

# **“Creating Synergy between Church Planting and Pastoral Training Initiatives”**

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<https://aqueductproject.org/conference-room/>

## **SUMMARY:**

Fregy John opened the conversation by articulating two key questions: “What hinders synergy between church planting and pastoral training initiatives?” (44) and “How can a stronger relationship between church planting and pastoral training initiatives be fostered?” (45). It was noted that creating synergy between the two initiatives is necessary because where pastoral training is emphasized church planting efforts tend to slow (46).

Pastoral training can be defined in a limited sense (comprising formal, academic programs only) or in a broad sense (including formal, non-formal, and informal training of both pastors and lay-leaders in the church) (48). For the sake of the discussion, the panel members determined to favor the broader sense of the word (49). In all forms of pastoral training, one of the prominent challenges is that of balancing the personal attention required of transformative education and of scalability (51, 52, 99). Another challenge is ensuring that educational programs are contextualized (61, 62). Overseas students in Western seminary programs often leave with little or no practical leadership experience (63, 78) or choose not to return to the people who sent them (97, 155). These challenges are compounded with the fact that formal, Western institutions are too small to keep up with the growing, global need for pastoral training (75). Thus, out of necessity, non-formal training initiatives have been growing rapidly (65).

Despite the recent growth of non-formal initiatives, it was noted that these programs often have no way of recognizing one another (73). Therefore, the question was asked: “Is accreditation a hindrance or a benefit to synergy between pastoral training and church planting?” (82) It was proposed that simple certification could provide the benefit of recognition without the costs associated with accreditation (84, 85). Nevertheless, some regions of the world value formal accreditation more than others (83, 86, 89, 129). Fregy John summarized by noting that the benefit of both formal accreditation and any sort of certification is recognition (91, 161). Accreditation carries the added benefit of making further formal education possible (92).

The panel then considered the role of the accredited institution in non-formal pastoral training (97). It was noted that institution of formal pastoral training could lend accreditation (83, 100) or help to institutions abroad (103). It was generally agreed that formal institutions can be most beneficial not by running training programs but rather by guiding and supporting indigenous trainers (125, 132, 135, 168).

The concern was raised again that accredited pastoral training tends to slow church planting efforts (108). During the course of this discussion, it was noted that slowing the process slightly to ensure leaders are well-trained is beneficial (121, 124, 133). It was recommended that pastoral training programs perhaps teach only what is absolutely necessary while giving students tools to become life-long learners (109, 111, 136, 140). The training process could be expedited if all of the course work was designed to be practical (144, 117).

It was noted that this synergy can best grow by having indigenous pastors actively involved in the training process (144, 146, 149). Such a relationship would prove beneficial for several key reasons. First, it would ensure the local pastor trusts the training of new leaders (144). Second, it would prevent the congregation from losing trust or respect for the local pastor (147). Third, it would facilitate a one-

on-one relationship in the training process. This type of relationship is important because being an effective pastor involves more than an academic understanding of doctrines and principles (133, 143). The local pastor, who knows the character and qualifications of those in his congregation, is best equipped to ensure each trainee is adequately prepared for the work of ministry (156).

It was reaffirmed that synergy between the work of pastoral training and church planting initiatives is possible and necessary for the health and witness of the global church (131, 162). Open communication will be important in establishing and maintaining this synergy into the future (170, 172, 173, 178, 179, 186, 187).

## TRANSCRIPT:

**[1] Fregy John:** Good morning – for most of you! Maybe I am the only one who is in the evening. For our time together, let's start by introducing ourselves because some of you came in a bit later than others. You are able to see each other, so you are able to jump in and introduce yourself: a few things about what you are doing, so that each of us can understand each other. I'll go ahead and start with myself so that I can set the stage. I'm Fregy John. I'm basically from India; currently I live in Malaysia. And I count it as my privilege to chair the discussion today. I was part of pastor training in overseas missions for 13 years in various capacities, and for the last 16 years I've been part of a church-planting movement. But the vehicle by which we reach the goal is pastor training. So we call ourselves a training organization but our main focus is church planting. And I work with Timothy Initiative. So, welcome to this panel discussion and please jump in and introduce yourself and we will get to the conversation.

**[2] Jonathan Armstrong:** And Fregy John, you should know that all of the participants see each other in a slightly different order [on the video screen], so why don't you just tell which one of us should introduce ourselves next.

**[3] Fregy John:** Okay, I'll ask Alvin to go ahead and introduce yourself.

**[4] Alvin Hull:** Thanks for letting me join you guys today; I really appreciate the ability to listen in. I'm serving with Pioneers. I've been doing church planting for most of my 30-some years with Pioneers, but now I'm in a training role. Our main reason for joining this is that I'm part of a training team that is working in the Middle East to train men who are going back into places like Sudan to do church planting, and also training for church planters on our foreign teams across the world, starting teams in different parts of the world for training. That's why I'm joining you today; thank you!

**[5] Fregy John:** You're welcome! And now, David, can you introduce yourself?

**[6] David Deuel:** Yes, my privilege. My name is David Deuel. I, like the rest of you, have been involved in pastoral training. My interest is in church planting, like my former brother who just spoke. I've always seen pastoral training as a way to accomplish church planting, but much more than church planting. I started out pastoring in church plants in three Asian churches, one in New York City, one in Los Angeles, one in Tampa, Florida. It was part of what we call an Anglo church plant in Florida. And I'm considering getting involved in my area of upstate New York, which has recently been declared the number one post-Christian area in the country now, which is sad but challenging. Thank you!

**[7] Fregy John:** Thank you. Gene Wilson, can you come in?

**[8] Gene Wilson:** Yes, I'm Gene Wilson; it's a pleasure to be on with all with you and meet you. I represent ReachGlobal, the international mission of the Evangelical Free Church of America, and I've served always in the area of church planting, but in different capacities, first as a church planter in Quebec with French Canadians, and then I was asked to be in Latin America as a church planting coach, so we work with ten countries in Latin America. And currently, for at least the last seven years, I've served as church planting director, which is really a misnomer, because I'm really a catalyst for church planters, like many of you do, coaching and partnership and stimulating church planting through our different national partnerships.

**[9] Fregy John:** Thank you. Matthew, can you come in?

**[10] Matthew Dereck:** Yes, my name is Matthew. I've been working for the Aqueduct Project for a number of years, and that's the main reason I'm here. I'm here as an observer and curious about what the dialogue will bring about and really excited to see where the discussion goes.

**[11] Fregy John:** Thank you. I think you are the most familiar person to all of us. Okay, Greg!

**[12] Greg Seghers:** My name is Greg Seghers, and I work with an organization called ZEMA. It stands for Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa. I am on furlough right now in the United States, and my home is outside of Durban, South Africa. I work with a group of churches called the Amazioni which is a Zulu word that means "people of Zion" and they're a part of the African indigenous church movement, and the Zionists make up about 80% of that movement. I have to give you a little bit of history: it doesn't have anything to do with the Jewish state, but it has everything to do with Zion, Illinois, and a man named John Alexander Dowie who started the movement back in 1896. He started a city north of Chicago called Zion and missionaries came to Southern Africa and his teachings spread and now we have about—the numbers are not exactly known, but the estimates are about 20 million of these people that follow the Zion movement. They call themselves the Amazioni. They're syncretistic, but because of our tie with the church of Zion, we have an opening to go in and to evangelize and disciple the existing church leaders. And so I've been there for 24 years. We started non-formal Bible training: it's called the Zion Evangelical Bible School, or ZEBS. We also have Zion Bible College, which is in Swaziland. We have about 78 of these schools going with about 2,200 students this year. Thank you for allowing me to be able to participate in this conversation today.

**[13] Fregy John:** Thank you; you're welcome! And now we have three Daniels; we'll start with Daniel Yang.

**[14] Daniel Yang:** Good morning, gentlemen, and thanks for having me here. I'm glad to be a part of this group. I am in Chicago right now. I direct the Send Institute, which is part of the Billy Graham Center of Evangelism at Wheaton College. We research church planting, social trends, and evangelism. My position is seconded to Wheaton College; I'm actually employed by the North American Mission Board, which is the Southern Baptist home mission board, and we predominantly do church planting. We do some relief work as well. My immediate background is that I was a church planter in Toronto, so I planted a church which planted other churches out of that. So I was also a church planting coach, trainer, and recruiter. I'm glad to be with you guys this morning.

**[15] Fregy John:** Thank you; you're welcome! I like your "365" prayer.

**[16] Daniel Yang:** Yeah, I'd love to add you guys onto that if you're interested. I'm praying for church planting leaders all next year and I'm going to pray for one per day.

**[17] Fregy John:** Thank you. Okay, Daniel Im!

**[18] Daniel Im:** Hey everyone! I'm the director of church multiplication for NewChurches.com, with LifeWay Christian Resources. My background is that I've been here for about three years. I'm Canadian, but I'm living in Nashville right now. What I came down to LifeWay to do is basically to figure out how LifeWay was going to begin resourcing church planting multi-site and multiplication, because LifeWay was predominantly more books and curriculum and all that, but there's a lot of publishing and resourcing strength with the organization. So I came down three years ago to start that while Ed Stetzer was still at LifeWay. Now he's working with Daniel Yang up at Wheaton, but we're still doing the new churches stuff together.

**[19]** My background is in pastoral ministry, both in church planting and in multi-site. I rewrote the second edition of *Planting Missional Churches* with Ed Stetzer and recently *No Silver Bullets*, which both are really focused on the development of pastors. I really see my life mission as being the number two guy to a lot of pastors who don't have number two guys, so the way that I think and what I do and the resourcing and all that—that's my heart and my mission.

**[20] Fregy John:** Thank you; you're welcome. Daniel Lins, please come in!

**[21] Daniel Lins:** Good morning! It's a real privilege and honor to be here with you all and I'm looking forward to learning a lot. I recently began working with a group which you may know, Fregy, called Operation Agape in South Asia. They do a lot of church planting.

**[22] Fregy John:** Yes! Where are you calling from?

**[23] Daniel Lins:** I'm calling from San Francisco right now, from the U.S.

**[24] Fregy John:** Not in Ludhiana?

**[25] Daniel Lins:** No, but I was just there in Delhi about a week ago.

**[26] Fregy John:** I'm supposed to be there for a meeting next week.

**[27] Daniel Lins:** Yeah, you missed it! Or we missed you.

**[28] Fregy John:** Yeah, the same part of the world.

**[29] Daniel Lins:** We missed you at the board meeting too! So yes, last week they had a dedication of twelve New Testaments. So I'm working with them, primarily coordinating the Bible translation, but also helping to develop curriculum for the church planters as they're learning. They've seen a lot of attrition of churches and believers across South Asia and in the church planting movement, so we're hoping that training stronger leaders will help the churches to be more established and so we're trying to learn as fast as we can to do that.

**[30] Fregy John:** Thank you. Welcome!

**[31] Daniel Lins:** Thank you; it's good to be here.

**[32] Fregy John:** Stephen Langley, please come in!

**[33] Stephen Langley:** Hi! I'm Stephen Langley. We're based in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. My wife Jessica and I have been here for nine months; we work with an organization called TEAM. We work very closely with ZEMA. Greg Seghers is an old friend and great mentor of ours, so it's a lot of fun to be with him here today and a great privilege to meet the rest of you as well. We also work with the Amazioni. Jessica and I are here intending to pioneer a youth ministry initiative among the Amazioni, but we also work with pastoral and leadership training. We're involved in teaching in the Zion Bible schools that Greg mentioned; that's another piece of what we do. Glad to be here!

**[34] Fregy John:** Thank you; you're welcome! Steven Shepard, can you introduce yourself?

**[35] Steven Shepard:** Yes, I'm the president of Church Planting International; I've been working for thirty years. We work in Peru, in the Amazon amongst four tribal groups, two of which are unreached. We also work in Mexico with a group in the mountains, and in some cities, and also in Uganda, Africa—that's

very new to us. And we work in church planting primarily and aiding native church planters in planting churches and also in training leaders, which, I've seen, very much relate one to another. So I'm very glad to be with all of you.

**[36] Fregy John:** Thank you; you're welcome! All right, Jonathan!

**[37] Jonathan Armstrong:** Very glad to see you all. For me it's this afternoon; I'm calling from Germany. I work with Matthew Dereck, and together we represent Aqueduct Project and Moody Bible Institute. Delighted to be a part of this! Thank you.

**[38] Fregy John:** Is there anyone missing that I am not able to see on my screen?

**[39] Andy Pflederer:** Yes, John, I'm here.

**[40] Fregy John:** Ah, Andy, sorry!

**[41] Andy Pflederer:** No problem. Good morning! I'm Andy Pf

lederer and I've been involved in pastoral training since the early 90s, first in Albania, and for the last number of years now as a faculty member at Moody Theological Seminary. I'm interested in hearing from you what role an accredited seminary can play in this process of pastoral training.

**[42] Fregy John:** Thank you! On my screen only six faces show at a time, so if I don't talk to you or I don't address you, just feel free to come in.

[Jonathan Armstrong demonstrates how to view all participants.]

**[43] Fregy John:** Okay, getting into the conversation and looking at this group, I'm really impressed by this group. All of you carry years of experience and knowledge and I think you have the answers for what you are coming together for. Today we are going through a topic, a dialogue on creating a synergy between church planting organizations and pastoral training initiatives. So we have experienced people from both worlds, from pastoral training and church planting. And some of you are from both worlds. Actually, some of you, as I was going through your profile and hearing from you, played roles in both worlds and I would really love to hear from you. We are recording the whole conversation and Jonathan will make sure that we will be able to hear and read the whole conversation.

**[44]** So, what we are going to do in the next hour or so is that we want to hear from all of you. Mainly we want to see two areas of conversation. First of all, what hinders synergy between church planting and pastoral training initiatives? Because sometimes, it is intuitive to a level, so, from your experience you can come in and say what it is that hinders synergy between church planting and pastoral training initiatives.

**[45]** And the second thing we want to discuss is: from your experience, how can we foster a stronger relationship between church planting initiatives and pastoral training initiatives? You can come in one by one or if you want to stop and ask some questions in the middle of a conversation, you can feel free to. Just raise your hand and you can come in.

**[46] Daniel Im:** Yeah, I feel that there are some clarifying questions that need to be asked anytime that first question is asked. Part of that is, when you look at church planting and pastoral training, there's always a tension of formal, non-formal, and informal education; and the speed of where we are in the world and the speed of how fast we want the plants to be released versus the training. So it always

seems like they're on the same continuum, where it is like the more pastoral training you provide the slower the planting process is, so, not to say that they're against or opposed to each other, but in my experience it always seems to be that they're in tension.

**[47] Fregy John:** I agree with what Daniel said. Does someone else want to come in on that?

**[48] Gene Wilson:** Yeah, I was thinking along the same lines that when we talk about pastoral training and church planting, it seems that the training has to be broadened beyond the pastors to laypeople, to church planters, to bi-vocational workers. We're probably all involved working with different types of Christian workers besides the pastors. So that is kind of a question about the question: are we really focusing on the more academic pastoral training like we have at Wheaton and Trinity and different places throughout the world? Or is pastoral training just a term used for training in general?

**[49] Fregy John:** Yeah, actually that last question in the conversation is key: are we going to limit ourselves only to the pastoral training or can pastoral training be used as a general term for all theological or biblical training? I think most of us are in agreement that it is not just precisely narrowed to pastoral training, but it is in the broader sense.

**[50] Jonathan Armstrong:** For what it's worth, in the history of these conversations, we've been looking at pastoral training from very broad categories, so whatever your experience represents—if you're from Wheaton or an established Bible college, from your context, how can the pastoral training center that you're aware of and work with work better with church planting? If it's a very informal Bible school that you know best, how can that Bible institute work best with church planting?

**[51] David Deuel:** I think probably one thing that hinders the synergy between the local church and training ministries is the very fact—and you gentlemen all know the statistic—that 95% of all pastors around the world have no formal training. How are they trained? How have they been trained historically? I think of Jonathan Edwards who trained two or three before the seminary started and those individuals developed their own training ministries and trained two or three at a time. I think the point here, if I can bring it to a point, is that we've kind of lost sight of the individual in training. And consequently, we design things for groups—I'm not opposed to that, don't get me wrong. If 95% of pastors around the world are being trained informally, which means probably by another pastor, then it ought to be part of what we consider to facilitate that form of training, whatever we want to call it.

**[52]** And I think in doing so we will rediscover the individual. Someone jokingly said recently, "The individual may be the last unreached people group." There's an element of truth to it, certainly. So I think what we need to do in our designing materials and programs is to make everything more scalable, even to the extent that a pastor could train an individual or two or three individuals in this study.

**[53] Daniel Im:** Yeah, that's good, because Dr. Alan Tough has a 70-20-10 principle, and the whole idea of that is that 70% of our learning is through doing, the informal, what David was talking about; 20% by interaction, feedback, coaching, mentoring; and 10% by listening in formal education. And so if that is how we're wired, then even at the local church level and what they're doing to raise up trained residents and raise up church planters, what does that look like for the formal theological educational institutions as well?

**[54] Jonathan Armstrong:** May I ask, David, for a clarification? What I heard you say is that we need more scalable resourcing of pastoral training but also more personal, and I would tend to think that those would militate against one another, if I could just call for clarification.

**[55] David Deuel:** Sure! I think they do, naturally. And I think that's part of the problem. I think that's part of what hinders us. But I don't think it's impossible. I think we can, without creating two sets of materials, programs, and so forth, do a better job of making it possible to facilitate a pastor's training of an individual or two or three. It's being done and we can help them do that better; we can support their work. So I don't think it has to, Jonathan, I don't think they have to work against one another, but I think they naturally do if we don't intervene and try something different.

**[56] Daniel Yang:** Yeah, probably an example of that is the way that we do training in education at the doctoral level. I think there's a lot of high-league customization, and yet you provide a framework for educational training across a group and cohorts can vary between six and fifteen to twenty individuals, so I think we have a model in that.

**[57]** I wanted to make two comments, one personal and the other one just observational of what's happening here in North America. I came from an ethnic church background; I'm Hmong ethnically, and most of our pastors when we came to the United States in the later 70s, early 80s, were trained by TE [Theological Education by Extension]. I'm sure a lot of you guys are familiar with that. So it was a great entry point and it gave the first generation immigrant community some form of theological training. So it was really helpful, it was very useful, and a lot of our pastors were accredited. That was enough for at least the Christian Missionary Alliance, the denomination I was with, to release laypeople to pastoral positions. So I think there's something in that, that at least for this generation it was still very useful in North America. And then many of their children—us—went on to seminary-level education, and we still have a hard time duplicating the leadership that the first generation had under Theological Education by Extension. So that's a very interesting problem that has been created. We have a lot more educated second generation leaders that are less capable of leading congregations than we had first generation leaders that were educated through TE. So I just wanted to throw that out there as an observation.

**[58]** And then secondly, related to the work that I do: the way that we do North American church planting—and this is just speaking broadly—we're very focused on the organizational psychology of things: systems, processes, assessment, recruitment. And I think, by and large, having conversations with many, many church planting organizations, we have become experts in this arena. We assume that church planters come with theological education.

**[59]** And so I don't know if this is a hindrance, but this is definitely a distinction that I've seen: In church planting organizations, we've spent less time focusing on pastoral training and more on organizational assessment, if that makes sense. So there definitely needs to be more of a bridge there in North America. I'd love to see our planters get more theological training as well, and we aren't seeing that yet in North America. We focus a lot on the organizational leadership. I just wanted to make that observation.

**[60] Greg Seghers:** Can I ask a question? Daniel Yang, why do you see that there's the lack of leadership capability of the second generation? What's going on that's contributing to that?

**[61] Daniel Yang:** There are probably a few things, one being that a lot of these younger seminary-trained students are trained in Western theology, rather than how to do theology, if that makes sense. And so they'll come back to their first-generation, predominantly ethnic church—and anecdotally I know this because that's my context but I've talked to many people who have a similar issue—so they have these students come back and they don't know how to lead and pastor because the seminaries have given them a systematic theology that doesn't quite fit their parents' church still.

[62] I think it's a necessary tension. I think this is a part of second-generation leaders becoming more contextual in their approach. I think it's a big tension, though. You'll have a guy who's coming into his parents' church quoting John MacArthur, and it just doesn't make sense. So I think that's one of those issues.

[63] And then I think the advent of the way that we've done youth ministry—and again, this is from my observation—that you've got a lot of high school kids who went straight from high school to Bible school. They've never served as an elder; they've never served as a deacon or a lay leader. They're trained for four or five years and then they're brought back into their parents' church with less actual church experience. I think these are two of the struggles that I've seen.

[Fregy John reminds participants to un-mute their microphones when speaking.]

[64] **Fregy John:** Okay, in the conversation that Daniel mentioned, there are three different categories of training we find in pastoral training: formal, informal, and non-formal. And all of you are familiar with these terms, and most of you are involved in one of these categories or maybe multiple categories. Looking from my observation, I feel that a huge amount of training currently happening is in the non-formal setting. Is this true?

[65] **Gene Wilson:** My experience is that that is true, Fregy John: that that has been the growth area. When I started out in seminary and was interested in church planting, I went to different formal academic settings, and there was very little—and this was in Europe; I went around France and Europe, just looking at who was training church planters, if there was a course in church planting or a professor with experience—there was very little. And even less in non-formal. And then I'd say in the 80s or the 90s, a lot of seminaries and schools started focusing on church planting and having courses on church planting. There was growth in formal education and since the year 2000 non-formal has really exploded and often linked with informal, with coaching and mentoring. So yes, I just want to affirm what you said: it's the area of growth.

[66] **Jonathan Armstrong:** Gene, what you're saying is really important. Where could we research the trend that you've just named more specifically? Are there books that you would turn us to or journal articles or leaders in the movement that we could interview? How would we research the trend you just articulated?

[67] **Gene Wilson:** Yeah, I wish, Jonathan, that I had the answer to that. That was just from my anecdotal experience of looking into it, but I don't know anything in writing. Maybe others could speak to that.

[68] **Stephen Langley:** Jonathan would already know this name, but I'll throw it out there for others. Samuel Chiang has done quite a bit of writing and research on non-formal and informal pastoral training initiatives.

[69] **Fregy John:** Is Samuel Chang talking about when we started this trend, or the change of trend, or the timing? Did he mention when this trend started: the trend from the formal setting to non-formal that has been happening more and more?

[70] **Stephen Langley:** I can't speak specifically to the timing of it, but everything I've read of Chiang's had to do with tracking and analyzing and discussing non-formal Bible training institutes in the majority world. I don't recall reading a lot about the timeline of the development of that. But I know that

Jonathan has had some interactions with Dr. Chiang as well, so maybe he could speak to that. He might be more familiar with more of Mr. Chiang's material.

**[71] Jonathan Armstrong:** Samuel E. Chiang is president of the Seed Company formerly, and I think he has another position now. He has written a number of things on oral Bible institutes, and that's what's he has really focused in on: the development of oral Bible institutes, which is a huge phenomenon. I think it's slightly different from the rise of non-formal training programs that Gene was speaking to, but also very important. Thank you, Stephen, for bringing that in.

**[72] Stephen Langley:** Thanks for that clarification.

**[73] Fregy John:** Coming back to what Gene was talking about, the non-formal. One of the trends we see today is that the non-formal training programs are increasing and many times the formal institutes have nothing to do with the non-formal, and there is a big distance. Most of the church-planting organizations or church-planting movements don't depend on seminaries or big Bible institutes; they always depend on non-formal training. They don't recognize each other or recognize this importance of each other. Have you ever experienced that?

**[74] Andy Pflederer:** May I ask a question? In light of your comment, Fregy John—and in your networks, everybody who is listening—what do you see as the role of the formal education piece?

**[75] Fregy John:** To discuss what we are doing in our network, we have a very good relationship with formal educators and non-formal educators. Actually, most of the time, indirectly we provide the link between them, because most of the people we use for training are seminary or Bible school graduates. And they use our training material, actually, non-formally in the field. So most of our master trainers are seminary graduates or Bible school graduates, and we give them the tools so they use them in the non-formal setting. So we are not saying that formal education is not needed. We say that, if you have formal education, then good! But looking at the need in the world, we can't have all seminary graduates to come and reach the world, or plant churches in every village in the world. For example, going back to our experience in India, we have 650,000 villages and more than half have no Christian presence. So that means 350,000 villages have no Christian presence. To have a church planter in those villages, each seminary in the world would have to give us people.

**[76]** So that is not something the Lord intended for us to do: depending on Bible schools and seminaries. So we have to think differently. That's why we started training people in the local churches. Most of the time we use seminary graduates or Bible school graduates if they are available; otherwise we train them to be master trainers. So we don't see a big issue there, but most church-planting movements, in my experience I see that they distance themselves from formal education. They may go to the extent of saying that, "This baggage will reduce the speed of church planting movements." Have you heard that statement? So many times it may only come to a level of two days of training or three days of training and then we say, "Go ahead and do it." It has its own advantages and disadvantages.

**[77] Andy Pflederer:** Yes, that makes a lot of sense. What do you see in the leaders who are trained in a formal setting, what do you see that they have and can contribute that is unique and that you don't see in leaders that are trained in a non-formal setting?

**[78] Fregy John:** Others can come in on this, but my observation is that they are more systematic in the formal seminaries they come from, or formal schools. But as far as field experience is concerned, those who learned from the field—like what Daniel Jang was talking about, the first generation and the current generation have more experience. They have seen the ministry in the field, so they know the

ground reality much more than someone who comes from a seminary, actually. When Daniel Yang was speaking, I was just remembering that because most of them from the non-formal background, they learn most of it in the field, not in the classroom. And the classroom realities and the ground realities are, many times, very different.

**[79] Andy Pflederer:** Well, that raises a question in my mind: are we at a place in terms of church planting and the church planting movements where we really need to give more attention to the non-formal and informal, and that the formal education is not really going to be a key player right now? Or is there a need for all three, and do we want to look for ways to blend these models? Come up with apprentice kinds of models? Sioux Falls Seminary has a brand new model running for three or four years where they're using mentors in context in partnership with faculty mentors. What do you see? Do you see a need for a blending or do you see a need for a shifting away from the formal?

**[80] Gene Wilson:** Andy, if I can address that, I would just like to say I think there is integration that is needed. I think that the problem has been when formal education is a requirement for being a leader in the church planting movement or for being a church planter and so forth. I'd like to see church planters and church planting movements having access to people with formal education, for theological reflection, for doctrinal clarity, for health issues, especially—theological and missiological health. So there's interaction. And just to flesh it out, on my team of church planting catalysts, I have a guy who is a professor and chair of missions at Trinity. But the seminary has given him a third of his time to travel and catalyze church planting movements and do non-formal training. So I think that there are many, many professors of missions and church planting who were church planters and have a heart for it. If they were released and empowered to get involved in the field and use their theological education, they could do it. So I see a lot of potential for synergy, but we have to overcome the tension in the sense of competition between different forms of training.

**[81] Fregy John:** Personally, I also feel the same. There is always room for synergy. One is not instead of the other. It has its own value and importance. And I think that drives us back to the question: what hinders synergy between church planting and pastoral training? What is the hindrance? I think we should focus on what is the hindrance, what is stopping us from bringing it together?

**[82] Andy Pflederer:** Is accreditation a concern? If we're integrating, and you have a professor or whoever traveling and doing non-formal education, and there's no need for accreditation, that takes out certain requirements, that takes out certain expense. And yet actually the content—and more than the content, what is being taught—is passed along. So is accreditation important, or is that a piece we could remove and that would help the synergy move forward?

**[83] David Deuel:** I think in some places, in some countries, accreditation or a form of recognition (maybe not called accreditation) is required just to conduct a school or conduct an official training program. The definition of official is a tricky one, of course. But I think you're onto a significant point, Andy, about accreditation, because I think this may be one way, in the future, that the formal training schools, even though they're difficult to sustain, will be the conduits for accreditation to the smaller schools. If we can do that right, if we can get past the competition, the formal, established schools with all their resources, including their accreditation with their state or country accreditation, would be very helpful to the informal training programs, but we just can't seem to get there for a variety of reasons.

**[84] Jonathan Armstrong:** And David, may I ask you to comment, too, to expand Andy's question then: "Is accreditation necessary or helpful?" Can we expand that to, "Is certification of any kind helpful or necessary?" In past conversations, I know that Ramesh Richard and the TOPIC organization, Trainers of

Pastors International, have begun to explore the idea of whether they could broker a non-accredited certification for smaller pastoral training institutes. Would a non-state-accredited but certified form of oversight be useful?

**[85] David Deuel:** If you go back to the generic term that people are using for all forms of accreditation—an authorization, as it's called in some countries—if you go back to the term “recognition,” which I think still captures the absolute necessity, what is most important is that local churches recognize the qualifications of an individual that would be coming through any form of training at all. I'm still passionate about this one-on-one idea, making things available to the pastor who wants to train one person. Could that one person achieve recognition? Well, he could, in a good system that was functioning properly. It's going to take a lot of work to get there, but it's not impossible, and it might be worth the trouble.

**[86] Daniel Lins:** I'd like to make a comment. This is Daniel Lins, working in South Asia. We see the accreditation as very valuable, actually, and we're working hard to make the programs accredited. Number one, to the students, it kind of validates the time they've spent doing it. They're sacrificing a lot in terms of church planting but also in terms of family and other time that they're pulling away from, so it adds value as a recognized degree, when it's accredited, so that way, after it's finished, maybe they can go and work for another church planting network that might pay them more, or they have what we call, “cultural currency” to be recognized in a community. Now they have a few letters after their name and many people actually want that. Not everyone, but we have a number of cohorts where they're eager for that; that's an incentive to them to continue their training.

**[87] Fregy John:** Greg, do you want to come in from an African perspective about accreditation?

**[88] Greg Seghers:** Yeah, I would just like to give a perspective from southern Africa. The pastors are very much into church planting, but they're doing it on their own. They're multiplying rapidly, much faster than we could ever train them in a seminary or Bible school. I think that they're meeting the felt needs of the people. They're not paid; they have a job and they pastor churches. They might have anywhere from six to fifteen branches. They'll go and work in an area, and they'll plant a church there. And so it's just rapidly spreading, faster than I'd say a seminary could keep up with training them.

**[89]** One of the things that I was thinking is that in our situation after 24 years of doing non-formal training there is a trust that has been built up with the pastoral leadership and so they know that they want to get Bible training and get the truth and that they need to come to the Zion Bible schools. And that's why—you know, we're not accredited, but we have a reputation and a trust that we'll teach them the truth. And then from that they are using that Bible knowledge that they have and the church administration that they get in our schools to continue to build and to continue to spread rapidly in their denominations or their church groups.

**[90]** So I think trust is a big issue and the relationships that are built with these denominations. And for our situation, with the rapid spread of the churches and the planting of the churches, there isn't a need for accreditation. However, there are accredited schools in Southern Africa and we appreciate those; many of our teachers are from accredited schools. And so I think that there's a need for having those seminary-trained leadership involved in the non-formal training. I think they come with that knowledge and that systematic training that is good; but the pastors that are coming into the non-formal training have the experience and they just need the biblical knowledge.

**[91] Fregy John:** Okay, if I heard this right, I hear repeatedly that either it is accreditation or certification or even reputation. All those are different terms, because it is acceptability, or in other words, a cultural

currency. It means that someone else accepts the training that we go through, or somebody else approves it, or there is a general acceptance. That's what I'm hearing repeatedly in different terms. Is this right?

**[92] Alvin Hull:** Yeah, if I can make a comment here: in our training in the Middle East, the guys there are being trained as church planters. What they're asking for—this recognition term is really what rises to the surface with these guys. They're saying, "If you could just recognize us, just please recognize our training." As far as accreditation, they see that as a door that opens up the possibility of far more training for accreditation. But they're not looking to be a program that is accredited on the field. They just want to say, "Just recognize our training, please." And then if they want to go on to Moody or Wheaton or Trinity or somewhere else for more training, that helps to open that door for them, and that's a critical piece.

**[93]** The other thing I was going to throw in is that I'm actually very concerned with where formal education has gone with this whole thing. I'm in a PhD. program; Duane Elmer is my main reader and mentor. And in our work we've been asking our church planters around the world what role formal education has played into their retention and thriving as trainers and church planters. We've been shocked to learn that probably about 25% of them are saying that it's been vital. The rest are saying "No." So I feel that we've got a gap. Now I'm an adjunct professor at a school doing accredited training, also doing the non-formal and informal training, and I think that what you guys are talking about is really hitting on my nerve because I'm like, "Yes, we've got to bridge this gap, we've got to bring it back together," as Andy was saying earlier. Otherwise we're losing ground with formal education in helping to train these pastors and church planters. And I think that's sad when there's so much wisdom and knowledge there. Let's bridge this gap, let's bring it back together, let's find a way to not keep losing ground in the formal, but to bring it back together. So I'll just make that comment. I think the recognition and accreditation are two different animals, but I think they have a very close relationship with the people we're putting overseas.

**[94] Fregy John:** Thank you. I'd like Steven Shepard to come in, since he is a part of church planting, to hear what he thinks about this whole conversation: recognition, reputation, accreditation, certification.

**[95] Steven Shepard:** I think that the most important thing is that there are certain foundations of truth that are so important for leaders to understand and become convinced of, and that's when they really make an impact, and I think that one of the problems in the missions movement is that there is a lack of attention being given to defining: "What is the message? What should the teaching be?" because there's a great amount of difference as to what is being covered in the training, and sometimes I feel like it's not gospel-centered, and so it's not a teaching that will impact others. And so I think that the informal ways of mentoring, building trust with people, accompanying people to the field, and—but I do think recognition is very important. And so, an informal certification, I think, will accomplish that. It carries a lot of weight in the circles that they are in. But I also think that the seminary-trained people can really help. They move in different spheres, so there's a place for all of these things.

**[96]** But the main thing is that church planters can be mightily used if they understand and are convinced of gospel truth that really transforms their lives. And that's what matters. And I think this can be accomplished in non-formal and informal ways, and it can be recognized so that it carries a lot of weight with coworkers. And I think that also the seminary-trained people can play a great role. So I see it as organic and relational. Christ-centered relationships: those who are discipling and those who are receiving discipleship.

**[97] Daniel Im:** I think part of it is that it's really a "both-and" where we need formal theological education for the master trainers, because we want to ensure theological clarity and biblical faithfulness and give them skills to know how to exegete and also interpret and then contextualize in other contexts. But for the majority of pastors who are going to be pastoring and planting in their context and raising up other disciples, I think part of it is: how do we allow proximity to formal or recognized or affirmed or something wherein we know there's theological clarity or faithfulness in a context where you don't have to spend—you know, if someone's living in a tribe and they all pool their money together and send this one person to, for example, Moody, and Moody covers their tuition, it's still, even though Moody covers their tuition, it's still a huge expense in cultural shock, and then once they come over, the whole thing is: do they want to go back?

**[98]** So what does it look like to develop master trainers in each of these contexts, recognizing that it's not actually going to bring finances into the formal theological seminary? It really is an expense that I don't think can be recouped. So is it a matter of saying, should formal theological seminaries develop chairs or seats or financing where they know that it is always going to be a negative, it's always going to be an expense. But it's to the extent of saying, "We're investing into this like missions, and we're going to set up extension centers and cover the cost of our professors to fly over."

**[99]** The other thing is: what does it look like to leverage online education, the whole idea of flipping the classroom, but also have maybe a cohort mentor who possibly has already gone to one of your theological or biblical institutions, but has a heart for missions, kind of like a missionary? And then they are a cohort mentor in different countries around the world, so that the biblical exegesis or the preaching or this or that is coming through a lecture online and then the cohort mentor in context is helping the pastors to be developed, maybe in more of a non-formal rather than informal type of setting.

**[100] Stephen Langley:** Daniel, I'm speaking a little bit out of my depth here, but I'm really intrigued by the idea of established formal theological institutions lending credibility, as it were, to the informal institutions. And anything I say from here on out is subject to correction by Greg, because he's been here a lot longer, but one of our colleagues here who's observing today, Eric Binyan, he's a dean at a Bible college in Pietermaritzburg, and the initial certificate it offers is not accredited, but through an extension program, students can achieve accreditation at that school. And it's not cheap for these students, but it is a fraction of the cost of what it would be if they sought theological education directly through an established Western seminary. I believe one of our other colleagues in South Africa, Jonathan Emmanuelson, is working to find a way to offer accreditation associated with one of our assigned Bible schools down there (and Greg, correct me if I'm wrong; we just had a passing conversation about that). It's something we are observing here and I'm really intrigued about how we can make that work, because these students can afford informal Bible training, they can afford these schools, and if there's some way for accredited institutions to lend them credibility, I think that could be very, very valuable.

**[101] Fregy John:** Thank you. Anybody else want to comment on that conversation on accreditation?

**[102] Daniel Yang:** I just want to share some things that Wheaton College is doing to bridge that gap. They're partnering with, for instance, Every Nations, which is a church planting movement down in the Philippines, and I guess they're pretty global now. And so Wheaton is bringing in a cohort of their leaders to provide them with theological education, not just for personal benefits but to then create their own institution. I think that's another way to think about how the partnership between—you know, this may be more East-West partnership—but how an already accredited institution like Wheaton

is helping to establish other institutions, if that makes sense. And so that may be a particular paradigm that we begin seeing happen more and more.

**[103]** I think the interesting thing about American institutions is that I think we all know a lot of things are driven by enrollment, and so that begins to take over a lot of the more pure motives, so there's a bottom line to why institutions make the decisions that they do now, and enrollment is a big thing. And that's not to say that they're not trying to equip leaders, but, I mean, even the whole move from Bible colleges to liberal arts is a huge shift, and I think it's a necessary one, because I think we should train more than just pastors in Christian thinking, but I think that affects all that we're talking about today, especially when we're talking about American institutions and so, pause at that idea there—if our American institutions in the West were helping to establish other institutions, that may be another way to think about it.

**[104] Jonathan Armstrong:** Daniel, that's absolutely fascinating. Can you comment how that has worked? How many institutions have been formed or spun out of this initiative through Wheaton, what have we seen in the couple years that this has perhaps been going on? Thank you.

**[105] Daniel Yang:** Yeah, so this is pretty early on. Every Nations is one of those; there are other partnerships forming right now that I'm not at liberty to say, but there are other similar partnerships that are forming right now, where a lot of organizations that were started twenty or thirty years ago to address the issue that we're talking about today: how do we provide practical, even pragmatic training for pastors? So they've been in existence for twenty or thirty years and realized that, "Okay, but we also want to have the accreditation and authorization," —everything that Fregy was talking about earlier. And they're now backfilling some of that, now coming to Wheaton and saying, "Teach us how to institutionalize," in a sense. I don't think they're necessarily looking for ATS level of accreditation, but they're looking for two things, with Every Nations, at least. They're looking to establish a tradition, and they realize that they've been a movement, but that their movement leaders are aging and so they want to establish a tradition. And so that's one example.

**[106]** There's another one, Propel, that's a cohort of women evangelists and global leaders, so less tied to a local church, but these are already women in ministry; God's used them as evangelists, traveling. Christine Kane is an example; she's part of that. And so, again, they're already in ministry and for whatever reason they feel a need to deepen their theology, and so that one's less about institutional accreditation, but that's again how Wheaton is partnering with those who had informal training and now are trying to bring in more formal training to some of these leaders. I'm sure other institutions are doing similar things.

**[107] David Deuel:** There's a concept in accreditation that—it's not easy but it works—and it's referred to as accrediting the individual. So you have a particularly bright student that comes out of a non-formal setting and doesn't have the benefit of accreditation and all the resources that come through formal education, some of the more established programs. But it becomes an institutional objective to help that individual find his way or her way into an accredited program in other schools as they move up from bachelor's to master's to doctorate. I probably wouldn't have believed in this eight or nine years ago until I actually saw it work. And it does work. It's messy, it's not something we would choose to do efficiently, but if we want to do this, in other words, if we're of a mind to make the non-formal setting work, it can, even for an individual that needs to go right to the doctoral level and do research and publish books and so forth. And so there are options.

**[108] Fregy John:** Let me come in now. One of my observations is that in the last few years we hear people repeatedly saying, “When we have accreditation, formal institutions, upper hand, then all these things will slow down the church planting movement.” I hear this all the time. Those who are a part of church planting movements, please comment on what you are hearing. “If we go with accreditation and linking up with a formal school, and adding more baggage, it is going to slow down the church planting movement.” I hear this all the time. I want you to comment on this.

**[109] Daniel Im:** I think part of the issue there is the belief that someone needs to finish their theological education before they go and start pastoring or planting. And I think that that is true if you are by yourself, and maybe going into more of an indigenous remote area. But if you are in the context of community or you have mentors or elders or those who are supervising you who are walking alongside you, I think there’s a point where you can say, “What is the bare minimum before you even go out?” Rather than requiring three years full time before going out, what is the bare minimum? Maybe it’s a year in the context of a residency within another church plant, or within another established church where they’re being mentored and receiving theological education, and they’re in community with you after the year when you then go out and plant. I think a year timeframe is really a bare minimum, I would say, to observe and learn—there is obviously a lot more in theological education than just what you know, there’s a formation of the heart, there’s the actual practice of practical pastoral ministry and what that looks like—and so what is that bare minimum? And then how do we continue the development when they are then going out so that we are cultivating lifelong learners? Because I think that’s one of the characteristics of effective pastors: that lifelong learning, rather than, “Hey, I’m done. I got my degree. I’m finished. I know everything.” We know that just because you have a piece of paper doesn’t mean you know everything.

**[110] Fregy John:** Alvin, do you want to comment on this? I saw your hand was coming up.

**[111] Alvin Hull:** Well, I will comment on it, but what you’ve heard exactly is what we’re hearing all across the world: that this formal education is definitely slowing down our church planting movements, because what we’re telling our church planters is that they can’t be effective until they’ve got that piece of paper that Daniel was talking about. And that’s not the message that we want to send to them. And it’s definitely what we’re hearing, and what we want to see happen is, like we said earlier, the bridging of these two. There’s just so much available in the formal setting, but how can we get it down into the informal and non-formal setting? Everything you guys are saying, I’m all ears for, because we’ve got to see it happen.

**[112]** My concern is that we’re raising up these leaders in church planting movements who don’t have a theological, biblical basis for where they’re taking the churches, where they’re taking the people they’re leading. So I’m listening closely because I want to see if there’s some way we could do this. I’m looking at the guys we’re training in the Middle East, and we take them in for one year of training, like you were saying, and in one year of training the response has been phenomenal and they’re asking for more. But what do we do with that one year of training? How do we do that well, so we can open the door for whatever else they could get, and not slow down the church planting movement? So I’m right with you. I’m listening close.

**[113] Fregy John:** Maybe I can also comment on this. Before I comment, I want Daniel Lins to say something. He has been to India and seen things happening. Come in, Daniel.

**[114] Daniel Lins:** I would echo some of what Alvin is saying. We’re not working in a year model; we’re working in kind of a cohort model where they stay within their own context and receive training from

their leaders and those local leaders receive training on a regional level and then the regional level leaders receive training quarterly at a national level. And that seems to be working, to not really draw them out of their context. Like Alvin said, we're all ears on how to do this without slowing things down. Two of the ways that we've brainstormed to not slow it down are, one, in our assessment, to try to make it competency based, so that the work and the assignments that they're doing actually overlap with the church planting. So we're trying not to add a lot of writing, we're trying to do more of *in situ* assessments where their leaders are going there and watching them. And then also we're altering the curriculum so that it's more directly related to what they're doing. It sounds a little bit like what Daniel was sharing that they're doing among the Hmong people as far as some aspects of training.

**[115]** I went to seminary also, and we just recognize that some of those content chunks aren't necessary or valuable in what these church planters are doing, and so we're trying to tailor the curriculum more to exactly what they need to learn. And they see the value in that. But we're very eager to learn how to do this well, and what ideas you guys have found to be successful, and maybe also what curriculum or content or resources are available.

**[116] Fregy John:** Thank you. Andy, come in!

**[117] Andy Pflederer:** Yeah, let me refer back to Sioux Falls Seminary again and the Kairos Project. ATS will accredit outcomes-based learning. So what the Kairos Project does is they set certain outcomes, and then they work with a partnership of mentors: a mentor in context, a faculty mentor. And the mentor and the students put a pathway together to meet this outcome. They don't have to take any courses at Sioux Falls. They can take the training on the ground, kind of like what you were talking about, Alvin: whatever will result in some kind of a master assignment that can be assessed in creative ways like you've mentioned, Daniel, and if that master assignment meets the outcome, they pass. And there are five or six outcomes, whatever you decide for your master's program, and once you've met those outcomes, you have an accredited master's degree. I think their program really bridges, like we're talking about, it opens the door to contextual learning, contextual assessment. It's much more affordable, it's much more flexible. Larry Caldwell is the director of this program and I would suggest that we bring him into this discussion.

**[118] Daniel Im:** One thing that we're doing to address this: LifeWay recently launched in India and also in South America as well, and we also are in China where we're publishing indigenous authors. So rather than just translating our work, we're finding indigenous authors who are practitioners. They're biblically faithful according to all our values and where we would find theological partnership.

**[119]** And we're publishing them and in South Africa as well, but in addition to that, we just redesigned our learning managements system, called Ministry Grid. And in redesigning that—and just to give you a sense, we had 400,000 unique users on the old platform last year, but we just redesigned it so that it would be global. We did it all on Amazon S3 servers so it can be accessed anywhere via the phone. If you have a bad internet connection, the videos come through at lower quality, so it's not sucking up your bandwidth. So just this week is when we launched it, and actually we launched it already in Australia and tested what it looks like for the network connection to be over there as well, and we have pilot projects going on in India too, because the unique thing about LifeWay is we have all of these digital textbooks. And part of it is wordsearch and with our B&H Academic and our platform myWSB.com, we carry all publishers' textbooks. And the unique thing is that we can actually integrate that into our learning management system. So someone can watch this professor teach and then read just this chapter of a book, the way that we have the licensing agreements set out. And it can all be done via phone.

[120] We've experienced success in the North American context. But we've built that, we've put millions of dollars into it, we've built it with this issue in mind, because our heart is for pastoral training in the global context. So we're piloting that immediately in Australia and India, and we're looking to figure out how we could best do that in Africa as well, and in the Philippines as well.

[121] **Stephen Langley:** I just want to ask something, and I'm really keen for interaction on this point. I am in no way reticent to doing things more efficiently and doing things well and asking these question, but I do want to push back against what I feel is an underlying assumption. The statement that you've brought up, that the accreditation and the formal education is slowing down the church planting movements. I feel like the underlying assumption behind that statement is that fast is better, and it has to be fast, and if it's not moving quickly, there's something wrong. Now I want to believe, best-case scenario, that that's born out of a sense of urgency for the gospel, but at the same time, a fast church planting or church multiplication movement is not necessarily, *de facto*, a positive thing.

[122] And I think what we've seen with the Amazoni in Southern Africa is a really good illustration. In the early 1900s, this movement was a couple thousand, and today, as Greg pointed out, it's over 20 million. There are over 4,000 denominations, so to speak, in this African-initiated church movement. But theologically they're all over the map; I mean, some are Bible believing churches, others you wouldn't recognize as a Christian church. So by any standard that is a prolific church multiplication rate; it happened very, very fast. But that's not necessarily in and of itself a positive thing, and accreditation wouldn't necessarily guarantee against theological diversity, but I at least want to raise that question. I do feel like there's an assumption there that fast is best in a church planting movement. What do we think about that?

[123] **Fregy John:** Gene, you've been silent for a while. Do you have something to comment?

[124] **Gene Wilson:** Yeah, I agree with the brother. I don't personally see the biblical value of "fast," although there's an urgency and a timeline that God is working on. But healthy movements—and I think there's a life cycle in movements, so they may be slow at first but pick up speed if they're healthy. So if they're fast initially they may be counterproductive and they may collapse or become embroiled in heresy or other things as well. So I think the point is well made, but that's not really the central point of our discussion. So I'd like to go back to the idea of accreditation as assessment. It's certifying that this institution is training; this institution is theologically sound and faithful to Scripture and so forth.

[125] I'd like to push back: can't we do better than assessment, as far as formal educators? Can't we help to design non-formal training institutions? Make them healthy from the start? I have an example of this in Africa: an African indigenous mission was started, Reach Africa, and all the leaders are Africans. They asked Craig Ott from Trinity and myself to help them design. So rather than translating the curriculum for church planting, the non-formal curriculum, we had Africans write it, and we were consultants and advisors in helping to design it and make sure the theology was sound, they had some of the best resources, and we just mentored these brothers. And it was contextual from the start; it was theologically sound from the start. It has expanded to 31 countries, and I think that's part of the key: that it was indigenous, it was transferable, it was simple, and yet it was theologically sound. So this is just a thought: rather than coming into this as formal educators and trying to do assessment and give our stamp of approval, why don't we get involved earlier and just say, "Hey, let's be part of the game here, let's embrace non-formal education and make it as healthy as possible."

**[126] Jonathan Armstrong:** That's brilliant! Gene, may I ask, have you seen that done elsewhere? Are there other initiatives we could look to, like the initiative you just mentioned, as a model for further work?

**[127] Gene Wilson:** I don't know exactly, but there's a book (maybe I'll pick it out and bring it in early) that talks about the Hindustan Bible Institute. They're accredited, and yet they realized they weren't forming church planters, so they tell the story of how they developed non-formal education in partnership with the formal, and it turned around and multiplied their church planting. So it's a little different angle, but that's an excellent case study.

**[128] Fregy John:** Yeah, they have formal and non-formal programs in HBI, Hindustan Bible Institute.

**[129]** Hearing from all of you, most of us have Western educational standards and accreditation and recognition in mind. But in the grassroots in Asian countries, in many places where the gospel is preached for the first time and churches are started for the first time, in those places, in 60% or 70% of those scenarios, they don't care about accreditation because they don't know what it is. They don't even understand certification. They just heard the gospel, they become a church. And they don't have any baggage. In such places, training programs having a lot of baggage, a village planter whom we train is not able to get approval from a seminarian. A professor from a seminary comes in and evaluates his work and says, "You're not up to the mark." That may not work and that may not be the right thing. So in certain settings, this accreditation and certification and all of those things may have a limited importance.

**[130]** But later, as their Christian experience grows and they encounter other Christians and other Christian groups, then mutual recognition is an important thing. We run training programs in 40+ countries, and the countries where we have some Christian history, they're more demanding on accreditation and certificates. But in other places, they don't even talk about a certificate, because their certificate is a church they planted, or the believers who came to the Lord, and they are enjoying the eternal peace they have. So they don't even bother about a piece of paper. But the more they have the other Christians and other organizations, other Bible schools coming up, in those places they ask for certificates. And they ask the questions, "What kind of recognition can we have?" "What kind of degree?" "Can we go for higher education?" and "Will my certificate be valued like other people?"

**[131]** So those questions come into those areas, and most of you may agree that in a church planting field, where there was no church in the past, in those places where the gospel is preached for the first time, they are not worried about the accreditation or certificates. But having said that, I'll come back to the certification or reputation or validation because with most of these church planting movements, what happened is that if there is no structure or guidelines, it can become a heresy. Sooner or later, if they are not rooted in the Scripture, they can become a heresy. Here in India, we have, you name it, all those cult groups that are already in India. And they work only among the Christians. When a new Christian comes, they start working among them. They don't work among the Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists. They work only among the gullible Christians. So if the pastor himself is not trained enough, or trained properly, then that will reflect on the health of the church, and at any time it can turn into a cult, because they don't have any guidelines.

**[132]** So we have to balance: not for the sake of the certificates to hang on the wall, but to see that they are on the right track and that they are rooted in the Scripture. That may be one area I recommend that formal educators can come in. Formal educators and formal seminaries can play a role as a catalyst, or the people who come and help the people who are in the non-formal setting, the people in the field. It is

not to come and dictate terms; it is to come and help. Most church planting guys in the field won't be happy to see someone come from a seminary and dictate terms for them, but if they come along to work with them and help them, they will be more than happy. So there can be synergy. What do you think?

**[133] Steven Shepard:** I completely agree, and I think we have to come back the fact that is it only God that can make a pastor. You could go through the seminary and be highly trained and get a doctorate, and be an ineffective leader and not really be called, not have the character, not have the heart or the conviction. And this is something only the Holy Spirit can build into someone. And so there's a place for all of these methods, but it's very important to have, I believe, the personal relationship and involvement and mentoring. So someone can be called of God and be mightily used and have a great grasp of truth through these informal or non-formal means, but they're in relationship with someone, and so this is what matters. Certainly fast is not always good, because you have churches that have a doctrine that is not going to help anyone. But yet the foundations, the important foundations that someone can grasp without the formal education and be mightily used. But there must be the Christ-centered relationship of trust that is built through the organic connection on the field with people working together. So there's a place for all of these methods.

**[134] Jonathan Armstrong:** May I ask, it seems now that we're on the second question (maybe we have been on the second question for some time): "From your experience, how can we foster stronger relationships between church planting and pastoral training initiatives?" Steven, you've emphasized the personal element of forming those relationships. Is that something that is scalable? Can an institution do something programmatically to foster that? Thanks for your response.

**[135] Steven Shepard:** We have a very informal Bible institute. They have to complete certain courses, plus we go to the field with them. We don't want to do the work; they're the ones doing the work. Our part is to come alongside people who are called. I think the character is the most important part, and then the Bible knowledge; lastly the gift. A lot of the time people come alongside those who are highly gifted. I think that then there is a recognition of that leader, that man. And they're related then to other people, other works. And then someone can emerge that needs or wants the more formalized training, and I think that that can come into place, but there needs to be standards, there needs to be a core of doctrine that is upheld and recognized and taught and then teaching goes on. "Faithful men who will teach others." And that is the model.

**[136]** And so I think defining the message is very important. There's a lot of different theological diversity, and some of it's wrong and some of it's right. It's not like anything will do. And I think that's one of the problems: that there are teachings that are not going to impact anyone. Churches are being molded by them, they hold to these kinds of teachings. So calling people back to the basics of the gospel is very important, and what those basics are, of grace and faith and the finished work of Christ, and who Christ is and the attributes of God. I think these are very important things to define, so that we don't just have churches that are being multiplied but don't have a well-defined message.

**[137] Jonathan Armstrong:** Thank you.

**[138] Fregy John:** Does anyone else want to comment? We are already one hour and thirty minutes into this conversation.

**[139] Alvin Hull:** I'm just going to add one more comment here, with what Andy was talking about earlier with this mentor helping out, and Jonathan, what you said about the personal aspect and the program aspect. In our research, when I made a comment on about 25% have talked about formal

education making a difference in their ministry, the other piece that shocked us was that around 80 to 90% of the people we're interviewing are saying that life-on-life mentoring, as Steven just mentioned, was the key part. And so hearing that now, we're saying, in *Pioneers*, how can we bring this life-on-life mentoring into our program of training? So I agree, Jonathan, that has to be—and what Andy mentioned about the guy that's doing the other work—we are committed to bringing this thing together in whatever context of training we're doing.

**[140]** So I think it's key, and also the other piece is we're finding that hands down, the character formation is what these leaders want to have as their focus. They see the importance of the skills and all that, of course, but hands down, there is no question in their minds that if we're going to raise up pastors, we've got to get back to spiritual formation, the basics of our message. All that is by far what they're saying is most important for their training. So I'm right with you, I'm still listening close. I just want to say, absolutely, we're tracking with what you're saying.

**[141] Jonathan Armstrong:** And Alvin, if there's a title or something that we can get a hold of to access that research, we'll put that in the bibliography that corresponds to this conversation. What was the study that you just cited?

**[142] Alvin Hull:** I'm actually doing a couple of different ones. The study I'm citing right now is the one that I'm working on for my PhD dissertation that we're going to have published in probably the next six months. But we're really trying to get at the basics of these issues of training our people. So it will be out there in four or six months, I hope.

**[143] Fregy John:** Thank you Alvin. That reminds us, until last year we used to call our trainers teachers. But when we added the piece of mentoring, we no longer called them teachers; we called them trainer-mentors. We call all our trainers trainer-mentors because mentoring is the most important part and we don't give a certificate to a student until a mentor certifies them. So a mentor has to see that he has gone through the course, and he has to see that it has made an impact on his life, and he will have to certify that he has seen the church he planted. That is how certification comes. So that term is very important, and that aspect will make any training effective and we will be able to see that one-on-one relationship, and there will be more quality.

**[144] David Deuel:** We were answering the question, "How can we foster stronger relationships between pastoral training and the local church?" In light of what you just said, Fregy, I can't think of a better way to do that than to involve local pastors in the training ministry. To ask a pastor to trust a training ministry and not involve that pastor and ask him to send his people is in some ways, if we're not careful, a slap in the face. And so involving area pastors, even if they're not—we're using the word qualified—even if they're not qualified to teach a class perhaps on church history (I'm not even sure that that's necessary), I think we need to give them some kind of a role in our training ministries. And I think they will come, if we do that. And I think they will bring their people to be trained.

**[145] Fregy John:** David, I just want to comment on that. We had a lot of discussions on who the trainers will be, and we had a lot of people who suggested, "Take only seminary graduates," but later they realized we will only use pastors to be trainers. We use other theologians, scholars, outside resource people to train the trainers, but the actual training, we always realized: it is a pastor's job to train: one ministry leader training other ministry leaders for ministry in the ministry field. It is not training *for* ministry, it's training *in* ministry.

**[146]** And then many scenarios that happened were that somebody comes and runs a seminar, and he is a superhero and the pastor is a nobody. And everyone that attended that seminar will say, "Oh, that guy

is super! Our pastor is dumb.” We don’t want that to happen, we want the pastor to come back to his original responsibility as a trainer, because his job description in Ephesians 4 is equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. So he is the equipper.

**[147]** So in our training program we say that the pastor is the equipper; he is the coach; he is the mentor; he is the trainer. So in all of our training programs at the grassroots, the pastor is actually a trainer. And the training center is in the local church. And every church can be a training center. It may not be a big Bible school; it may be small training center with ten students. But what we try to do is equip the pastor to do that job in the local church. And from one church, the church multiplies. That’s the way we are doing it in our network, and I think that’s what I see in many other church planting movements.

**[148] Jonathan Armstrong:** Fregy John, how can we learn about the structure of the Timothy Initiative? Is there a published report or something that we could learn about the structure of what you’re doing?

**[149] Fregy John:** Yes! You will see it on our website, and we have documentation we can send to you. So, we only work with the local churches actually, and the pastor is the one who runs the training. We give them training tools, and training for the pastor to run the training program at the local church. But at the end of the day we want the pastor to be the hero. We don’t want an outsider to come and do all the gimmicks, and get all the glory and go back, but we want the pastor to be the one, because the pastor is going to be with them. Especially in a village church, they only know the pastor.

**[150]** So we want the next generation of church planters trained in the local church by the pastor. Sometimes we may do it from the churches where the pastor has already been trained to be a pastor, and other pastors come and learn from him. And there are places we have started with a pastor who is not really trained. So we give him ongoing training: once every three month he comes and learns how to teach the material. But he will go back and teach his people. So that is what we are doing in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, all these Asian countries, and now we are doing it in southeast Asia, and the rest of the world. So the pastor *is* the trainer.

**[151] Gene Wilson:** Can I ask a question of clarification? Fregy, when you talk about the pastor being the trainer, I understand that you mean the local, national leader who equips the saints. But have you found that pastors are effective trainers of church planters? I mean especially where apostolic church planting is necessary, in Nepal, going up into the mountains, with pioneer-type church planting. Are pastors able to teach and model and effectively equip people for apostolic church planting?

**[152] Fregy John:** It may vary from place to place, but in most cases, in the village church, the pastor may be the only leader. He may not recognize the role of the apostle as that is categorized; he may be the only one. We look for at least three things when we take a pastor; all the pastors may not deal with it, but we look for three things. The first thing we look at is: is he able to teach? Is he able to teach through training, or from learning it himself?

**[153]** The second thing we look at is whether he has ministry experience already. We don’t want him to teach just from the book; we want him to teach from his life and ministry.

**[154]** Then the third thing is that he is interested in people, or equipping people, because if he thinks that, “I’m the only leader,”—if that is the attitude he will not be useful. But he is interested in seeing that others are trained. So once we find these three things are there in a pastor, we give further training to that pastor so that he may be able to train. Because one of the ground realities that we heard some

of our friends say that we take their leaders to the seminaries and train them, but they don't come back or they don't go back to their respective country.

**[155]** It is not only with taking them to Moody Seminary, but even with a Bible school in Delhi. Even if you take them to a Bible school in Delhi, they won't go back to the village. I have seen it. For 13 years I was part of a seminary, one of the largest seminaries. A lot of people come from the village, but they never go back.

**[156]** So if you want to see a church planting movement happening across the whole globe, we need to think about training them in their local situation, and only a pastor will be able to do it. And to add to a pastor's ability, additional helps can be given. But a pastor knows the guys in the church. It is not like a Western pastorate, where there is a senior pastor, associate pastors, and a lot of staff in the church. That is not the case. In the village church with 50 people, the pastor is everything to them. So then he is the one who is teaching and training them. It is like Paul and Timothy: taking them along. So that has a big advantage. And in most cases, in a village church, the pastor is already a church planter. He planted the church, and he's pastoring the church.

**[157]** Andy, do you want to comment on this?

**[158] Andy Pflederer:** No particular comment right now. This is very interesting, a very helpful conversation.

**[159] Fregy John:** Actually we had a similar conversation happen a few months back about accreditation. Jonathan may be able to share some of those links with our friends. We had a great conversation on accreditation, and we had another conversation on how we can merge formal and non-formal, but today our conversation is mainly between church planting initiatives and pastoral training. And we have a lot of input: recognition, mutual recognition, all those things can build a synergy. One thing I'm hearing from most of the participants is a mutual recognition or a certification or maybe the purpose to see the quality maintained so that the whole thing is not watered down, or concern for maintaining the quality in the field. Is that what I'm hearing or not?

**[160] Jonathan Armstrong:** Fregy John, very sorry, perhaps you could repeat that for us?

**[161] Fregy John:** In our conversation, one of the things that we repeatedly hear is accreditation, certification, and recognition, or maybe reputation. But all that is driving us to think about whether the quality is maintained or not. Are we maintaining the quality? Theological institutions are looking at church planting movements: in the process, is it watered down? Are they going away from the Scriptural standard? And there is a big concern, coming together, that quality can be maintained. Because in a church planting movement, the quantity is increasing, the numbers are increasing and it is going faster; and the theological institutions looking it are raising a question: are they maintaining quality? Is that the concern?

**[162] Steven Shepard:** I think it's a big concern, and one of the little things that we've done to help maintain quality in the local language to have translated—sometimes they form associations on their own in these countries, churches' associations. So right in their statutes they have a certain statement of faith that is detailed enough to include the important biblical teachings that are foundation pillars. And also then they have this in the catechism; we've used the catechism that has been translated and reviewed in the local language so that they have these documents as a plumb-line for their church planting, because it's so easy to spiral out of control. And you have pastors who should not even be pastors that are teaching something that is not gospel-centered, not Christ-centered. It's man-centered,

and it isn't helping. It would be better if the church wasn't even there! But it's there, and so it's very important to preserve sound doctrine, and I think that through the informal training, the institutes as well as these other documents that we can provide so that there is a unity in the faith with our native coworkers.

**[162] Fregy John:** Any final comments from anybody?

**[163] Steven Shepard:** Is there contact information? I would love to have contact information and emails for y'all, as we say down here in South Carolina.

**[164] Fregy John:** Matthew or Jonathan can give all the contact information of all of us who are in the panel.

**[165] Jonathan Armstrong:** Absolutely! We'll issue that in the next 48 hours or as soon as we can arrange it to get everybody's contact information to one another, and then probably in about six to eight weeks, we'll issue a transcript and a careful report of the conversation to yourselves and to others. Thank you!

**[166] David Deuel:** Excellent; thank you!

**[167] Gene Wilson:** One comment I have is that we're finding as we're working—I just came back from working with the Roma movement in Serbia, and they've actually been connecting just for the last two or three years the Roma gypsy people, and it's coming out of revival, it's one of the rare church planting movements. But they don't have the structures, they don't have the system, so we found as we helped them with training to help them form a church planting network which supports and in very simple ways brings the systems that Daniel Im was talking about of assessment and stuff, but in a very organic, simple way.

**[168]** But also that is important for the doctrinal quality control. So personally I don't think it's the role of the seminary, especially a seminary in another country, to give oversight theologically, but that church planting network can grow into a way to support the movement and the church planting. It's very close; in that church planting network there will be a few church planters who have theological education. I'm thinking of Mickey Cambovitch who is the representative for Serbia for the Roma people; he will be a planter and he actually joined us in the training. So anyhow, I wanted to bring out that idea of a church planting network which is being formed in the church planting movement that can serve for several of those purposes.

**[169] Fregy John:** We are going to wind up our time, but before that, all of us can take one minute and give a last comment, and we'll close with prayer.

**[170] David Deuel:** I'll go ahead. I just want to say that after this experience today and a previous call, I think this kind of dialogue has been necessary for a long time, but I'm not sure that many of us have found it. We have our own ministries and we enjoy them and we benefit from them, but you need a perspective of other ministries, and people doing other things, so I want to thank you for doing this.

**[171] Fregy John:** Thank you.

**[172] Daniel Yang:** For me, just speaking predominantly from a North American context, I think more and more of what you guys are doing globally is going to apply here in North America and we'll see that shift from West going to East to now East and South going to West. And so I appreciate you guys who are ministering in different countries and I look forward to learning from you even more in the future.

**[173] Daniel Lins:** Yeah, same. I'd say it's a privilege to be with you all and to be networked and to recognize that we're doing a lot of the same things and trying new things in similar ways, so I'm glad to be connected.

**[174] Fregy John:** Thank you! Andy, final comments?

**[175] Andy Pflederer:** One issue that has been alluded to, but that we didn't pick up and discuss at length is the issue of enrollment, competition for funds, and I wonder if that could be a topic we could pick up in the future. In terms of a hindrance to synergy, I think that in the world of theological education, one of the hindrances is competition for enrollment, which means competition for funds. And if we could rethink that and come up with models that move in the direction of unity, I think we would find great fruitfulness.

**[176] Fregy John:** Thank you.

**[177] Jonathan Armstrong:** It's a great idea, Andy! We can try; I'm not sure if people will come to the table, but we'll try!

**[178] Steven Shepard:** I just want to say that I've really appreciated this conversation and we're always glad and even eager for co-laboring with others, and hopefully this kind of networking might lead to some of that, that souls can be reached through the synergy of us working together for the glory of God in this world.

**[179] Daniel Im:** Yes, I feel that the conversation has been incredibly beneficial, and it's been neat to see all the different nuances and perspectives, but I feel like we all have the same heart and see the need, and I don't think any one of us has all the solutions. So I think what Fregy John talked about at the end about the role of the pastor and what effect it would have on the congregation when someone outside comes in was, I think, most insightful for me: just thinking about what that looks like. I've been leaning on the "master trainer" type of model for a bit, but I think that gave me a little bit more to begin thinking through in how we could better equip the equipper in each context.

**[180] Fregy John:** Thank you, Daniel.

**[181] Greg Seghers:** Yes, thank you for the opportunity to participate. The context in Africa I think is a little bit different than the direction that the conversation went, but I appreciate hearing and also thinking through how to make a stronger connection between the formal and informal. I'd like to keep thinking about that and how to share the resources of formal training and to begin to infiltrate the abundance of pastors that are just springing up in Africa. So I look forward to more conversations. Thank you!

**[182] Fregy John:** You're welcome. Stephen?

**[183] Stephen Langley:** I'm also very thankful to Jonathan and the Aqueduct Project for bringing us all together. I'm still baffled by the technology that enables us to have this kind of dialogue; that's awesome! Like Greg said, a common theme I heard from a lot of people was wanting to look forward to the integration of the formal and the informal theological education, and if there's any and every opportunity for future dialogue on that, I would love to be involved in a room such as this, full of more experienced and wiser men than myself. I think that the learning opportunities there are phenomenal, and I feel like we're all just caught up in something that Christ is doing. He said, "I will build my church," and he is! And it's exciting to be caught up in the midst of that, so thank you all for being involved.

**[184] Fregy John:** Thank you. Matthew, do you want to comment? Any final words?

**[185] Matthew Dereck:** I'd just like to thank everyone for coming today. It was a very engaging discussion and I'm glad that you are all willing to take out some of your time this day to contribute what this will hopefully become.

**[186] Alvin Hull:** Yeah, I'll just add a comment quickly at the end here. I think in these kinds of dialogues I feel the weight of the calling we have as trainers. These are huge issues, and it's impacting the church globally and the church planting movements; and I did come to the table today wanting to listen a lot, so this has been extremely helpful and I appreciate the time. Jonathan, thank you for getting this all organized. We want to get this piece right. This is so critical. This whole idea of merging together everything—the formal, informal, non-formal, the program the mentoring, all aspects that we've been talking about—if we can get this right, it will have a huge impact on the Kingdom. So thanks for letting us be a part of this conversation.

**[187] Fregy John:** Thank you! There were a lot of different topics we discussed. There is no single one-word answer to any of these issues. We will have to continue the conversation. Thank you all for sparing your time. One thing I realize: you have great minds, great experiences, and great learning. Let us continue the conversation and see there will definitely be a synergy coming and as somebody reminded us, it is all about the Kingdom! It is all about the Kingdom, and it is our prayer that "Your kingdom come and your will be done." It's a privilege talking with you. Have a great weekend and we'll close in a word of prayer!

[Fregy John closes the discussion in prayer.]

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