

Sharing the Gospel with Latin Americans

Harding University 15-in-1 Workshop

Sharing the Gospel with Latin Americans

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1. Context and Message

1. We must know the message of God for the world; we must know the world to whom we carry the message.
2. The gospel wears "cultural garments."
 1. Language
 2. Forms: drama, stories, colors, symbols, songs, etc.
 3. Contextualization: "In a word, then, the missionary task is to attempt to understand/interpret the message intended by the Holy Spirit and human authors of the biblical text and then to explain/communicate that message in a way that is meaningful and persuasive to respondents in the context of their culture. And this must be done with as little intrusion of the missionary's cultural predispositions as possible" (Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, p. 109)
 4. Nida's Three-Culture Model.
3. The history, culture, and religious landscape of a people are factors we must take into account as we formulate the gospel message we present to them (e.g. Paul's sermon to the Athenians, Acts 17)
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2. History

1. The Conquest: A Defining Moment
 1. 1492: Key year for Iberia and the Catholic Kings
 1. Defeat of the Moors
 2. Expulsion of the Jews
 3. Discovery of the "New World"
 2. Impulses:
 1. Declining economy: feudal system
 2. Large numbers of soldiers with no battles to fight
 3. Missionary zeal
2. *Conquistadores* and *conquistados*.
 1. *Ecomienda*
 1. *Encomendero* received large tract of land and everything on it-including the people.
 2. He was to instruct the Indians in the Christian religion and European culture in return for their tribute and labor.
 3. Led to the wholesale abuse of the Indians.
 2. *Requerimento*
 3. Bartolomé de las Casas
 1. Friar who dedicated 50 years fighting for the rights of the Indians in the Caribbean.

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1. Wrote in protest of the bloody, unjust "war" against the native populace and the most horrible enslavement "that ever men or beasts have had to bear."
 2. Spaniards would place mothers and their children together and run them through with the sword or burn the Indians alive in groups of thirteen "to the honor and reverence of our Redeemer and the twelve apostles."
 3. In 1516, fourteen Dominican priests denounced the negative influence of the *conquistadores* on their missionary activities because as quickly as they could indoctrinate the Indians the *conquistadores* were killing them.
2. Aguinis: "Every Latin American is the field of confrontation between the *conquistador* and the indigenous, between the triumphant and the conquered, between the ambitious and the resigned."
 2. The exportation and imposition of Spanish culture in the New World.
 3. Comparison of Spanish conquest and United States colonization (see chart at end)
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2. Cultural Implications
 1. Authoritarianism (centralization)
 1. Garcia-Hamilton: *Los Origenes de nuestra Cultura Autoritaria (e Improductiva)*
 2. Authoritarianism stands for a structured control of society from some "top" or "center."
 1. For the avowed purpose of unity.
 2. Based in a concern for tradition.
 3. Society (as expressed in its leadership) takes priority over the individual.
 3. Authoritarianism and Social classes (failure to integrate)
 1. Iberians, Criollos, Mestizos, Indians and Slaves
 2. Impulse for revolution but largely maintained today.
 4. Authoritarianism and Religion
 1. Intolerance: "One faith, one shepherd, one flock-unity above all else"
 1. "Dogma is not to be discussed-it can only be accepted or rejected."
 2. For many years the Spanish colonies officially excluded all "Jews, Masons, heretics, and freethinkers."
 2. In Spain, national unity was attained by military conquest of the "infidel." This war produced a kind of brotherhood between the priest and warrior.

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1. Authoritarianism and education (William Taylor, *Crisis and Hope*, p. 64):
"Education was dominated by a scholastic mindset which condemned students to rote memory and limited educational content, from primary through the university levels."
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2. Individualism expresses itself in terms of a personal reaction and revolt against the status quo.
 1. Strong appeals to liberty.
 2. A tendency to radicalism (break with tradition) in politics, religion, art.
 3. Emphasizes the dignity of the individual and personal rights.
 4. Attitudes toward law (failure to develop an internalized ethic)
 1. Council of the Indies, established in Spain in 1524 to advise the king on colonial affairs.
 2. By 1635 there were 400,000+ laws in force.
 3. Marcos Aguinis: "The law was long ago and far away." "Getting around the law is a sport." "Hecha la ley, hecha la trampa."
 5. Passive authoritarianism:
 1. Weak responsibility
 2. Protest
 3. "Don't get involved"
 4. "Salvation" vs. "solution"
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3. *Machismo* and *Hembrismo* What is it?
 1. The masculine-feminine opposition that occurs in all cultures, heightened in Latin culture, probably most dramatically in Mexico.
 1. Abelardo Villegas: "the average Mexican may regard the European as having more culture, the North American as having more money, but the Mexican as being more masculine."
 2. Expressions: the quality of a man's mistresses; the number of women he has conquered; his undisputed supremacy in the family.
 2. A strong emphasis on *machismo* produces the complementary *hembrismo*, or extreme female passivity and dependence.
 1. With this arrangement the male is also dependent on females to form the "stage" upon which he acts.
 2. Constantly motivated to be *macho*, the male also suffers insecurity faced with the need to always "perform".
 3. Family Implications
 1. Latin ideal of masculine valor was formed during the long wars of the middle ages.
 2. In the New World, *machismo* was seen in the dominance of the *conquistadores* over native women.
 1. Children of these unions were resentful of their absent, irresponsible father.

1. *Mestizo* boys wanted to be as *macho* as their father.
2. These same boys were emotionally attached to their mothers. Mother represented security but also a socially inferior class. To attain status a boy had to be as *macho* as his father.
3. These sons, emotionally attached to mother and trying to emulate father, tended toward an exaggerated form of *machismo*.
4. Revolutionary battle cry: *Hijos de la chingada--que viva México*.
2. The attitude of the *conquistador* is much like that of the young man in a better family toward the servant girl. He is biologically attracted but sociologically repelled--sexual attachment but social distance--and in this conflict many of the major tensions in Latin life arise.
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2. Religion: Traditional features of Latin Roman Catholicism.
 1. Dr. María Bermúdez lists the basic characteristics of traditional religion:
 1. Magic and superstition for the peasant.
 2. A matter of convenience for the middle class.
 3. A source of boastful display for the rich.
 4. In practice:
 1. Emphasis on the role of Mary.
 2. Preoccupation with the function of the saints.
 3. Demand for consecrated charms
 4. Almost morbid preoccupation with symbols of death.
 2. Increasingly, the better educated view traditional religion negatively. Santiago Ramírez: "Religion-an emblem, a justification, and an excuse for greed."
 3. The reaction.
 1. Anticlericalism has been stronger and more violent in Latin America than in any other place in the world.
 2. Revolutionary movements are often anti-clergy. In revolutions, the Masons played an important role. In the military cliques, there are often strong liberal tendencies.
 3. Psychological conflicts for those emotionally bound to the church while ...
 1. Unconvinced of its religious message.
 2. In conflict over its insistence to control.
 4. Result: No great personal involvement in religion.
 1. No great writers which deal with religious themes; no religious poetry.
 2. Little familiarity with the Bible, intransigence of dogma, substitution of visual forms of ritual for verbal forms of literature.

1. In ritual drama: the worshiper is an onlooker-the pageantry was never internalized-hence never sought expression in poetry or song.
2. The Religious Vacuum. Filled in part by:
 1. Pseudo-mysticism (Unamuno).
 1. Intellectual.
 2. Seeks the ecstatic joys of illumination beyond the realm of understanding.
 2. Spiritism.
 1. Masses
 2. People feel they are communicating with the souls in the other world and that guidance for this life can be found in the veiled utterances coming from beyond the grave.
 3. Pentecostalism.
 1. Ecstatic involvement in the spirit world. Possession by the Holy Spirit is more appealing than contact with souls of the dead.
 2. In both spiritism and Pentecostalism the focus is on the individual.
3. Church-State.
 1. In Latin America many people have seen a tendency for the church to swallow up the state (official religions, an ecclesiastical government).
 2. In the United States we see the opposite tendency: for the state to swallow up the church.
4. Evangelicalism: Adherents exhibit some of the same tendencies as found in traditional Roman Catholicism.
 1. Infallibility of denominational doctrine (authoritarianism).
 2. Individualism is found in numerous indigenous denominations dominated by a "strong man."
 3. Evangelicals seem "foreign" to Catholics:
 1. Foreign architecture
 2. Interiors of churches are plain
 3. Services remind one more of the classroom than a worship period
 4. Catholics are often impressed with Evangelicals on these points:
 1. The centrality of Christ in evangelical teaching and worship
 2. The focus on the interior religious experience rather than on exterior forms or symbols of worship.
 3. The priority of faith over works and of love over law.
 4. These very features are themselves part of the Latin reaction against institutionalized authoritarianism.
 5. Religion and Machismo
 6. Machismo reinforces the Latin view of God as the paterfamilias or dominant figure, demanding obedience and carrying out judgment. For many, the notion that "God is love" has been a life-transforming revelation.
 7. The figure of Christ has been a symbol of death or of a small, dependent child.

1. Mary is the symbol of life and beneficence, a mother mediatrix between needy people and a fearsome Father God--a reflection of the role of the Latin mother as intercessor between her children and their stern father.
2. On the human level, the Roman priest fills the role of the "third sex."
 1. Celibacy communicates that sex is less than the divine ideal.
 2. The priest's garment is interpreted as symbolic of transvestism--religion tends to be identified with the feminine role.
3. The dominant symbol is Mary--the greatest appeal of religion is to women.
4. Latin American men tend to be strongly anti-clerical.
5. The *hembrismo* expresses itself in Roman Catholic forms. The woman is to emulate the Virgin: object of beauty, life, tenderness; inviolate, perpetually a virgin (virtuous), sinlessly immaculate. Celibacy of the priesthood demonstrates that marriage is a kind of infidelity to the female deity, a betrayal of loyalty. (Celibacy occurs primarily in those religions in which female deities are dominant).
6. For the laity, the particular Virgin of the land becomes the symbol for that country (she is the "earth mother"). Each country has its Virgin and often carry these images to war.
7. In Latin America one almost inevitably speaks of *la religión de mi madre*. (While in North America we speak of "the faith of our fathers").
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2. Images of Christ
 1. The Spanish Christ
 1. MacKay: "The sword and cross formed an offensive alliance ..."
 2. Christ of the conquerors who "slay Indians right and left, rob their lands, raped their women, and transform those who survive the slaughter into slaves ..."
 3. Barbieri: "the spirit of the sword was stronger and more powerful than the spirit of the cross."
 4. Missionaries labored to make their Christ acceptable ... "but in their zeal to adapt to the Indian culture they were unable to avoid the emergence of religious syncretism."
 2. The Image Christ
 1. It was much easier to display a statue than elucidate a dogma ... once again, religious syncretism manifested itself.
 2. Here Christ became wood or stone, canvas or paper ...
 3. He is "nativity Christ," a helpless infant, silent and tiny.
 4. "The oppressed seek the mother, Mary, and not her son, Jesus."
 5. Another prevalent image is that of the suffering Christ. The image Christ is a vanquished Christ.
 3. The Christ of the Minorities
 1. The rich and powerful ... believe in the image Christ ... while maintaining total silence in the face of suffering ...

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1. "It is quite easy to tolerate a Jesus of Nazareth who does not irritate his worshipers by calling attention to their sins ... He is reduced to impotence in the safety of the convent or monastery."
2. The Christ of Protestantism
 1. *Sola Scriptura*; Salvation centered in Christ; tendency to individualism (liberty of conscience, all vocations are sacred, a variety of Protestant groups)
 2. Socio-political effects.
3. The Christ of the New Theology
 1. ...the political left of Latin America.
 2. The Christ they proclaim is anthropological and sociological ... expert in foreign and domestic politics, revolutionary theoretician, and social reformer.
 3. The theology of this Christ ... is anthropocentric.
4. HOPE: "There is a return to the reading of the Bible in various ecclesiastical communities ... In response to the quest for faith, the majestic figure of the historical, living, and true Christ is bound to stand forth from its sacred pages."
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2. A Message for Latin America
 1. Marginalized Jesus
 2. Predominant images that focus on a conquered, stilled, silent Jesus.
 3. Nativity Jesus
 4. Crucified Jesus
 5. Historically Jesus is "rejected by men but exalted by God" (Acts 2:23-24; 4:8-12; 1 Pet. 2:4, 7; etc).
 6. Theological rejection of Jesus (see Drawing)
 7. The humanity of Jesus is rejected for the "maximum human representative of God," i.e. the Pope.
 8. The divinity of Jesus is rejected as the "Queen of Heaven" (Mary) sits on the throne.
 9. Mediatrix (based on John 2:1-11)
 10. Co-redemptrix (based on Luke 2:33-35)
 11. "Mother of God" (based on Matt. 1:23)
 12. Messages to re-center Jesus.
 13. Jesus identifies with and liberates the oppressed, persecuted, impoverished.
 14. The struggle for identity in Latin America. Identity grounded in God.
 15. Mary in relationship to Jesus (What the authoritative Word of God teaches about Mary)
 16. Mary is contingent, Jesus is eternal.
 17. Col. 1:15-20
 18. John 1:1; 8:58

1. Mary gave birth to his human form, she did not give birth to his divine nature. She is the mother of Jesus, not the mother of God.
2. Mary was chosen for her purity and devotion to be the mother of Jesus. Her devotion to God also led her to fulfill her conjugal and maternal duties.
 1. She was Joseph's wife.
 1. Matt. 1:18-19.
 2. Matt. 1:25
 3. Luke 2:7. Jesus is her "firstborn," not her "only begotten" son.
 2. As exemplary mother, she bore offspring.
 1. Matt. 12:46-47
 2. Matt. 13:55-56
 3. Gal. 1:19, etc.
 4. The Roman Catholic teaching that these "brothers" were close relatives outside the nuclear family is untenable. The *koine* Greek is precise enough to define other close blood relations (e.g. Luke 1:36, 58 (*suggenes*=cousin); 1 Tim. 5:4; Col. 4:10).
3. Mary was submissive to the Lordship of Jesus
 1. The episode at the wedding at Cana is used to show Mary's dominance of Jesus. Can this isolated incidence be used to show that Jesus was controlled by his mother? (John 2:1-11)
 1. Luke 2:47-52.
 2. Mark 3:31-35 (and parallel passages)
 3. John 19:25-27.
 2. Mary is numbered among the disciples (Acts 1:14).
 1. She does not appear to be in charge or venerated in some special way.
 2. It may be assumed that she was obedient to the gospel preached on the day of Pentecost but no mention is made of her in Scripture beyond this point. That is, there is NO mention of Mary in the church whatsoever.
 3. She is never the subject of sermons or worship in the church.
 3. Mary is dishonored by shifting undue attention to her and from her Lord.
 4. Messages to re-center Jesus.
2. The Pope as "Vicar of Christ"--Christ's representative on the earth.
 1. Key questions.
 1. Does Jesus require an earthly representative?
 2. Can a mere mortal represent the Son of God?
 3. Who will select such a man? Other mere mortals?
 4. What authority will such a man exercise?

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1. Successor of Peter? Matt. 16:16-18
 2. Messages to re-center Jesus.
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2. Current Challenges in Latin America
 1. Leadership
 1. Missionaries should be aware of their personal leadership style.
 1. Shawchuck, *How to be a More Effective Church Leader*
 2. In short, be aware of our own leadership style and cultural baggage.
 2. Survey of leadership in the N. T.
 1. Authoritarian, hierarchical models predominated in the first century (Matt. 20:25-28).
 2. Jesus called for leaders "among" rather than "over." Servant model.
 3. "Elder" model of ancient Jewish communities and the synagogue was used in the N.T. church. Most congregations of a mixed composition and the nucleus (elders) was probably Jewish.
 4. Application of this model was a challenge in Ephesus (Acts 20; 1 & 2 Timothy) and on Crete (Titus).
 3. How is leadership defined in the host culture?
 1. Requires that the missionary be a student of the host culture.
 2. Key Questions:
 1. What is the style of the ideal leader in this culture? (Autocratic or democratic; alone or in groups?)
 2. How do people become leaders in this culture? (Born or made?)
 3. What role will the missionary play as leader?
 4. How will the missionary interact with, identify, and develop future leaders?
 4. Latin America
 1. *Caudillismo*: strong, charismatic leader.
 1. A strong hand required to bring order to the chaos.
 2. Very directive, decisive, strong.
 3. Frees others from responsibility and fear of failure.
 4. Authoritarian.
 5. Ideal is an autocrat who is a benevolent dictator: Castro.
 2. Leaders are born, not made.
 1. From childhood, bands of individuals recognize some members as leaders.
 2. The key dynamic is the relationship between leader and followers.
 3. While we recognize leaders based on experience and "expertness," these qualities take a back seat to friendship in Latin America.

1. W. Philip Thornton, "The Cultural Key to Developing Strong Leaders," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 84 (July 1984).
 1. Leadership must be culturally appropriate in style and characteristics.
 2. Any strategy that places missionaries in key positions of leadership and later seeks to transfer that leadership to national hands is not one that will attract strong, natural leaders."
 3. Leadership must be in line with the target audience at the point of social status.
 4. It is possible to structure against church growth by structuring against the attraction of and multiplication of natural leaders. If the church structure does not offer a sufficient number of leadership positions, potential leaders will go elsewhere.
2. Such concerns determine our "entry" point in the culture and often define the challenge for Christian leadership.
3. A Diachronic Approach to Appropriate Leadership
 1. Tannenbaum-Schmidt continuum of decision-making (see chart)
 2. Appropriate leader styles is a function of several factors.
 1. Culture
 2. Ability and willingness of the group
 3. Biblical knowledge
 4. Spiritual maturity
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2. Development Ministries in response to poverty
 1. Material Crises
 2. Population Explosion (Latin American population is growing at a rate 3 times that of the U.S. This is uneven, but on average Latin American population will double in 36 years)
 1. Less food to eat (119 children die daily in Peru from malnutrition)
 2. Less formal education (of 1,460 children only 529 will make it through the first grade; 27 will finish high school; and 1 will finish university).
 3. Less housing (in some major cities nearly half the population lives in slums)
 4. Family disintegration (7% of population are street children-Brazil alone has 16 million "street kids.")
 3. Urbanization
 1. Colonial heritage (centralized)
 2. Function of economics
 1. 1995: 70% of Latin Americas live in the cities (Uruguay-90%; Argentina-87%; lowest is Guatemala-38%).
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1. Family
 1. Family disintegration:
 1. Some causes: rural emigration, poverty, unemployment.
 2. Some results: 35 million street children.
 2. Social Stratification in Latin America
 1. Social classes-an estimate:
 1. Upper class: 2%
 2. Middle class: 18%
 3. Lower class: 80%
 2. Those who rise into the middle class quickly take on the values of the upper class and turn their back on the lower class.
 3. Indians find social mobilization almost impossible.
 3. *Machismo/Hembrismo*
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2. Latin Americans in the U.S.
 1. 25,000,000 Hispanics in the U.S. (10%) of the population.
 2. Growing at a rate 3x our population.
 3. Year 2005 will be the largest minority group in the U.S. Hispanic children are now the most numerous of all minority groups of children in the U.S.
 4. The second largest Hispanic population in the northern hemisphere (after Mexico city) is Los Angeles, CA (approximately 6,000,000?)

Colonization-United States Conquest-Latin America

Pilgrims fleeing religious intolerance Conquerors bringing religious authority
Came to colonize and build Came to conquer and exploit(1)
Found joy in work Loathed work-used slave labor
Wrote charters with laws (self-governing) 400,000 laws imposed by Spain(2)
Decisions for religious pluralism Conformity to Catholicism imposed(3)
Separation of church and state State religion
Tendency of state to swallow up church Tendency of church to swallow up state
Christianity as religion Christianity as culture
Revolted against England for freedom Exchanged European rulers for locals(4)
Merchant class developed Dependent on Spain
Wilderness opened for settlement Land remained in the hands of an oligarchy
"Land of possibility" for immigrants Possibilities denied-many return to Europe
Ambition Resignation
"Can do" attitude Fatalism
Unique identity Searching for sense of identity

NOTES:

(1) Hernán Cortez (*Conquistador*): "I came for gold, not to till the soil like a peasant." Francisco Pizarro (*Conquistador*): "I have not come to evangelize them but to take their gold away."

(2) From the *gaucho* Martin Fierro: "The law is like the knife, it does not cut the one holding the handle."

(3) The *requerimento* was a kind of outdoor theological argument to be read by the Spanish to the "pagans" before charging in attack. It was read in Spanish, combined biblical passages with royal decrees, and affirmed that all the lands and the people conquered now belonged to the emperors of Spain or Brazil. In essence it summarized the Christian faith and demanded submission to the king and the Catholic faith.

(4) Arno Enns, *Man, Milieu, and Mission in Argentina*, p. 49. "The revolutions of independence in Latin American countries were not genuine changes of governmental institutions, but the exchange of the colonial Spanish ruling elite for an indigenous creole elite who preserved the semi-feudal structures of the government and society. The South American colonies threw off the chains of European domination, but the revolution of broad participation in the governmental and economic life of the nation by the average citizen was not included."