and our theological distinctives and those sorts of things, but we do have a common mission of discipleship to the global church. The verse that is in my mind is something like, "Set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work," and that doesn't come with it like the definition of the work. The group of elders doesn't first determine the nature of the work and then agree as to whether or not these are the right characters to take it up, but they're trusting in the character of the individuals and the accountability? Paul repeatedly comes back and gives reports and is accountable ultimately, but also free to do the work, and so that's our intent.

**[94] Ramesh Richard:** Thank you, Bryan.

**[95] Bryan O'Neal:** I should say, just to be clear, that Jonathan is teaching a couple classes and has to turn in final grades in May. Jonathan—you could speak to other details—is under contract to finish a book, and there are some of life's loose ends unless Jonathan desires to set those all aside. Having said that, though, I think you guys know him. He's already doing this. I think that's in many respects why we're here, because he's already doing this. So, there's going to be some period of transition as there are less and less of these things and more and more of this, but in other respects, it's organic in what he's currently doing.

**[96] Brad Smith:** Correct. I'd love to support, as well, what you're talking about, if we can. I'm not a bishop or a prophet, but I could foresee this could be a conflict relatively fast and here's the reason why: innovation in terms of technology platform and distance learning is not coming from the formal world—it's coming from the non-formal. That's across the world. We were mentored by Western Governors University, and they got all their stuff from non-formal. All they've done is transfer it to the formal, and they're one of the fastest growing universities in the United States. They put us inside so we can see their stuff, and where they're going is they're looking at non-formal. This is not a Christian place but that's where the new technology,

the new approaches, and even, frankly, the new accreditation strategies are coming from. So, we've got to watch this.

**[97] Ramesh Richard:** I think Brad is very wise in this. I've got to say, I'm partial on this, but if the position is a full-time one then I think the position will have to be separate from Moody. I think Brad is right in this.

**[98] Brad Smith:** You could jump into that and at some point, if the tension gets too great, God will reveal His choice. You couldn't even know this until that point, and go with it or not. I think the other issue with this is it will create tension. But, it's also kind of a fun tension, if you're okay with that, as long as you guys are okay with communication. Potentially, you guys could bring innovation from the non-formal world into distance learning because I think that's what we're seeing. So, it could be that, in that tension, there could be some nice innovation flowing back to his job.

**[99] Ramesh Richard:** And that may be a possibility for consideration.

**[100] Brad Smith:** Where the tension comes down the most, I think, will be in leadership structures. A couple things: one is that we find that once you get into what we're talking about here, leaders train leaders, and facilitators and equippers train pastors. Yet, most universities and seminaries are full of teachers. You can't take an elbow and make it a knee. Actually, that would be wrong if God made an elbow. And so, you run into people who don't grasp what it is because they're elbows. Yet the facilitator's a knee, and so that's where you run into some tensions. It's not that they're not good people, that they're not seeing why an elbow can't act like a knee, and yet you're finding that you're needing a lot more knees and a lot fewer elbows. That's where most of the tension comes from. The other point is just structure. Moody is wonderful school. You guys have gone through transitions and they're great, but I don't think that formal's going to drive this. I know it's coming but I think it's going to turn, and it's going to turn and flip again and still, non-formal is just going to be so far ahead that they're going to be playing catch-up for another twenty years. So, where that fits there needs to be people helping the formal. But, I think this could potentially be a great asset to the formal by helping to track the non-formal, which is moving so much faster than the formal could ever move, partly because of the structure issues. My only thought is this could create tension for you. You're okay with that, and you're in communication here. That may be a nice tension but you may have to, like any skunkworks—if you understand how skunkworks work—you have to have somebody protect you while you're out there innovating. That's going to perhaps create more tension for you than it will for him.

**[101] Bryan O'Neal:** That's right. I've been in this position for eight months. Part of the conversation with me coming to this position was to recognize our third school as functionally as the same skunkworks. This is the entrepreneurial division of Moody, which allows us to employ and attempt a variety of new forms that don't explicitly fit in traditional or even accredited kinds of patterns. Even some of the things we are currently doing in business learning aren't accredited. So, that's part of the freedom that we have. One of the things we

appreciate about Dr. Nyquist and his leadership is that he has brought an emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation and agility. The one-hundred-and-thirty-year-old institution has a few adjustments, as some of those knees and elbows need to be oiled. He's also brought at least a verbal affirmation that he'd like us to try seven or eight things, and it would be good if three, four, or five of them would work.

**[102] Brad Smith:** And you're okay with taking the blame for staffing loss?

**[103] Bryan O'Neal:** I'm okay with it because I know him. If we ultimately end up at a place where they are just incompatible, and that's what we say, then that's okay, too. I think that for both directions, Moody and this unnamed collective, have a shared confidence in Jonathan's character and integrity and direction.

**[104] Ramesh Richard:** May I add to Brad's comment? One of the issues creating conflict is fundraising, when you start raising funds for this particular effort. Moody is large enough to absorb that. Either they say they fund wholly as it's a budget of theirs, or they've got their separate funds. There could be issues. I think Chad wanted to say something.

**[105] Chad Causey:** Yes, so three challenges I think the group faces. Challenge number one is the challenge of real innovation, or incrementalism. It occurs to me that when Leadership Network wanted to bring together mega church or multisite churches, however wonderful it is, you are not bringing in a little Baptist pastor; you are bringing Peter Drucker. And so, let me point out the obvious, for a moment. We know that mature industries have profound challenges at disrupting themselves and innovating themselves fundamentally. The taxi association would never create Uber, the hotel lobby would never create Air B&B, Kodak would never invent Facebook. It just so everyone who's in the conversation is to some degree already established in this space, and it means there's a very high likelihood that if you don't look aggressively outside of the circle of the people who are saying they are really passionate about this because they are all in companies. You desperately need new entrants who absolutely infuriate everyone around this table or we aren't getting this done. That would be observation number one. Now, observation number two. I love Drucker for everything he's written, but who's our customer and what do they value? This is an inherently complex stakeholder client ecosystem, because the customer is the pastoral practitioner, but the customer is also the denominational leader. It's part of what makes this so stinking hard. You don't have a simple customer value proposition vertical. You have all of these stakeholders that get into this and it necessarily increases the complexity. The third challenge I think is we still predominately have structured our conversations in terms of activities and not outcomes. It has become primarily a subject matter orientation rather than an implementer practitioner orientation. I have found myself thinking about Bakke University, and you offer three degrees: Business, Urban Studies, and Theology. I was like, "Yes, that's the degree I need," because by 2050, two-thirds of the world lives in cities. What does a local ministry practitioner need? Business, Urban Studies and Theology. We have got to rethink about from a radically—the technical phrase would be human centered design—from the local implementer. What do they need to be able to do? Then go ahead and accept that you are going to anger the subject matter specialists who have organized

traditional higher education into isolated verticals, and say, “Those really just don’t work.” We’ve heard repeatedly that pastoral training is more than theology, and so you have laid that groundwork. I really appreciated that because it’s important. Increasingly pastoral preparation is going to increasingly be more than theology. We are just hitting the curve on that; it’s going to be a hockey stick curve. Right now, we are trying to teach pastors in India how to effectively brand and message online. What should their church website look like so that it doesn’t stink? How do they engage people effectively through social media, and what are the legitimate limitations of that, and what is their theology of ministry for that? We have folks going, “How do you make a website?” It’s all over the board. So with those three things, what are we actually trying to enable a local practitioner to do? You are probably going to end up with ten or twelve profiles that really have differing competency mixtures that are needed just like you end up with different competency mixtures if you’re a local doctor running a hospital system. Both are in medicine, but still. I think you have got to get outside of this circle even though you know this is the sponsoring circle. I think this circle will unintentionally kill itself, because it is going to continue to operate under unchallenged biases that we are incapable of seeing. If you want to really innovate, you have got to get outside of people who have been doing this for years. They are not going to disrupt themselves; they are incapable of it for lots of reasons that are well documented. Finally, as beautiful as “Who is the customer and what do they value?” is, recognize that you are already in the midst of complex stakeholder and client sets and it’s part of what makes innovating this difficult.

**[106] Ramesh Richard:** And innovation is one of several values we need to have. I’ve just read a review article from February 2017. It’s called, “The Stretch Goal Paradox.” And you ask, “Where do we stretch? How do we stretch? Where shouldn’t we stretch? What’s the distance we stretch?” There’s another one called, “Curing the Addiction to Growth.” We get several things in leadership that’s going on. Disruptive innovation may be too much for this group to handle. Chad, your comments are very, very incisive. We have to work with the current sponsorship organizations that are often done, like Moody or whoever, to understand the whole thing. The reason we have this Coca-Cola guy is he comes in and he completely looks at it in a different way. And so, we are grateful for the GPro Commission and how it’s being developed. Verbiage is different. Angles are different. Interpretation is different. They are still getting it all done, except they have lots of resources financially. Thanks for your incisive comments. Anybody else that must speak? We want to spend some time in prayer. It is very difficult to run an alliance, the usual parties, the trade shows. If you run an alliance, you usually become an event management company, and so you are. This is an event you became. GPro Congress is an event. We have one in Latin America that is an event. So, that’s not an issue of if I want to become just an event management group. That takes lots and lots of work and resources. Anything else? On the little pen that we gave you, we tried to capture all the ministry metaphors. One is that the pen is an instrument. What you may not have found is the clock on the pen—I don’t know if you did. It’s not a working clock, but the clock is set to what time, Chad?

**[107] Chad Causey:** Almost midnight.

**[108] Ramesh Richard:** Yes, 11:55 PM. I was in Montenegro. If you came to our office, we would love to have you there. We do not have a board room for fifteen, but we have a board room for eight or ten, at the most. All our clocks there are five-minutes-to-twelve. Now some of our employees think it is five minutes to lunch, but when I was at Montenegro, this wonderful pastor gave it to me and said, "We see you are an urgent man, so we came in here and set all our clocks to five-minutes-to-midnight." We are at a very urgent time, in history. It's a decisive time. We will act regardless of how this conversation goes. We are acting okay, so whether this comes in and allows us to act will be tremendous exponentially growth. We are acting already. Back to pastor Michael Baker's questions and Brad's questions: we will act, we are acting. The train has already pulled out of the station. It's whether we want to increase speed. We are so grateful that you would come, and you will see results as a result of your presence here. Invitations are to read everything that was done here and to participate in ongoing multiplication. We will act, Lord willing. My favorite phrase in every language is "the Lord will." We prepare, plan and execute after the Lord's will.

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