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Serving in the Holy Spirit at Iglesia Ministerial Cristiana

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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

SERVING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT AT IGLESIA MINISTERIAL CRISTIANA

Written by

OTONIEL LUMBÍ

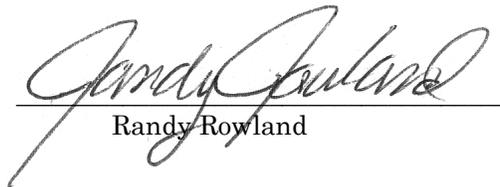
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requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:


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SERVING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT AT IGLESIA MINISTERIAL CRISTIANA

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

OTONIEL LUMBÍ
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ABSTRACT

Serving in the Holy Spirit at Iglesia Ministerial Cristiana

Otoniel Lumbí

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2019

Iglesia Ministerial Cristiana (in English, Ministerial Christian Church) is going through a ministry challenge. Its congregants are not serving efficiently within the local church as part of being the Church as the Body of Christ. Each member possesses talents and spiritual gifts, but they do not apply them for the benefit of their brothers and sisters as written in 1 Corinthians 12:7 which states, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

This project is divided into several parts. Part One explains the background of the church and its community. Part Two addresses the theological challenge that the church has in serving each other and its neighbors. Part Three contains an action plan for the church to adopt a spirit of service. The implementation process chapter concentrates on the pilot project focus group. Members will be assigned duties and encouraged to put their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice in the church.

The purpose of this project is for the church to learn and to be encouraged to take on a position or tasks in order to practice applying their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church. The goal is for the congregation to experience a spirit of service and to apply its natural talents and spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church and its wider community.

Content Reader: Randy L. Rowland

Words: 227

To my parents Denis and María Lumbí and sister Acsa Lumbí Perez, who love God with all their being and who have encouraged me in the process of finishing this doctoral project

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I am grateful for the participants in this project who took it seriously and showed excitement in helping me complete it.

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PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Iglesia Ministerial Cristiana (IMC) has been going through some ministry challenges for a while, but these issues have become larger recently, especially among the leadership. Every church goes through challenges; however, if they are not properly addressed, they can harm the church and prevent it from being the church God has called it to be in Christ. IMC is a Hispanic non-denominational church with a Pentecostal background in west Phoenix, Arizona. IMC transitioned from being a denominational Pentecostal church to an independent Pentecostal church. Currently its primary ministry challenge is a lack of willing service among its congregants.

This problem was chosen for the focus of this project because the congregation needs to grow in Christlike service in order to fulfill its mission. Moreover, learning about this topic will equip me to help other churches, especially Hispanic churches which are experiencing similar challenges. Each member of the church has natural talents and spiritual gifts, but they are not applying them effectively to minister to their fellow brothers and sisters in the church. To address this challenge, I will give four modular teachings on being filled with the Holy Spirit. These will teach and encourage the church to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts. A focus group will be used for the pilot project. The results from that test group will be evaluated and the process will be adjusted based on new findings before delivering the series to the whole congregation. The end goal is for the congregation to cultivate a spirit of service through the application of their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church.

Chapter one examines the church in different scopes such as its history, demographics, ministry vision and goals, cultural and sub-cultural influences (e.g.

postmodern thought and ethnic diversity), core values, and theological convictions.

Briefly, IMC started in the house of its pastor with only his family in attendance. After a month, another family joined to help found this church. Once a third family joined, the church needed a new space in which to hold services. They rented a church from an established congregation but could not have Sunday school due to the other church's service time. So they had Sunday school at a park near the church for the first month. Then they rented another church that let them have more services during the week. In 2009, seven years after its inception, IMC was able to purchase a property of its own. This is where the church has resided for a decade.

The church originally focused on ministering in south Phoenix, but the purchase of the new property shifted its community. IMC is in a suburban area of west Phoenix in which many residents live at or below the poverty line. This area is unique in that several generations live there and many families share a multi-generational home. The Hispanic ethnicity is predominant, with both English and Spanish spoken in the area.

Chapter two evaluates several books and articles that may be useful in cultivating a spirit of service in the congregation. The literature chosen examines service in the congregation, the effective use of natural talents and spirituals gifts, and the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit within the church. The main message is for each member of IMC to become a servant of Jesus first so that his or her gifts will build up and minister to others.

Consumerism has affected the Church as a whole, including IMC. One effect of this influence has been that the church's leadership approaches management with a business mindset. However, in Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus clearly states that there is a

difference between the world's system of leadership and his: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."¹ Worldly leaders want those under them to serve them; however, Jesus' model of servant leadership requires those who are stationed above to serve those that are below them in position. Jesus gave this as an example for his Church to follow.

Chapter three elaborates on the previous chapter regarding biblical leadership, the use of natural talents and spiritual gifts, and how to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit. To serve the local church in the ways that Jesus served, it is necessary to be filled with the Holy Spirit like he was at his baptism (Mt 3:16). Being filled with the Holy Spirit will help prevent worldly influences from affecting believers. They will therefore be led by the Holy Spirit to lead like Jesus did in the use of their natural talents and spiritual gifts.

Chapter four outlines a ministry plan that introduces and supports the cultivation of a spirit of service in the congregation by putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice at IMC. First, four modular teachings on being filled with the Holy Spirit will be given to a pilot project group during Sunday school. The participants in the pilot project will learn, be encouraged, and then be given a task to put their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice. I will be the principal presenter and facilitator.

¹ All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version Bible, unless otherwise noted.

In the four modular teachings, the focus will be on encouraging the participants to have an encounter with God again if they have not recently had one, in order to deepen their spiritual lives with God. In doing so, they will be living in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Living in the flesh hinders people from being selfless and from putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts to use for the edification of others: “Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God (Rom 8:5-8).” Ultimately the experience is not about them, but about God fulfilling his purposes for the edification of the Church, which is his body, the Body of Christ.

In the modular teachings, the participants will have an opportunity to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts. They will have the Bible as their main resource but will also be provided with other books that address living in the Spirit. After the pilot group has received their modular teachings and have chosen what to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church, there will be an evaluation to see how to best implement this training and practice among the whole church. The goal is for the whole church to receive the modular teachings and to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church by receiving one or more tasks that will serve others. The whole church will experiment in cultivating a spirit of service with their natural talents and spiritual gifts.

Chapter five outlines the implementation of the doctoral project. Before beginning, I gathered all necessary materials in order to run the pilot group. On the last day of the modular teachings, the pilot group was evaluated on the modular teaching application of their natural talents and spiritual gifts within the church. The results were used to inform and modify the implementation among the whole congregation. I launched this project in January of 2019. In April I had all the books and handouts needed to start with my project; these materials were related to the use of natural talents and spiritual gifts in the Church. I then promoted it in the church with those who wish to be part of something special that would help the church fulfill its mission as described in Scripture specifically in cultivating a spirit of Christlike service. There was an invitation announced to the whole church each Sunday for a month (May), and then approximately ten to fifteen participants joined the focus group. Then the focus group began in June. I gave the modular teachings to the focus group in our church building. After one month of training, the results (feedbacks) were analyzed to modify the modular teachings, so to implement them with the whole congregation. This project will launch a new vision for the church starting in 2020: The whole congregation will experiment what the pilot project went through; they will be equipped spiritually (filled with the Holy Spirit) and will receive the modified modular teachings to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts at IMC and its community.

CHAPTER 1:

COMMUNITY AND CHURCH CONTEXT

This chapter highlights the ministry and community background of Iglesia Ministerial Cristiana in Phoenix, Arizona. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2010 Arizona had a population of 6,392,017. The city of Phoenix is the capital of Arizona and at that time, it had a population of 1,445,632. The church is in west Phoenix with area code 85043 and its population is 30,560.¹ The church is in a suburban neighborhood in Phoenix. Most of the neighbors around the church are Hispanic and middle-aged.

IMC is a Hispanic non-denominational church with a Pentecostal background. The church was founded sixteen years ago by my father and me. It began with our family and grew until we needed to purchase our own building. IMC was initially part of the Pentecostal denomination but it is now non-denominational. Our leadership felt frustrated and inhibited by the rules that our church needed to uphold and support within the denomination. The supervisors restricted us from being able to expand our vision for the church. Since we did not get the support we wanted, we left and started working

¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, “United States Census Bureau: American Fact Finder,” accessed November 27, 2018, https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk.

independently. Our goal was to grow and help the church leadership and congregation to use their natural talents and spiritual gifts that God gave them to edify others.

My role in the church is to support the senior pastor in pursuing our vision and to help the leadership and church in general to effectively put in practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts. I am the associate pastor and I focus on teaching Sunday school to the adults. Sporadically I give discipleship teachings to the general congregation and to the youth. Services are held in Spanish with some worship songs in English. The kids and youth are taught the Bible in English and Spanish. There are two general services held in the church on Thursday and Sunday mornings. On Tuesday there are Bibles studies in a home; this currently serves as an outreach as well since members can invite friends to attend.

There are about seventy members in total. IMC's membership is generally Hispanic (mostly Mexican), first to fourth generation Americans, and most have little formal education. Most members are blue collar workers living in poverty. There is a significant machismo influence. Members are family oriented and their households are often divided due to different world views and preferred languages. Some are undocumented while others are U.S. citizens. Most households contain four to eight family members.

Families within the church are comprised of individuals who subscribe to either modern or post-modern ideologies. The clash between these two worldviews and cultures has caused disunity in the church. Those who uphold the views of modern thought view those who prefer post-modern ideology as rebels, while post-moderns view moderns as out of date and ill-informed. Church members who are shaped by modern ideology also

tend to also believe that God exists, that his purpose for humanity is salvation through Jesus Christ, that the Bible is the Word of God, and tend to center their preaching and teaching on sanctification with undertones of guilt. They use reason, logic and other proofs of the person and work of Jesus. Their communication appeals mostly to the mind or intellect. On the other hand, post-modern members of the church focus more on personal authenticity, demonstrating the nature of the Gospel by living it with integrity and building loving and accepting community groups. They tend to favor experiences and stories which demonstrate that faith matters in real life and like to focus on how God works today. They emphasize the application of the Word rather than knowledge about it.

Generation X, millennials, and boomers tend to favor either modern or post-modern thought. Post-modernism is more dominant among younger generations compared to baby boomers. Boomers are fewer in number but retain influence on the church culture since they tend to be in leadership roles such as teaching, parenting, being grandparents and owning businesses. However, some boomers are drawn in by post-modern ideologies through their exposure to traditional and social media outlets and their interactions with their children, grandchildren, and students.

The ministry challenge therefore is to connect with both audiences, modern and post-modern. Pastors and preachers must communicate both information about the Bible and about its application in daily life. In other words, the congregation should learn that having knowledge is potentially powerful, but applying that knowledge in life is true power. The responsibility of the Church is to keep the attention of moderns and post-moderns, teaching everyone to apply the Word better and to live like Christians from the Bible.

Currently, the church community's demographics are nearly identical to what they were sixteen years ago when IMC was founded. Community members are generally friendly to newcomers, religious but not devoted, and mostly Roman Catholic in background though not in practice. There are many single mothers and teenagers raising children. The culture of the area is family oriented, values hard work, and is especially welcoming to those with similar backgrounds and places of origin. Birth places can cause both unity among those who share them or division among those who have rivalries which stem from their cities or states of origin. There is a clear and common sense of machismo, that is, of the male being a strong authoritative figure in the family. Moreover, the community is generally impoverished; some live in trailers and many do not own a car.

The first generation of immigrants from Mexico typically have only a little education, perhaps having finished up to sixth grade. The second generation, their children, have more education than their parents. Only a few attend college since their parents do not push them to study or pursue a career. It is commonplace for a girl to leave home around fifteen years old to live with her boyfriend and his immediate family. Since the Hispanic culture generally holds traditional views about marriage, the parents of the girl often encourage them to get married. Many get married young and start families right away. Often around age twenty, the young parents move into a trailer or apartment.

Since most of the first- and second-generation immigrants lack education, they typically work on their own in roles like landscaping or auto mechanics, or in positions where they make minimum wage like dishwashing or construction. However, other members of the second generation have better jobs since they know English well and can

find employment in customer service and call centers. Undocumented immigrants have the most challenges in finding gainful employment since they do not have papers to work legally in the U.S. Therefore, they live in poverty. Due to being in poverty, second generation families divide or separate because of family economic issues; fighting about money is one of the main reasons why people get divorced according to some studies.² The first generation rarely separates for this reason; they came from Mexico and most experienced even more severe poverty prior to immigrating. Moreover, many of the young people in the neighborhood get caught up in gangs and drugs due not having a clear path to higher education or gainful employment. Some become delinquents, drug users, and alcoholics.

As stated above, many first-generation immigrants in IMC and the neighborhood are undocumented. For years, they feared that the Sheriff of the County would arrest and deport them from their house, work, or while they were driving their car. This fear was transmitted to their children. The parents believed that they might be deported at any point and would not see their family again. The children also were living with this fear every day believing that perhaps when they arrived home from school, the police would have taken their parents away forever. For these reasons, there are many internal (e.g. culture shock) and external (e.g. persecution from the law, poverty) issues within the community that IMC is trying to reach for Christ.

Even though years have passed since the Hispanic community was being persecuted by the Sheriff, it left an emotional trauma in the families. This is evident when

² Shellie Warren, "10 Most Common Reasons for Divorce," accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.marriage.com/advice/divorce/10-most-common-reasons-for-divorce/>.

speaking with them and seeing how they still live in fear; moreover, there is resentment towards the law and those in authority due to this emotional trauma. Specifically, the Sheriff and his staff were accused of violating the law in Arizona in the following ways: They got convicted (a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail) for breaking the law by violating the rights of Latinos; they did this by doing racial profiling by stopping people whom they believed were here in the U.S. illegally; therefore, they turned them in to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).³ This was, however, the outcome that most outraged the Hispanic community: “In a brief statement released late Friday evening [from the White House . . . ‘Throughout his time as sheriff . . . is now 85 years old, and after more than 50 years of admirable service to our nation, he is (a) worthy candidate for a Presidential pardon.’”⁴ Things like this are still going on today due to the policies of the administration of the President such as the Zero Tolerance Immigration Policy stated recently: “. . . [The] administration has introduced a ‘zero-tolerance’ policy calling for the prosecution of all individuals who illegally enter the United States. This policy has the effect of separating parents from their children when they enter the country together, because parents are referred for prosecution and the children are placed in the custody of a sponsor, such as a relative or foster home, or held in a shelter.”⁵

³ Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Maggie Haberman, “Trump Pardons Joe Arpaio, who became Face of Crackdown on Illegal Immigration,” *The New York Times*, August 25, 2017, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/us/politics/joe-arpaio-trump-pardon-sheriff-arizona.html>.

⁴ Kevin Liptak, Daniella Diaz, and Sophie Tatum, “Trump Pardons Former Sheriff Joe Arpaio,” *CNN*, August 25, 2017, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/25/politics/sheriff-joe-arpaio-donald-trump-pardon/index.html>.

The outcome of this policy has been disastrous. For example, there have been multiple incidents of those in authority raping minors in the shelters that the President has mandated for the separation of families due to the parents coming to the U.S. illegally. Many of these tragedies have occurred in Arizona. Someone working at Southwest Key (facility for migrant children) has been charged with several sex offenses against immigrant boys (ages 15-17) in Mesa, Arizona.⁶ *The Nation* reported another horrific incident that occurred because of the Zero Tolerance Immigration Policy: “A 6-year-old girl who was separated from her mother under the . . . administration's zero-tolerance border policy was sexually abused by another child at a facility for migrant children run by Southwest Key, according to a form provided by the child's family. As first reported by *The Nation*, the child was assaulted twice during her stay at Casa Glendale in the Phoenix area.”⁷ Finally, the report below is yet another example of what happened in one of these shelters: “Earlier this month, a Southwest Key detention facility worker was arrested for allegedly sexually abusing a 14-year-old girl in his care at a center in Arizona. The Phoenix Police Department said the 14-year-old's roommate, who is also a

⁵ Miriam Valverde, “What You Need to Know about the Trump Administration’s Zero-Tolerance Immigration Policy,” *Politifact*, June 6, 2018, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2018/jun/06/what-you-need-know-about-trump-administrations-zer/>.

⁶ Topher Sanders and Michael Grabell, “Worker Charged with Sexually Molesting Eight Children at Immigrant Shelter,” *ProPublica*, August 2018, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/worker-charged-with-sexually-molesting-eight-children-at-immigrant-shelter>.

⁷ Dianna M. Nájuez and Mary Jo Pitzzi, “Report: Migrant Child Sexually Abused at Southwest Key Shelter in Phoenix,” *AZ Republic*, July 28, 2018, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/immigration/2018/07/28/reported-abuse-girl-southwest-key-migrant-shelter-stirs-backlash/854281002/>.

minor, witnessed Fernando Magaz Negrete, 32, enter their bedroom at the Southwest Key detention facility in Glendale and sexually assault the 14-year-old.”⁸

Sadly, even in the face of the physical and psychological trauma inflicted on immigrants, the White House defends the Zero Tolerance Immigration Policy. “. . . administration officials have repeatedly asserted that the shelters are safe, even fun, places for kids. But there has been increasingly intense scrutiny of the federally funded, privately run shelters after the administration separated some 3,000 children from their parents at the border and sent them to shelters and foster homes across the country.”⁹ Moreover, “these are not the first allegations to emerge of sexual abuse of children separated from their families at the border under the ‘zero tolerance’ practice. Toward the end of July, news website ProPublica reported that police had received at least 125 reports since 2014 of sex offenses at shelters housing immigrant children.”¹⁰ Clearly the Hispanic community has been deeply affected by these incidents. Likely more have occurred but have not been reported due to a widespread mistrust and fear of the authorities. Nearly everyone in the Hispanic community is associated directly or indirectly with this suffering. It is not easy to evangelize and minister to both the Hispanic people that have been oppressed by the government system and those who support it.

⁸ Chantal Da Silva, “Three Separated Children Have Been Sexually Abused at U.S. Shelters, El Salvador Says,” *Newsweek*, August 2018, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/three-separated-children-have-been-sexually-abused-us-shelters-el-salvador-1098943>.

⁹ Sanders and Grabell, “Worker Charged With Sexually Molesting Eight Children at Immigrant Shelter,” <https://www.propublica.org/article/worker-charged-with-sexually-molesting-eight-children-at-immigrant-shelter>.

¹⁰ Da Silva, “Three Separated Children have been Sexually Abused at U.S. Shelters, El Salvador says,” <https://www.newsweek.com/three-separated-children-have-been-sexually-abused-us-shelters-el-salvador-1098943>.

The church exists to support its community and to minister everyone whether they are documented, undocumented, black, white, have been victimized or have been on the side of the oppressor. It is the mission of the church to preach to all humanity: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .’” (Mt 28:18-19). This task is not easy but it provides hope for every person. The message for IMC’s community is to forgive and love the authorities and all people as stated in Scripture: “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God” (Rom 13:1). This is God’s way of ministering internal healing and reconciliation, even though there is suffering and injustice going on.

The lead pastor and I have had some trouble connecting with the community around the church even though we have been in the area for nine years. Our tradition is evangelical with an emphasis on the study of Scripture. The audience we are trying to reach is Roman Catholic. They are generally not open to Protestant Christians or any other religion that is not Roman Catholic. They feel that evangelicals want to take their saints or statues away. Many are religious but are not devoted followers of Jesus. They barely attend Catholic church, but feel an extreme sense of loyalty to it nonetheless. There is apathy and mistrust toward the Protestant Christian community. In fact, if people within their families convert to Protestantism, they are seen as having broken their allegiance to their religion and to the family.

In the forward of *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* by Justo L. González, Virgilio P. Elizondo explains the differences in dynamics between the Anglo-American and Hispanic cultures toward Christian denominations:

Let me illustrate what I am trying to say. When an Anglo-American changes from one confessional affiliation to another, there is no great traumatic break in family ties. Changing churches is part of U.S. culture! No great thing. Within Anglo-American culture, one “converts” from one Christian denomination to another, or even from the Christian religion to another religion, within the same culture and hence without any great fuss. You don’t have to abandon U.S. culture in order to change to another religion. This is not so amongst Hispanics. Often the change from Catholics to another denomination totally fragments the family and the relatives. It is a traumatic break that brings about much suffering to all the parties involved. In the former case (United States), one changes religions without abandoning one’s cultural heritage, while in the latter case, conversion demands a total break with one’s culture. In the former, one continues to be a member of one’s people, while in the latter, one has to abandon and betray one’s people to convert to the religion and the culture of the other!¹¹

When we reach out and invite Roman Catholics to our church, they think that we are trying to divide their family. Some have insulted Christians because of this division. I have seen that when someone in the family converts to Protestant Christianity, the family kicks them out of the home and refuses to let them attend family gatherings. They do not want them to influence the rest of the family. These cultural Catholics are not well informed about the Bible and only know the traditions because all their family members have been Roman Catholics. Many are converted due a lack of foundation in what they believe, only in what they have been taught by tradition through their parents.

Additionally, it is intriguing to note the dynamics in the households of the community. Two or three generations may live in one home but live very differently. The education and preferred languages are two key factors. The first generation typically only

¹¹ Justo González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 14-15.

speaks Spanish. The second generation often speaks both languages but prefers English. Some children do not want to speak Spanish because they see it as inferior to English. The parents agree, so they do not motivate them to be proficient in both. The parents may think like this because of their lack of education, when in fact it is very useful to know multiple languages. Being bilingual provides avenues to more opportunities, communities, and people and can be especially helpful in sharing the gospel. Spanish is important to know, especially for those living in the U.S., according to Tanisha Love Ramirez and Roque Planas who write, “Spanish is the second-most spoken language in the United States, after English, and is the dominant language in many of our neighboring countries in the Western.”¹² Moreover, they explain the opportunities that people will have if they know Spanish along with English including having the upper hand in competitive jobs, the ability to work overseas and access to make new friends.¹³

Even though the community I serve is united in their identity as Hispanics, their thought patterns are totally different, varying mostly between modern and post-modern. The first generation is centered on tradition, while the second generation sees truth as mostly relative and believes that authority lies with the individual. Because of these two clashing thought processes, the household is divided. The first generation wants to teach their children in the ways that they were raised in Mexico, while their children are experiencing a completely different culture in the U.S. The media, laws, and cultural interactions in America have influenced the second generation significantly. The first

¹² Tanisha Love Ramirez and Roque Planas, “15 Reasons Every American Should Learn Spanish: Spanish is Kind of, Sort of Everything,” *Huffington Post*, August 2018, accessed November 28, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tk-reasons-ever-american-should-learn-spanish_us_55d773b5e4b08cd3359c1292.

¹³ *Ibid.*

generation parents have trouble understanding this and therefore view their children as being rebellious. The second-generation children get frustrated because they are viewed as rebellious simply because their way of thinking is different from that of their parents.

Young teens often start thinking that the solution is to leave the house. Many girls move in with boyfriends, thinking that they will find peace in the other house; however, they do not understand that the parents of the boyfriends are similar to their own. In the beginning these girls try to adapt but typically end up living with the same frustrations as before. The young couples then go to live on their own and the relationships may or may not last. This scenario is repeated often; few second generation children stay with their parents until they finish college or get married. Of course, each family is unique, but this is a common pattern in the community and even in the church. Sometimes culture and tradition influence believers more than what the church teaches about the Word of God. My church reflects this reality.

IMC has been going through some ministry challenges for a while, but certain problems have grown recently and need to be addressed. The primary ministry challenge is getting the congregation to serve efficiently. I have chosen this topic for this project because it will help disciple the congregation in a key aspect of following Jesus; moreover, in learning about this topic I will understand how to help other churches which experience similar issues. Each member of IMC is filled with natural talents and spiritual gifts but do not apply them with their fellow brothers and sisters in the church as is written in Scripture. This project's process will begin with me giving four modular teachings about putting into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts. Then, the church will be encouraged to take on a position or tasks in the church which allow them

to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts. A pilot focus group will be run first and then evaluated in order to learn how to give it to the whole congregation. The end goal is for the congregation to cultivate a spirit of service in regard to their natural talents and spiritual gifts.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines a variety of literature that will help the church in serving successfully by being filled with the Holy Spirit. The major points of focus are service within the congregation, the effective use of natural talents and spiritual gifts, and how to live lives filled with the Holy Spirit. The goal is for each person to be a servant of Jesus first so that their natural talents and spiritual gifts will then benefit others.

***Latino Pentecostal Identity* by Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh**

In her book *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society*, Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh addresses an often-neglected topic in the Christian academic world. There are very few Latino scholars in the field of theology and even fewer who write about Latino Pentecostals. Walsh states that out of 37 million Latinos in the United States, about five million of them are Pentecostals and the number is growing every day. She explains that many of them have Catholic roots. Those who become Pentecostals start a generational legacy of being Pentecostal; this has happened for one hundred years

already.¹ Latino Pentecostals have been influenced by evangelical Christianity and the American evangelical subculture.²

Walsh explores various aspects of Latino Pentecostals' identities including, as the subtitle states, their evangelical faith, self, and society. In other words, the book explores Latino Pentecostals' self-image and how they are viewed in society. Her research was mainly gathered by interviewing Pentecostal Latinos in the U.S. She includes information from members of the Assemblies of God, Victory Outreach, and the Vineyard. These groups' headquarters are in the U.S., but their membership and denomination have spread internationally. Each of these denominations has formed a Latino Pentecostal identity. They all approach their Latino Pentecostal identity differently and have changed through the years. Sánchez finds that even though they have a shared identity, their vision and the people they are trying to reach are different.

When Sánchez discusses the Latino Pentecostal identity in the Assemblies of God, she focuses on the Latin American Bible Institute (LABI) because the Latino Pentecostal identity has its roots there. LABI started in San Diego with a vision of doing ministry in Latino communities by following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Moreover the institution, being under the umbrella of the Assemblies of God, encouraged all of their members to be filled with the Holy Spirit. By this, they meant the practices of spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy.³ There have been many practical changes since its foundation in 1926. Their strict dress code was lifted and they began

¹ Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 48.

being more open to popular culture in order to win over the youth for Christ. Its mission has been modified to not only minister to Latino communities but to every soul in the world. Most importantly though, their main Latino Pentecostal identity of being filled and guided by the Holy Spirit has not been modified.⁴

Victory Outreach began with the goal of ministering to drug addicts and gangsters. In 1967 its founder Cruz “Sonny” Arguinzoni had a vision of reaching the lost this way. The focus of Victory Outreach was primarily on reaching youths before they joined gangs or become drug addicts. Most of their ministries were in areas surrounded by Latino communities. However, the second generation of Victory’s membership has changed its way of looking at church and have moved to include college-education professionals, people of color, and reaching the broader culture in other ways.⁵ From its roots of working with primarily Mexican-American or Chicano former drug addicts and ex-gang members, Victory has expanded to become an international denomination established in Europe, Asia, East India, and Latin American.⁶ The church has become like other contemporary charismatic churches, with an influence of pop culture, modern technology, and marketing; these changes have been made to reach all youths.⁷ They aim to maintain their ministry to youths on the street as well as to the new groups which have since joined the denomination.

⁴ Ibid., 86.

⁵ Ibid., 131.

⁶ Ibid., 132.

⁷ Ibid.

Victory has their youth focusing on their peers as well as on the generation that follows after them. They have a youth ministry called G.A.N.G. which stands for “God’s Anointed Now Generation.”⁸ In trying to reach the new generation, the ministry uses a website for outreach which outlines a step by step program for those who accept Jesus. Their approach is more modern than how past generations ministered; moreover, their focus is not only to reach drug addicts and gang members. In summary, they are reaching out to all but especially to the young.⁹ Lastly, they are evangelical Christians that seek to win the lost for Christ and help them maintain their lives in his way: “bobby soxers, hippies, cholos, the tattooed, body-pierced college students searching for God-if there is a song to be co-opted, a style to be transformed, a corporate logo to be refashioned, evangelicals will seek to do just that.”¹⁰

Vineyard was founded in 1982 following a split from Calvary Chapel; two churches merged in California in west Los Angeles and Orange County. Out of the three denominations researched by Sánchez, Vineyard is the youngest. Vineyard states that it is both evangelical and Pentecostal.¹¹ Their explanation is that they are evangelicals because they believe in Jesus being the way for salvation and they believe in the Trinity. They are Pentecostal because they believe in the modern day manifestations or gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹² Vineyard is seen as the most liberal of the three denominations. They

⁸ Ibid., 152.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 153.

¹¹ Ibid., 158.

¹² Ibid.

explain this as wanting to engage in the culture and be representative of the faith they profess.¹³

Assemblies of God, Victory Outreach, and Vineyard have different visions of how to engage with the culture of the U.S. to share the gospel of Jesus. However, they share the same foundational mission. They all seek to obey Jesus' words in Matthew: "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age'" (28:18-20).

This book contributes to the topic at hand because it focuses on the Hispanic Pentecostal community that I am serving at IMC. Moreover, it talks about the different ways in which Hispanic churches have been formed in recent history. Among the three churches that Sánchez interviewed, the one that most resembles IMC is LABI, which is under the umbrella of the Assemblies of God. Before my church became non-denominational, the pastor and some of its members came from a Pentecostal denomination that resembled the Assemblies of God. The doctrine or teaching is nearly the same as the Assemblies of God and its worship resembles how the denomination functioned before adopting changes to adapt to the U.S. culture. However, the most critical similarity is that both LABI and IMC want their members to be filled with the Holy Spirit so they can use their spiritual gifts to benefit the Hispanic community.

¹³ Ibid., 191.

The limitation of the resource in relation to my ministry challenge is that Sánchez discusses the other denominations which do not have much bearing on my project. The main reason for this is that the backgrounds and purposes of Victory Outreach and Vineyard are not focused on being filled with the Holy Spirit to share their gifts within the Hispanic community. Their goals are to engage with their communities by being like the culture and using popular language and methods to attract them to come to the Lord. Instead of the Church telling the world how to behave, this exemplifies that the world is telling the Church how to behave.

***The Great Giveaway* by David E. Fitch**

David E. Fitch in *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, and Other Modern Maladies* explains that the Church exists as the body of Christ and nothing more. The culture in the U.S. has influenced the local church to become more like a secular business than what God has called it to be, which is being the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:27 states clearly that “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” The local church has lost its purpose due to straying from this specific identity.

The main title of the book is *The Great Giveaway* because the church has given over its main practices to the modern culture. The key practices of the church that have been compromised are fellowship, evangelism, leadership, worship, preaching, justice, spiritual formation (discipleship), and moral education. The church has lost its biblical origin and practices and has interpreted them in the light of consumerism. Fitch states,

“For it is our modernism that has allowed us to individualize, commodify, and package Christianity so much that the evangelical church is often barely distinguishable from other goods and services providers, self-groups, and social organizations that make up the landscape of modern American life.”¹⁴

The book’s purpose is to alert the church of its increasingly secular nature and that it has lost its identity as the organic local body of Christ.¹⁵ Fitch wants the church to understand this so that it will see itself differently compared to the worldly system. Church members need to be representatives of Christ in practice by being the body of Christ. This idea fits with what Jesus prayed to his Father about his disciples: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of it” (Jn 17:16). The Apostle John further explains how disciples of Jesus should not be of the world: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 Jn 2:15). The core tenet of the book that the author conveys throughout it is that “The church is a people called out to live under Christ’s lordship in anticipation of the final consummation of his reign over all the earth. In this sense the church is a missional people.”¹⁶ Fitch then gives a more practical solution to the issue at hand:

¹⁴ David E. Fitch, *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism and other Modern Maladies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 13-14.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁶ Ibid., 19.

I do not believe that the realization as evangelicals that we have “given away” being the church calls for some new technique, new fad, or new denomination. Instead, the great giveaway calls for us as pastors, leaders, elders, and congregants to gather humbly and discern together what it might mean for us to return to the practices of being Christ’s body. . . Perhaps together, out of Scripture and our life together under his lordship, God can use us to reimagine the church faithful for our times.¹⁷

Fitch goes on to explain what these specific practices are that make the church the body of Christ. The church must be missionally driven and not just focused on getting locally larger, exhibit servant leadership not only in church but everywhere, share meals together, become more diverse socially and economically, have small group ministries, and lastly educate children in the Word.¹⁸ Fitch ends the book with these words in hope that the suggestions of the *The Great Giveaway* will become a reality: “As difficult as it might be, let us join and find our way back to the practices of being the people of God under the reign of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For he truly is the hope of the world.”¹⁹

The Great Giveaway contributes immensely to this project because it addresses the Church in general as it returns to being the body of Christ. Sadly, the culture of the U.S. has influenced many churches to become more like businesses than like the body of Christ. This book reminds the Church of its identity as written in 1 Corinthians, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (12:27).

Even though my church is Hispanic, it experiences the influence of U.S. culture and consumerism since it is located in Arizona. The worldly system has impacted the

¹⁷ Ibid., 228.

¹⁸ Ibid., 229.

¹⁹ Ibid., 230.

community greatly through the influence of the media which says that people's identity is found through what they have and not through who they are, which is the people of God as stated in 1 Peter 2:9-10: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Like the book communicates, the Church has discarded biblical formation to become secular; the Church has been formed to think like the world. The ministry practices of leadership and spiritual formation and discipleship are specific examples of how this book contributes to IMC's members learning to serve effectively with their natural talents and spiritual gifts.

The limitation of the resource considering the ministry challenge at hand is that Fitch generalizes that all churches in the U.S. are experiencing the same problem. This means that all churches in the U.S. are being influenced by the culture of consumerism and have stopped being the body of Christ. However, in the history of the church there has always been a remnant that have not stopped worshipping God. For example, in the beginning of humankind, Seth, the third son of Adam, and his generation were part of the remnant: "At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord" (Gn 4:26). Other examples include Noah and his family who were saved during the flood in Genesis 6-9, Lot and his family who were taken out of the corrupt cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19, and the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia in the book of Revelation 2-3. These families and churches showed loyalty and obedience to God despite what other

people and churches were doing. In other words, it is not accurate for Fitch to put all U.S. churches into the same category.

I believe that there are churches like Smyrna and Philadelphia in the present time. Even though my church is having issues, I cannot say that all the churches are like IMC. If the book had also addressed the reality that some churches are like Smyrna and Philadelphia, it would have demonstrated that there is hope during the chaos in which we are living today. Doing so would have helped my church in the process of this project by providing hope that a remnant of the Church exists today that has not let themselves be corrupted by the world and have been obedient and faithful to Scripture.

An Introduction to Ecclesiology by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen thoroughly explores ecclesiology in the book *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives*. He writes about various core traditions of the church, prominent theologians, and the impact that the church has in society. The first part of the book addresses different core traditions such as Eastern Orthodox, Free Church, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal/Charismatic, and Reformed. The second part of the book discusses great representatives of these church traditions, including John Zizioulas of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Hans Küng from Catholicism, Wolfhart Pannenberg of Lutheranism, Jürgen Moltmann from the Reformed tradition, Miroslav Volf from ecumenism, James McClendon Jr. of the Baptist Church, and Lesslie Newbigin from Anglicanism. However, there is no Pentecostal representative because there is not clear “full-scale ecclesiologies

available yet.”²⁰ The third part of the book explores how the church has an impact in society: “The ones chosen for a closer look are feminist ecclesiologies, liberationist ecclesiology, Catholic base communities in Latin America, the non-church movement begun in Japan and extended to Asia, and the ecclesiologies of African Independent Churches. Also, the ecclesiologies of the Charismatic Shepherding movement, the novel idea of the ‘world church’ and the visions of the “church as another city” will receive our attention.”²¹ Overall, this book deals with “comparative ecclesiology” as defined by Avery Dulles: “a systematic reflection on the points of similarity and difference in the ecclesiologies of different denominations.”²² Moreover, Kärkkäinen explains that “comparative ecclesiology usually draws from two kinds of sources: more or less official denominational confessional writings, and texts of representative theologians However, the present book goes beyond the traditional comparative ecclesiology in that the last part of the book also focuses on what may conveniently be called ‘contextual’ (sometimes also ‘global’) ecclesiologies.”²³

Two events from the history of Pentecostalism in the U.S. spread internationally. The first happened at a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas in 1901. Students started speaking in unknown tongues after focusing on the readings of Acts. Then in 1906, a similar revival happened in Los Angeles, California under the leadership of William J. Seymour. The impact was so great that by 1967, Pentecostalism had spread to other

²⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 13.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 14. See also Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Random House, 1974), 7.

²³ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 13.

Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and the movement was named “Charismatics.”²⁴ This means that the spiritual experience of the Holy Spirit such as spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy became shared values among all types of churches.

The Pentecostal movement is characterized as “full gospel.”²⁵ The author borrows the following points from Steven J. Land to explain how the Pentecostal movement views its theology: justification by faith in Christ, sanctification by faith as a second definite work of grace, healing of the body as provided for all in the atonement, the premillennial return of Christ, and finally the baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues.²⁶ Land writes that there might be another item to add to the list which is “prophethood” and the “priesthood of all believers.”²⁷ Kärkkäinen also includes Hollenweger’s argument that the best way to identify Pentecostalism is through these features: orality of liturgy; narrative of theology and witness; maximum participation at the level of reflection, prayer and decision making, and therefore a form of community that is reconciliatory; inclusion of dreams and visions into personal and public forms of worship, functioning as a kind of icon for the individual and the community; and lastly an understanding of the body/mind relationship that is informed by experiences of

²⁴ Ibid., 69.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 18.

²⁷ Ibid.

correspondence between body and mind, the most striking application being the ministry of healing by prayer.²⁸

Kärkkäinen writes that Pentecostalism is typically defined as more of a living movement than by specific matters of doctrines or theology. In other words, Pentecostalism has written far fewer official documents about its ecclesiology than other traditions and denominations; rather the movement has been focused on reaching souls for Christ and helping its members share their spiritual gifts within the Church.²⁹ It is important to note that Pentecostalism and Charismatics are different. Though they seem almost identical, in looking at their theologies the differences surface. Charismatics are shaped more by traditions and Scripture than by experiences of the Spirit: “The Spirit is seen as working through tradition, which carries and interprets divine revelation. The new experience of the Spirit is interpreted in light of Scripture and tradition.”³⁰

The book is helpful for this project because it discusses the origin of the Pentecostal community from which IMC emerged. This book also thoroughly explores the Pentecostal movements of 1901 and 1906. Without knowing its full history, it would be difficult to understand Pentecostalism and by extension, IMC. Moreover, the text summarizes what this movement believes. It explains the impact that Pentecostalism had on other churches especially through the later movement of Charismatics in 1967. Since my church is primarily Hispanic, many of the members come from a Roman Catholic

²⁸ W.J. Hollenweger, “After Twenty Years’ Research on Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Missions* 75 (January 1986): 6.

²⁹ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 73.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

background whether directly in their own religious history or indirectly by knowing family and friends who are Roman Catholics. They often ask questions about similarities between some Roman Catholic churches and Pentecostal churches, including singing the same songs and putting into practice the spiritual gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12. These are great theological questions that I need to be prepared to answer. This book has helped me articulate that even though some practices are the same, the underlying basis is different since we hold to different theologies. I explain that Roman Catholics use firstly tradition and then Scripture to interpret the Spirit's movement among them.

The limitation of the book in relation to my ministry challenge is that the author covers a lot of material on comparative ecclesiology between non-Pentecostal denominations. The book includes Lutheran, Free Church, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal/Charismatic, and Reformed church histories and beliefs. It briefly summarizes the origin and beliefs of the Pentecostal movement, however, its focus is on comparing it to other churches. Nevertheless, it does a good job comparing it to the Charismatic movement since they are similar in some ways, like in their experiences of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy.

***The Trouble with Paris* by Mark Sayers**

The Trouble with Paris: Following Jesus in a World of Plastic Promises by Mark Sayers analyzes how modern culture has been negatively influenced by the media. The hyperreality portrayed by the media has dominated the public mind and caused people to believe things which are far from the truth. People believe that if they consume what they

see in the media, they will be happy. But when they get what they thought would make them happy, they then see that it was full of illusions and empty promises. The creators of the media want the public to consume, embrace, and become addicted to what they have made. They promote a consumer-driven lifestyle which benefits themselves. However, the worst part is that the media has sabotaged Christians and the Church. The message of the book is to encourage everyone to escape the hyperreality of the worldly system and its negative influence, but especially the Church. Sayers directs everyone to the reality of God in order to experience true purpose and eternal happiness.

The only way to leave behind this hyperreality is through Jesus. Many people are lost trying to find truth and happiness. Scripture states that “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (Jn 14:6). Jesus welcomes everyone to the reality of the kingdom of God: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:33). Through Jesus alone will people find salvation and happiness for their souls. The hyperreality of culture is the enemy of the church. People in the Church are bombarded with hyperreality and false hope. The Church offers truth through Jesus. People might not like the reality of Jesus because they want the comforts of consumerism. But if they profess faith in Jesus, then they are misled and are sabotaging their eternal happiness and purpose when they do not acknowledge that they have been affected negatively by the worldly system.

The most significant contribution of this work to this project is its engagement with modern culture and the reality of the North American church today. Even though my church is Hispanic and much of the community’s values come are rooted other cultures

like Mexico, they live here in the U.S. and cannot escape the influence of culture and media's hyperreality. The media is very powerful in paralyzing many local churches in the U.S., including mine. Its aim is to encourage people to focus on only their own wants and needs instead of considering the common good. Service to others as Jesus calls for in Matthew 20:25-28 has sadly been put aside: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

American Christians have stopped thinking about how to serve their congregations with the talents and spiritual gifts they have received from God. Scripture consistently teaches that the church is not to fall into worldly patterns of thinking, as in Colossians 3:1-2, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Romans 8:5-8 states that, "Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God." Again in Romans 12:2, the Apostle Paul exhorts the Church to leave behind the worldly system which has negative influence over them: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing

of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” In doing so, the Church can be the Church, serving their neighbors like Jesus did. It will then be doing the will of God in letting the Holy Spirit to lead each person in edifying others with their natural talents and spiritual gifts.

There is no clear set back or limitation of this resource in regard to my ministry challenge. Sayers elaborates on the chaos that is happening in the local churches today in North America. Churches have become more materialistic than ever before. I am experiencing this hyperreality in IMC, as are many other pastors and leaders. Those in the U.S. are being influenced by the media every day. Entertainment media portrays the misguided notion that everything in one’s life is meant to be positive; but sitcoms are a good metaphor for the truth since the actors may look happy on television but hate each other in reality.³¹ I have been a victim of this hyperreality; instead of looking at things clearly for how they are, I was always hoping that things would simply change for the better.

Though I have a strong drive to only see the positive and ignore the negative, I need to instead believe through faith as supported by Scripture. For example, Abram believed through faith based on what God told him: “The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’” (Gn 12:1-3).

³¹ Mark Sayers, *The Trouble with Paris: Following Jesus in a World of Plastic Promises* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 6.

Christians must leave everything to God so that he can do his work. We need to focus on reality, and not on hyperreality or potential. Since I have been a victim of this temptation, I believe I have negatively influenced my church through my teachings, preaching, counseling, and relationships in general. However, recognizing the root of the problem is the first step to change our perspectives and replace wrong patterns of thought with the truth, which only comes from Jesus (Jn 14:6).

***Mañana* by Justo L. González**

Justo L. González is a Hispanic American; he was born in Cuba and has lived in the U.S. for many years. His work and perspective are especially important given his personal background and because of the limited number of Latino scholars in theology. The book's foreword is written by Virgilio P. Elizondo, another leading voice in Hispanic theology. Elizondo summarizes the plight of Hispanics in North America when he writes that "struggles for justice of the poor, the oppressed, the enslaved, the marginal, the exploited, the silenced, the unemployed, the undocumented, the abused, the underpaid, the unprotected . . . we [(the author and I)] have agonized with the refugees who are apprehended and deported as if they were criminals."³² He also aptly describes the spiritual state of the Church in North America: "Theologies, churches, and preaching seem more concerned with helping people feel good about being in this world with all its hedonistic tendencies than with calling individuals and nations to a true conversion to the

³² González, *Mañana*, 10.

way of Jesus of Nazareth In many of our churches there is often more a call to feel good than a call to discipleship.”³³

González addresses consumerism culture in the U.S., which has affected many churches nationally and internationally through the media. Moreover, he explains how churches in the U.S. have tried to influence Hispanic churches: “[Due to American consumerism culture], in the name of God they want us to replace God with mammon!”³⁴ Forbes, an American business magazine, writes that the U.S. has the most rich people on the planet, with 585 billionaires.³⁵ According to Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford, authors of *Hidden Worldview: Eight Cultural Stories that Shape our Lives*, the consumerism mentality is defined as hoping “all our needs can be satisfied by what we consume.”³⁶ In other words, life and happiness are based on accumulating material goods and wealth. However, Elizondo explains that the roots of the Hispanic culture are not in consumerism but in the Christian faith, whether Catholic or Protestant: “For a suffering and oppressed people, there is nothing more powerful than one’s collective religious symbols. They are the roots of our existence and the source of our identity. They put us in contact with our ancestors and guarantee our life to future generations. They are the

³³ Ibid., 11-12.

³⁴ Ibid., 16.

³⁵ Luisa Kroll and Kerry Dolan, “The Billionaires 2018: Meet the Members of the Three-Comma Club,” *Forbes*, March 2018, accessed December 1, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/#7f0f0ba1251c>.

³⁶ Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stores that Shape our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 45.

language of resistance and protest . . . They are the roots of our life as a people, and without them we will cease to exist as a people.”³⁷

González points out that Hispanics were not the first migrants to the U.S. but in fact it was the Anglo-Americans who migrated from Europe. He writes, “And twelve years before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, the Spanish founded the city of Santa Fe, New Mexico.”³⁸ He explains that Hispanics and Native Americans did not migrate from their native lands, but rather were conquered by Anglo-Americans:

Hispanic Americans---and Native Americans---will remain aliens in the land of their ancestors . . . It is clear that the means by which these territories had earlier become Spanish were no more honorable than the means by which they became part of the United States. On the basis of a first claim to these lands, no one but the Native Americans would have a right to them---and even then it would be necessary to determine which tribe was where first, and who was dispossessed by whom.³⁹

The title of the book is *Mañana*, which in English means tomorrow. For Hispanics, the word *mañana* signifies having hope beyond their mistreatment and abuse, especially in the U.S.: “For impoverished Hispanics and others, the real *mañana* is a time unlike today. It is a time of a new reality, not the outcome of today’s disorderly order but the outcome of other factors that bring about a breach with an unbearable today.”⁴⁰ When Hispanics combine Scripture with the concept of *mañana*, they believe that God will do something great with the world: “The world will not always be as it is . . . God is already doing this new thing, and we can join it by the power of the Spirit! *Mañana* is here! True,

³⁷ González, *Mañana*, 16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

mañana is not yet today, but today can be lived out of the glory and the promise of mañana, thanks to the power of the Spirit.”⁴¹

The most significant contribution that the author makes to the topic at hand is his Latino perspective on the modern church and its maladies. Therefore the book is relevant to many issues that IMC is facing, such as immigration. Hispanics have suffered greatly in this area. Nearly everyone knows someone who came to the U.S. to escape the suffering, violence or financial struggles in their home country. Immigrants come with the hope to better their lives. They come to work hard and help their families in the U.S. and back home. These immigrants are living in a foreign country and the way they look at theology, Scripture, and the church are different than those who have not suffered like them, such as those who have always lived in the U.S. Therefore, the way church leaders minister to them should be focused on understanding their pasts and giving them hope. The work of the church is to heal their wounds and give them hope that they can create a good life for themselves and for their families. This book’s perspective helps me understand why sometimes IMC’s members are more focused on material gain than on putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts to work in the church. Their focus is different because of their suffering. They are focused on taking care of themselves instead of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

I do not agree with González in his effort to show Hispanics as the victims of consumerism culture in the U.S. It is true that everyone in the U.S. and even local churches are being influenced by consumerism culture through television and social media. However, each person is responsible to correct themselves if they fall under this

⁴¹ Ibid.

temptation. Many Hispanics who came from other countries want to achieve the “American Dream,” they do not prioritize God. They want God to be with them and may have made a commitment that if God let them enter the U.S. that they would serve him. However the challenge is that though many served God and their churches in their home countries, when they came to the U.S. they stopped going to church in order to focus completely on working. I have seen this reality at IMC. Some members do not serve at all in the church due focusing too much on the temporary things of the world. I have also observed that others started well in serving God and edifying others with their natural talents and spiritual gifts, but later they were trapped in the mundane ambition of the worldly system. Sadly their spiritual lives decayed. Only a few have maintained their faith in the Lord like they did in their home countries and have put their natural talents and spiritual gifts to work in the church.

***Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* by Myer Pearlman**

In his book *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*, Myer Pearlman explains the major doctrines found in the Bible. The author interprets the Bible through the lens of Pentecostalism. He summarizes the Bible into eleven themes or doctrines: scriptures, God, angels, man, sin, Jesus Christ, atonement, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the Church and last things.⁴² Any other topic found in the Bible would fall under one of these eleven doctrines.

⁴² Myer Pearlman, *Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1999), 5-6.

The author specifically writes about systematic theology, meaning the study of biblical teachings concerning God arranged in topics.⁴³ He also mentions that there are four other types of theology that exist: exegetical, historical, dogmatic and biblical. Exegetical theology addresses the original interpretation of Scripture using several methodologies, such as knowledge of the original languages. Historical theology examines the development of doctrinal interpretation in church history. Dogmatic theology deals with church creeds. Biblical theology centers on different doctrines found in the Bible and compares them with what other books of the Bible say on a given topic. Pearlman uses a mixture of biblical and systematic theology in his book.

Pearlman's work contributes to the topic of this project in several important ways. One helpful section of the book elaborates on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The author identifies who the Holy Spirit is and explains his function within the Church. Then Pearlman elaborates on the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are given to members of the Church.

He explains that it is important to see the difference between the "gifts of the Spirit" and the "gift of the Spirit." The first having the word "gift" as plural refers to the supernatural gifts that are given to edify the Church. The other having "gift" as singular has its origin at Pentecost in chapter 2 of Acts. His interpretation is based on his Pentecostal background coming from the Assemblies of God.⁴⁴ When speaking about the spiritual gifts in the Bible, Pearlman believes that there are three passages that support

⁴³ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴ Glenn W. Gohr, "This Week in AG History – October 27, 1934," accessed November 3, 2019, <https://news.ag.org/Features/This-Week-in-AG-History-October-27-1934>.

them: 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. Nevertheless, the author focuses on 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 to explain about the spiritual gifts: “To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.”

Myer Pearlman classifies the spiritual gifts as follows: 1) those that God use to impart power to **know** supernaturally, 2) those that God use to impart power to **act** supernaturally and 3) those that God use to impart power to **speak** supernaturally. The gifts that are about knowing are the *word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and discernment*. The gifts that are about acting or action are *faith, miracles and healings*. The gifts that are about speaking are *prophecy, tongues and interpretation*. These are the manifestations of the Holy Spirit that members of the Church have been given for the edification of the Church.

Moreover, the author says that the spiritual gifts are granted by God to whomever He wants and He decides what kind of gifts He wants to give. Nevertheless, members of the body of Christ can ask God what gifts they would like and, if it is the will of God, he would give them to them for the purpose of the edification of His people.

Now, the book does not address natural talents. It would have been helpful to know the author’s perspective on natural gifts as compared to spiritual ones, especially since he uses the Scripture to prove each of his arguments. Other than this drawback, the book is an excellent resource, especially when he talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit,

since this connects with the context at hand with the ministry challenge that IMC is going through. He mentions that there is a difference between having the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” and the “gift of the Spirit”, which from a Pentecostal background the former is about being baptized with the Holy Spirit (speaking in other tongues as evidence); however, the latter is about receiving certain gifts, as mentioned for example in 1 Corinthians 12 and other passages, for building the Church. All this is important to understand why some of the members in the Church are more inclined to work in other areas in the Church than others. Also, it is great to see how the author classified each of the spiritual gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12; this helps to understand in what supernatural (know, act and speak) way he works in the Church.

At last, Pearlman writes extensively about the nature of sin which is something that hinders each person and even the Church at large from putting into practice both natural talents and spiritual gifts.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed five books for the purpose of dealing with the ministry challenge found at IMC, including *Latino Pentecostal Identity* by Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, *The Great Giveaway* by David E. Fitch, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology* by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trouble with Paris* by Mark Sayers, *Mañana* by Justo L. González and *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* by Myer Pearlman. These resources have deeply affected me as I work on this project and help my church serve each other well. Through these authors’ perspectives, I have begun to understand my congregation better so that I can help them put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in

the church. If IMC can accomplish this goal, we will show others that we are servants of Jesus and are filled with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 3:

A THEOLOGY OF SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

This chapter explores a theology of Spirit-filled life. First, the chapter examines how other worldly influences have affected churches' leadership norms and practices and distracted them from the tenants of spiritual leadership that were taught and practiced by Jesus. Because of negative outside influences, churches are not able to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifs for the glory of God and for the edification of the Church. Finally, the chapter addresses the reality of the internal spiritual battle within each believer, which only can be won by living through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is only through the Spirit-filled life that the Church can obey God and serve others effectively.

Biblical Leadership

In Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus teaches his followers about how they and the future Church should live: “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”

In this passage, the former type of leadership is worldly. Its focus is on power. However, the latter type of leadership is based on service. Jesus lived as an example of a servant leader so that the Church would follow in his ways.

Leadership is a broad topic about which much research and writing has been conducted. There are different types of leadership (transformational, autocratic, democratic, charismatic) and there is even a style called servant leadership that the business world uses. "People who practice servant leadership prefer power-sharing models of authority, prioritizing the needs of their team and encouraging collective decision-making."⁴⁵ The term servant leadership was created by Robert K. Greenleaf in an essay published in 1970.⁴⁶ The essay asks the following questions as a way of defining the term: "Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?"⁴⁷ Greenleaf continues, "A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the "top of the pyramid," servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as

⁴⁵ "9 Common Leadership Styles: Which Type of Leader are You?" TEC, accessed March 27, 2019, <https://tec.com.au/resource/9-common-leadership-styles-which-type-of-leader-are-you/>.

⁴⁶ "What is Servant Leadership?" Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, accessed March 27, 2019, <https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

possible.”⁴⁸ Additionally, the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership clarifies that “power and its proper use are central themes and tenets of servant leadership. Any abuse or misuse of power for personal gain or advancement is contrary to servant leadership.”⁴⁹

The name was coined to emphasize service in this type of leadership; in other words, those who are in leadership positions are there to serve others. This idea was taken from the leadership style that Jesus portrayed on earth. The difference is in its purpose. Organizations such as sports teams and businesses can implement this type of leadership; however, their purpose is to win or obtain material gains. However, the servant leadership that Jesus exemplified and taught was for spiritual gains, such as saving souls. His leadership is defined explicitly in several verses in the Bible such as Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” God sent Jesus to serve the needs of the sinful world and to save it: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (Jn 3:16, 17). Another passage that shows the core of Jesus’ servant leadership is Matthew 5:1-12:

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kevin Monroe, "Servant Leadership: A Virtuous Cycle of Service," Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, March 14, 2013, accessed March 27, 2019, <https://www.greenleaf.org/servant-leadership-a-virtuous-cycle-of-service/>

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

If the church is following the leadership example of Jesus, then each person in the Church is blessed with natural talents and spiritual gifts. There is a difference between these types of gifts in practice. Natural gifts are natural talents and spiritual gifts are supernatural. J. Warner Wallace writes that “Even before I started to look at the differences between ‘gifts’ and ‘talents,’ I recognized they all came from the same source. If we accept the premise that an all-powerful God is the creator of all matter and life, it is reasonable to conclude our abilities (even if we are inclined to attribute them to genetics or environment), must ultimately come from the source of genetics and environment: the God who created everything in the first place.”⁵⁰ In summary, everything comes from God, since he is the creator of everything.

Natural Gifts and Spiritual Gifts

Everyone is endowed with natural gifts; “Natural talents are those abilities inherited from one’s parents and nurtured in the context of one’s family.”⁵¹ These are talents or skills that a person has innately. Examples include playing musical instruments, art, logic, math, science or athletic abilities. In the Bible there are a couple of examples of people using their natural talents or skills. For instance, God called out those who had skills that would help in building the tabernacle of God: “All who are skilled among you

⁵⁰ J. Warner Wallace, “The Difference Between ‘Natural Talents’ and ‘Spiritual Gifts,’” Cold-Case Christianity with J. Warner Wallace, May 14, 2014, accessed March 27, 2019, <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/the-difference-between-natural-talents-and-spiritual-gifts/>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

are to come and make everything the LORD has commanded . . . Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun—blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen. And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair” (Ex 35:10-26).

Since natural talents exist from birth, everyone has at least one which can reach its full potential through practice and effort. Those who are saved and those who are not saved both have natural talents. Therefore, there is a distinction between natural talents and spiritual gifts: “Natural talents are imparted at our natural birth; spiritual gifts are given when we are born again.”⁵²

What are spiritual gifts? C. Peter Wagner defines it simply: “A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according to God’s grace, for use within the context of the Body.”⁵³ The Greek word *χάρισμα* (*charisma*; gifts) is found in the passages in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11, but *δόμα* (*dōma*; gifts) is found in Ephesians 4:8-12. Kenneth S. Wuest comments on this difference but says that it does not change its overall meanings of spiritual gifts: “The word here is not *charisma*, referring to special gifts such as the gifts noted in 1 Cor. 12:4-11, but *dōma*, a general term for that which is given.”⁵⁴ Marion L. Soards elaborates a little bit more on the meaning of “gifts” referring to the spiritual gifts: “The word translated as gifts is *charismata*, from *charisma* (“gift”];

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ C. Peter Wagner, *Discerning your Spiritual Gifts: A Self-Guided Quiz • Includes Explanations of All the Spiritual Gifts* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2002), 15.

⁵⁴ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 98.

χάρισμα]), a word that by root is related to *charis* [(χάρις)] or “grace.” The idea behind this word is that it means a “gift of grace,” clearly implying God’s grace. One understands that gifts being discussed to be God’s gifts or spiritual gifts, but as the name indicates, these gifts are God’s gifts through the Spirit for the working of grace.”⁵⁵ It is understood that only those who have the Spirit of God have spiritual gifts. Therefore, C. Peter Wagner believes that if the person has been born-again as a member of the Body of Christ, then he/she will have one or many spiritual gifts; he supports this by what 1 Peter 4:10 says: “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”⁵⁶

Major spiritual gifts are mentioned and explained in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:8-12 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. C. Peter Wagner explains that the gifts mentioned here are not all of them, because there are many others found in Scripture (e.g. 1 Cor 7:7); so those gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:8-12 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 should not be taken as exhaustive.⁵⁷ Bobby Clinton interprets these spiritual gifts passages like this: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 is about how to use the spiritual gifts in an orderly way; Romans 12:3-8 is about discerning one’s gift in order to use it with others; Ephesians 4:8-12 says that each gift mentioned here is for one purpose is that is to grow in maturity of oneness in believers; 1 Peter 4:10-11 is for the believers

⁵⁵ Marion L. Soards, *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999), 262.

⁵⁶ Wagner, *Discerning your Spiritual Gifts*, 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

to apply their spiritual gifts.⁵⁸ At last, all these passages have two things in common: 1) putting love into action and 2) to teach them that the gifts are to edify each other.⁵⁹ The spiritual gifts listed in these passages include words of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, effecting of miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, apostleship, evangelism and pastoral care.⁶⁰

Believers get an extra blessing upon being granted spiritual gifts in addition to their natural gifts. Natural talents can be obtained through genetics and through the environment. People can improve their natural talents with training and practice. However, since the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts, these are given only when the person has been born again. With natural talents people cannot acquire more than what they were given at birth. However, spiritual gifts can be given at different times in different ways.

The apostle Paul exhorts the church in Corinth and Church in general to “eagerly desire the greater gifts” (1 Cor 12:31). F.W. Grosheide says that the church in Corinth put a lot of emphasis in *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues) and they wanted more of that gift in their church; moreover, the author comments on this verse that they needed to discern the needs of the church, so that they could then pray to God because He is the One who

⁵⁸ Bobby Clinton, *Spiritual Gifts: A self-Study or Group-Study Manual from Horizon House Publishers* (Beaverlodge: Horizon House Publishers, 1985), 38-44.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶⁰ Wallace, "The Difference Between ‘Natural Talents’ and ‘Spiritual Gifts,’” <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/the-difference-between-natural-talents-and-spiritual-gifts/>.

distributes the spiritual gifts through the Spirit.⁶¹ Marion L. Soards gives a general explanation of what was going on in the Corinth church: “The situation seems to be that the Corinthians are taking spiritual gifts as the grounds for comparison among themselves, and that is leading to ranking of gifts and boasting.”⁶² Now Matthew Henry gives the spiritual status of the Corinth church by saying that they had abundance of spiritual gifts; however, because of not having a proper knowledge of God, they were abusing those gift.⁶³ Therefore, Paul does not mean that some gifts are better than others when saying, “eagerly desire the greater gifts” (1 Cor 12:31), but rather that depending on the needs of the church, there are gifts that are more important than others in certain seasons. For example, if many church members are physically sick, the gifts of healing are more useful than other gifts that people do not need at that moment. On the other hand, if the church needs to be edified spiritually, the gift of teaching is greater at that moment. The purpose of these gifts is to glorify God and edify his church. Therefore, believers can be fully gifted with their natural talents and then have spiritual gifts added to them. All types of gifts are given to glorify God.

The purpose of the spiritual gifts beyond glorifying God is for the good of the church; “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7) and “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of

⁶¹ F.W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 301.

⁶² Soards, *New International Biblical Commentary*, 252.

⁶³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 6, *Acts to Revelation* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), 567.

God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12, 13). Bobby Clinton says that each spiritual gift is all about growth of the body of Christ.⁶⁴ C. Peter Wagner says that “Spiritual gifts are not designed for Lone Rangers. They are designed for members of the Body.”⁶⁵ Albrecht and Howard give their thought on the use of the spiritual gifts in the Church, and especially referring to Pentecostal theology (belief in the filling of the Holy Spirit): “God gives gifts to believers for the benefit of the whole body, and there is, along with this understanding, an expectation for believers to participate in the life of the body through the use of their gifts.”⁶⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton comments on 1 Cor 12:7: “...the Spirit is at work where the public manifestation serves the common advantage of others, and not merely self-affirmation, self-fulfillment, or individual status. The Spirit produces visible effects for the profit of all, not for self-glorification. If the latter is prominent, suspicion is invited.”⁶⁷ Moreover, Gordon D. Fee gives his explanation of the meaning of last whole verse of 1 Cor 12:31 in relation to 1 Cor 12:7: (“Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.”): “The way they are going is basically destructive to the church as a community; the way they are being called to is one that seeks the good of others before oneself. It is the way of edifying the church (14:1-5), of seeking the common good (12:7). In that context one will still earnestly desire the things of the Spirit (14:1), but precisely

⁶⁴ Clinton, *Spiritual Gifts*, 25.

⁶⁵ Wagner, *Discerning your Spiritual Gifts*, 16.

⁶⁶ Cecil M. Robeck Jr. and Amos Yong, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 243.

⁶⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Texts* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 936.

so that others will be edified.”⁶⁸ J. Warner Wallace adds, “While we may find ourselves using our natural talent to serve our own selfish interests and desires, spiritual gifts have been given to us by God ‘for the common good’ and to the glory of God; they are given to us so we can give them back to God as we serve His purpose of building the family of believers. Spiritual gifts are given to us so *all* of us can perform “the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”⁶⁹ In summary, spiritual gifts are meant to edify the body of Christ, which is the Church. Moreover, these gifts are given when the person has been saved and receives the Holy Spirit.

Living a Spirit-Filled Life

According to Scripture, the only people who receive the Holy Spirit are members of the Church; in other words, those who have been born again: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph 1:13). Romans 8:9 and 14 make this clear as well: “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” and “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.” Receiving spiritual gifts is the seal or sign of the Holy Spirit that marks a person as saved. After being sealed with the Holy Spirit, believers live according to the Spirit. Living according to the Spirit is that same thing as living a “Spirit-filled life.”

⁶⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 624.

⁶⁹ Wallace, "The Difference Between ‘Natural Talents’ and ‘Spiritual Gifts,’” <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/the-difference-between-natural-talents-and-spiritual-gifts/>.

Moreover, another word for “Spirit-filled” is being “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” Frank D. Macchia gives its meaning: “Spirit baptism was rather an endowment of the Spirit as power for service, a power that opened the believer up to multiple extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.”⁷⁰ The author mentions one of the doctrinal beliefs of the Pentecostals to differentiate between the “seal of the Holy Spirit” at the time when the person is saved with the “filling of the Holy Spirit”: “Trinitarian Pentecostals who have their origins in Durham’s [(Pentecostal preacher)] movement maintained Durham’s distinction between initiation to Christ (understood as Spirit indwelling) and Spirit filling (which is a richer experience of the Spirit).”⁷¹ Moreover, Amos Young mentions Durham’s influence on the Pentecostal theology of “Spirit Baptism”: “Pentecostals who were influenced by Durham came to define the baptism of the Spirit not in soteriological terms but as the endowment of power for witness (cf. Acts 1:8).”⁷² In other words, after a person has been saved and sanctified, he/she becomes a candidate to receive the Holy Spirit to become a powerful witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, there are disagreements about the sign of being filled of the Holy Spirit. The most supported view is the person speaking in other tongues as initial evidence of Spirit baptism.⁷³ Frank D. Macchia adds, “In general, this diversity of viewpoints concerning Spirit baptism opens up the question as to what purpose it serves to speak of Spirit baptism as the dominant Pentecostal theological

⁷⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷² Amos Young, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 98.

⁷³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World*, 9.

distinctive if there has been little agreement as to what the doctrine might mean within the broader context of the Christian life.”⁷⁴ Therefore, the person who has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they are then to maintain that filling of the Holy Spirit in their everyday life.

People are molded in one of two ways, either by the standards of the world or by the spiritual realm. Those shaped by the world have permitted their minds and lives to conform to the worldly system. Interestingly, Scripture speaks as if a person can only be molded in one way and not in both: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 Jn 2:15-17). This worldly system distracts people from the truth of the Scripture. It goes against what the Scripture states. In Matthew 4, the devil tempted Jesus in the desert by trying to distract him from his mission on earth which was to save humanity. The devil shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world in Matthew 4:8-9 and says “All this I will give you... if you will bow down and worship me.” Romans 12:2 states: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” The Bible is clear that it is necessary to think like God does, and not like the world does. Paul writes that when we have been born again in Christ, we

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

have his mind: “. . . But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). The renewal of one’s mind is necessary for spiritual formation to happen.

A person is molded by the world when he or she feeds the desires of the sinful flesh, according to Galatians 5:16-21:

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The key phrase in this passage is “gratify the desires of the flesh” (v. 16). This happens when one feeds the flesh with sin or by doing things that will tempt one to sin.

Interestingly, the person has the power to not gratify the desires of the flesh. The solution is to instead walk by the Spirit: “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). Colossians 3:1-6 states,

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Putting to death the desires of the flesh is like ceasing to water a plant. If one waters the plant, the plant will grow and get strong. However, once the plant stops getting water, it will die. The desires of the flesh will weaken and die if a believer stops giving in to them. This spiritual work is necessary since a sinful nature is ingrained in humanity: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Ps 51:5) and “I do not

understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me” (Rom 7:15-17).

Although this sinful nature will never be destroyed completely while the Christian is living, it is possible to control sinful desires through the Holy Spirit like Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:7: “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” Watering the spirit of the Christian will strengthen him or her so that sinful desires diminish. The result of this work is in obtaining the fruit of the Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:22 -25).

The story of Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 emphasizes the need to be born again. Nicodemus was not an ordinary man, he was a “Pharisee” and “a member of the Jewish ruling council” (Jn 3:1). Jesus tells this teacher of the Law that he needs to repent of his sins: “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (Jn 3:3). Jesus explains that “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit-gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (Jn 5-8). The purpose of Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus is for him to obtain salvation and become a new

creature: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Cor 5:17).

All who have been born again fight with the sinful nature every day; however, they do not give in freely due to having the power of the Spirit. They must keep their spirits strong by not feeding the flesh but instead feeding their spirits. They need to flee from things that would make them sin or tempt them to sin. This is the advice that the apostle Paul gives to Timothy: “Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tm 2:22). Christians are responsible for maintaining their faith in Christ: “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). To “work out your salvation” is to keep feeding one’s spirit by studying Scripture, praying, going to church and teaching others about the salvation available through Jesus Christ. Each of these activities is imperative or a commandment in the Bible. John 5:39 indicates that believers must study the Word: “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Matthew 26:41 instruct believers to “pray continually” and “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Hebrews 10:25 warns believers “not [to give] up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Finally, Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15 state that we must share the Gospel: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” and “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”

Summary

The church can be formed spiritually or formed by the worldly system. It is difficult to believe that a church can be formed by the worldly system. But that is why the apostle Paul warned against this in his letters to the churches in Corinth, Colossae, and Galatia. The Church should be guided spiritually by the Word of God and not by the worldly system that is always trying to creep into our thinking. By living and maintaining a Spirit-filled life, the church will not be as vulnerable to the influence of worldly leadership and other worldly sinful desires. Then the Church will be able to put in practice not only its natural talents but also its spiritual gifts to obey God, glorify him and edify the Church.

PART THREE
MINISTRY PRACTICE

CHAPTER 4: MINISTRY PLAN

This chapter develops a ministry plan for cultivating a spirit of service in the congregation by putting each person's natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice at IMC. The plan includes four modular teachings which will be given to the pilot group over several Sunday school meetings about living in the Spirit and putting natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice. The participants in the pilot project will learn, be encouraged, and then given at least one task as a way of putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice. The purpose of running a pilot group is to then implement the ministry plan with the whole congregation. I am the principle presenter and facilitator of the teachings.

Ministry Strategy

The purpose of this project is for the congregation and the leaders at IMC to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts by serving the church. There will be four modular teachings during Sunday school meetings to inspire a pilot group to put into practice what God has given them for the glory of God and to serve the body of Christ. The participants in the pilot group will be those who go every Sunday, mostly the leadership. They will be given practical training with the purpose of later implementing

the modular teachings with the whole congregation. The whole process, starting with the pilot group and moving toward sharing this with the whole congregation, will take about a month.

The four modular teachings will be on the topics of natural talents, spiritual gifts, living in the Spirit and lastly, an invitation to practice using their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church. The main resource for these modular teachings will be the Bible. Other resources include Robert K. Greenleaf's essay from 1970, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* by Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, and Other Modern Maladies* by David E. Fitch, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives* by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trouble with Paris: Following Jesus in a World of Plastic Promises* by Mark Sayers and *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* by Justo L. González.

Theological Implications of Cultivating a Spirit of Service

IMC is focused on desire as a prerequisite to cultivating a spirit of service in the church. The pilot group exists because an invitation was given and those that wanted to be a part of this project became present. I believe that the best workers are those who want to serve God out of their heart in whatever they want to do. In the same way Jesus came to earth to die for humanity out of His love and will, He wants his people to do the same for His Kingdom: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Below

is the layout of the content of the modular teachings: natural talents, spiritual gifts, living in the Spirit and lastly, an invitation to practice using their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church.

Natural Talents

Everyone in the world has natural talents. People are born with a gift or many special gifts that are not spiritual, but natural. Throughout knowledge and experience, people can discern what they are good at and what they love to do. Many times, this has been said throughout their lifetime such as how beautiful they sing, how intelligent they are or even how empathetic they are. The important thing is to recognize that they have been blessed by God with natural talents. Then they will need to know what natural talents they have, so that they could develop them with practice.

Many times, people are not able to live a happy life because they are not using the gifts that God gave them for the world to enjoy. They think that they do not have anything to share with anyone. Their self-esteem has been impacted by this way of thought. It is important then to recognize that they too have been blessed with natural talents and to share them with their neighbors. This way of thinking will help a lot of people to be freed from their mindset, and the thoughts that they are not worth anything. This type of mentality will break all that bondage of low self-worth that even exists in the church today.

It is important to understand that God uses everyone in the church. This is when the natural talents come into place. The Bible has a lot of examples showing that God used people with natural talents to build His tabernacle in the desert (Ex 35:10-26).

Everyone can be useful in the church if they just believe God and want to serve in His Kingdom. They will feel useful in life and live happy people because they are putting into practice why they came to this earth for, humanelly speaking of course.

After they have recognized that they have natural talents, it is time for them to know what those natural talents are. Many times, they know by the verbal confirmation they have received from their parents, family and teachers in their life. If they are not sure, they can test what those natural talents are. They can do this in the church or outside church. It could be something like cooking. If they love to cook, they can share their food with the people at church. They will confirm if that is their gift by the feedback they receive. Making a list of what they enjoy doing will help them know what they can practice. It is through this process that they will know what their natural talents are. With practice they will not only know what their natural talents are, but they will also develop those natural talents. In other words, they will be better in exercising those natural talents every time they use them. After the pilot project members know about the existence of natural talents in their life, then they will be ready to understand how double blessed they are.

Spiritual Gifts

The body of Christ has been double blessed. First, they have their natural talents like the rest of the world who is not a born-again Christian, and then they have their spiritual gifts. What are spiritual gifts? It simply means gifts that are spiritual. There are several passages that talk about the spiritual gifts such as 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. The lists given in these passages are not intended to be

exhaustive, because there are many more spiritual gifts found in the New Testament. It is important to understand several things about spiritual gifts. First, to know the meaning of “spiritual gifts”, to know what those spiritual gifts are (e.g., wisdom, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, teaching, exhortation and leadership), to understand that we have at least one spiritual gift, the purpose of the spiritual gifts and then how to apply the gifts with others.

Moreover, there are several passages in the Scripture that cannot be ignored in reference to spiritual gifts: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7) and “Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way” (1 Cor 12:7). The former is for the new-born Christian to understand that the gifts are not for them but for the benefit of others. The ego of the person who has the gifts has been put aside, so that God can use them proficiently for the edification of others. Moreover, God wants his people to “desire the greater gifts.” Those “greater gifts” are not for those who will exercise them, but for those who will benefit from them “greatly.” Depending on the situation of the congregation for example, whether they need spiritual or physical health, some gifts will be more useful than others. At last, the verse in 1 Corinthians 12:7 ends that there is a “most excellent way.” By the context of that verse, the author is talking about love. Love should be the foundation of the gifts. For the gifts to be administered properly, love should be there. Love is not egocentric, which means that those who exercise the gifts would not become boastful. Because when this happens, the congregation will not benefit from them. The gifts will stop glorifying God but be glorifying those who have the gifts.

Finally, it is interesting to learn that the spiritual gifts are all about growth. People grow inwardly with some gifts (e.g. teacher, pastor and wisdom) as well as outwardly with other gifts (evangelist). No gift is greater than the other, because each one will benefit from the other. Let us say that a church has good teaching, but they are struggling to grow in numbers. People with the gift of the evangelist will help the church grow in numbers. They will be able to invite people to church and even encourage people in the church to be witnesses to their neighbor and co-workers. The same thing can be said if a church is growing in numbers but they are not growing spiritually. This is when other gifts such as teaching and wisdom will be useful for them. Therefore, the overall purpose for the congregation is to understand that they need each so that every member in the church grows inwardly and outwardly.

Living a Spirit-Filled Life

There is a process in Christianity. First, the person accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They are born-again if they repent of their sins genuinely. After they have been born again, from a Pentecostal background, they get baptized with the Holy Spirit (speaking in tongues as initial evidence) or are “filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹ After they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, then they will receive spiritual gifts so to edify the Church. At last, it is all about them maintaining their spiritual life on check, per say; this means they need to live a holy life or a spirit-filled life.

In every Christian there is an internal battle of the flesh against the Spirit. The flesh or the sinful desires want to dishonor God, while the Spirit wants to honor God.

¹ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 18.

Who wins? This is the question of the century. It all depends who the Christian feeds the most. Galatians 5:16-21 is clear about this internal battle:

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The new-born Christian has been called to not “gratify the desires of the flesh” (v. 16). This happens when one feeds the flesh with sin or by doing things that will tempt one to sin. Interestingly, the person has the power to not gratify the desires of the flesh. The solution is to instead walk by the Spirit: “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).

This is the struggle that the Corinth church was experiencing. They had abundance of spiritual gifts; however, overall they were in the flesh by being boastful of exercising those gifts, especially with the “gift of tongues.”² There was turmoil because of this. They were not walking in the Spirit. They were walking in the flesh. Perhaps at one time in their life when they received the spiritual gifts, they were walking in the Spirit; however, they became careless of their spiritual life. This is what affected them in maintaining their spiritual walk with God. This can happen to anyone who becomes negligent of their spiritual life. The apostle Paul said: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pt 5:8).

² F.W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 301.

Scripture gives specific advice on how to maintain their spiritual life, so that the Christian can live in the Spirit, because this is the will of God. Not only will they benefit from this, but with those they serve too. The apostle Paul says: “Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tm 2:22). Christians are responsible for maintaining their faith in Christ: “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). To “work out your salvation” is to keep feeding one’s spirit by studying Scripture, praying, going to church and teaching others about the salvation available through Jesus Christ. Each of these activities is an imperative or commandment in the Bible. John 5:39 indicates that believers must study the Word: “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Matthew 26:41 instruct believers to “pray continually” and “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Hebrews 10:25 warns believers “not [to give] up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Finally, Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15 state that we must share the Gospel: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” and “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’” All of these commandments and advices will make the Christian be active in their faith, which will not give time for the evil desires of this world dominate their mind: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the

Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 Jn 2:15-17).

Invitation to Practice

After the pilot group has received the four modular teachings about natural talents, spiritual gifts and living in the Spirit, they will feel ready to put into practice what they have learned. They know that they have natural talents and spiritual gifts that will benefit others in the Church. They too will be blessed with fulfillment and joy, because they will feel useful in the body of Christ. Not only that, but they will grow more with the Lord by doing the will of God here on earth; moreover, they will be blessed in heaven as well. It is a win-win for all.

Moreover, during this stage it will be important for the pilot group to understand that the Church needs their natural talents and spiritual gifts. Also, God will be pleased with them in serving their fellow brothers and sisters as well. Another thing that it is important for them to understand that they will grow deeper in Christ through this type of leadership. It will be an adventure for them to embark on this journey of growth. Their natural talents and spiritual gifts will be developed more every time they put them into practice. They will not feel stuck in their personal and spiritual lives. They will not take “church” as a routine. Because whenever people stop growing, they become bored. It will not be the case here. On the contrary, they will feel fulfillment and joy in doing what they do in Church. Not only will they be blessed here on earth in so many ways, just as feeling fulfillment and joy in life, but they will be blessed in heaven as well.

2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” This means that the members of the body of Christ will appear before the Lord to be blessed by what they did on earth for Him. This can only be done with what they do with their natural talents and spiritual gifts on earth. This will be encouragement for them to understand that God blesses those who help and contribute what they have (natural talents and spiritual gifts) with others.

Also, it will be good to tell them that they are not alone in the process of giving what the Lord has blessed them with. Natural talents and spiritual gifts are not only for the Church, but also for the whole world. Yes, there are gifts that are specifically for the Church such as speaking in tongues, but there are others that can be used for those who are outside the church such as evangelism. Frank D. Macchia supports this completely: “The universal priesthood of believers cannot be confined to the priestly function of parents in the home but must shape fundamentally the life of the congregation in its public services and mission in the world. The church must burst forth with signs of grace in an increasingly graceless world, offering many the fountain of life in the Spirit.”³ People with natural talents and spiritual gifts are voluntarily putting their time, energy and even money to serve others. Examples of this are Young Life, Community Bible Study and Bible Study Fellowship. People who do this should be blessed and celebrated. There are many ways how these people can be blessed and celebrated. One, is to join them in their clubs. They can put their time, energy and even money if they want to help

³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World*, 19.

those who need it the most. Moreover, it will be good to have in the church such type of alliance with these, so that the congregants will know what they are up to. They will read and be encouraged to do the same such as joining them in their journey or following their service example by putting what they've learned into practice in their local church and community. In addition, another way of supporting these groups is by sending love offering to them; this of course will be voluntarily. All these ways mentioned will help the pilot group understand the importance of serving in the church and outside the church as well.

Goals

The overall goal for the pilot group is to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the Church. For this to be accomplished, the pilot group needs to see this as an opportunity of fulfillment and joy in their life. They should not see it as we only want them to do “chores” in the church. This is not the purpose. That is why the modular teachings have been given for them to understand a different notion of service in the Church, different to how the world sees it: “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58). The pilot group is preparing the “land” (metaphorical speaking) for the rest of the church to unite in this adventure of service for the Lord. If the modular teachings have been received positively by the pilot group, then we have started to cultivate a spirit of service at IMC.

Target Population

Participation in the pilot group will not be mandatory because everything at IMC is voluntary. There will be an announcement asking for willing participants. This announcement will be given one month prior to the start of the project. Most of the congregation members are leaders so the participants will likely already have a position or assigned tasks. However, anyone who would like to participate will be welcomed. There were approximately ten to fifteen participants. Based on the demographics of the church, the participants will be Hispanics of various ages from a low socioeconomic status.

After the pilot group has received the modular teachings and put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church, there will be an evaluation to see how to best implement this training for the whole congregation. The pilot will run for about a month. The main goal is for the whole church to receive the modular teachings and to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church. Then the whole church will experiment in cultivating a spirit of service with their natural talents and spiritual gifts via the assigned tasks.

Summary

This chapter has developed a ministry plan that cultivates a spirit of service in the congregation by encouraging and equipping each person to put their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice at IMC. The four modular teachings will teach them how they can live in the Spirit by serving their brothers and sisters at IMC. When the teachings

have been given and the pilot group has put into practice what they learn, then I will share the teachings with the whole congregation during a Sunday service.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

This chapter describes the process of putting into practice the ministry plan from the previous chapter, which aims to cultivate a spirit of service in the congregation by teaching them to put their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice at IMC. First there is a summary of the project followed by a timeline for implementation. Then, the chapter lists and explains the resources used. Next is the plan for running and assessing the pilot project including the four modular teachings. The feedback and results of the pilot project will inform modifications before I roll out the ministry plan to the entire congregation.

Project Summary

Currently the primary ministry challenge at IMC is an unwillingness by the congregation to use their natural talents and spiritual gifts to serve the church. This problem was chosen as the focus of this project because the congregation needs to grow in Christlike service in order to fulfill its mission as stated in Matthew 20:25-28: “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever

wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Every member of the church has natural talents and spiritual gifts, but they are not applying them effectively to minister to their brothers and sisters in the church. The ministry plan will first be implemented with a pilot group and then with the entire congregation. Its goal is to teach, inspire and encourage everyone at IMC to cultivate a spirit of service through the application of their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church.

Timeline

I began this project in January 2019. The resources were completed in April 2019. In May 2019, I started to promote the ministry plan at each Sunday service in order to gather a pilot group. After a month, there were ten participants who were eager to be part of this purposeful journey. I taught the four modular teachings at Sunday School during the month of June. The pilot group had a month to learn, understand and be encouraged to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church. At the end of the modular teachings, feedback was gathered from the pilot group verbally and in writing. I took this information into account before implementing the plan with the whole congregation.

Resources

During the months of preparing the required resources for the ministry project, I chose eight main texts. These resources are The Bible (New International Version), Robert K. Greenleaf’s 1970 essay, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self,*

and Society by Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, and Other Modern Maladies* by David E. Fitch, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives* by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trouble with Paris: Following Jesus in a World of Plastic Promises* by Mark Sayers, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* by Justo L. González and *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* by Myer Pearlman. These resources will help the church serve successfully by living in the Spirit and putting into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts. The modular teachings were given to the pilot group in our church building. On the last Sunday of the modular teachings, I gave a summary of what was covered throughout the whole process. I used a PowerPoint presentation as a visual aid. Finally, I used handouts during the modular teaching summary (see Appendices A and B); the feedback was collected at the end of the modular teaching summary.

Assessment Plan

The core of the ministry project is the modular teachings. It is through these teachings that the pilot group then the congregation learned about how to serve like Christ with their natural talents and spiritual gifts. On the first Sunday of June when the pilot group started, the group showed excitement for the content of the course. The participants included ten Hispanics from a low socioeconomic class of various ages. I presented the modular teachings during the next four Sunday school meetings, which took place directly before the Sunday worship service.

Before teaching the modular content, I focused on inspiring the pilot group to understand their purpose in the first modular teaching. I read a couple of verses from the Bible: “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:43-45) and “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (Lk 15:58). The group was ready to be trained and equipped for the purpose of living in the Spirit and putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice in the church. The four teachings covered the topics of natural talents, spiritual gifts, living in the Spirit rather than in the flesh and finally an invitation to practice using their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church. After the pilot project provided their feedback, I used this information to modify the project before giving it to the whole congregation during Sunday services.

Results

At the end of the modular teachings, feedback was gathered verbally (see Appendix C) and in writing (see Appendices A and B) from the pilot group and recorded for the purpose of making modifications before presenting to the whole congregation.

The pilot group first expressed where they would like to serve in the church; it was interesting to see that they do have the desire to serve (see Appendix A). They picked a wide range of roles in which they would like to serve, including presumably undesirable tasks like cleaning. People volunteered for every type of task except teaching

the youth. However, since this was only the feedback of the pilot group, I hope that sharing these results with the whole congregation will motivate other people to fill the need to teach the youth.

The other feedback (see Appendix B) showed their anonymous answers to the points discussed in the four modular teaching topics: natural talents, spiritual gifts, living in the Spirit and lastly, an invitation to practice using their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church.

The first point was for them to give me their thoughts on what they like most of the teachings. One student said that they enjoyed the spiritual gifts more than the natural gifts. Another response was that they enjoyed learning about living in the Spirit; moreover, they enjoyed it because they want to grow and get closer to God. Many of the responses after that was to say that they enjoyed all of the teachings.

The second point was for them to explain their experience in putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice. One response is that they have put their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice for the Lord. Another response is that the more they get closer to God, the more they are able to put in practice all of their natural talents and spiritual gifts. Another response was that they put their natural talent of cooking into practice in the church to raise funds. Another response is that they feel great in putting those natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice, because they feel the support from God in the process.

The third point was for them to explain in detail how they would put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts in the Church. For this one, there were a few responses that were left blank. They were left blank because they might not know for sure

where they would like to work in the Church. Many of the responses after these ones were pretty much similar. Many said that they would like to work where there is need. In other words, they are open to work in anything; they are flexible. There was one response that they gave, that they would like to serve by cooking, cleaning and interceding for those who are struggling spiritually.

The last point was for them to give their opinion on how the modular teachings can be modified for the better, in order to share them to the whole congregation. A couple of the responses were to make the modular teachings more participative; in other words, make the teachings more interactive. This was a very good point. Another said that it will be good to use handouts again. Other responses were the same in saying that everything was good; there was no change needed.

The last feedback (see Appendix B) was very helpful for the presenter and facilitator. It was a good way to see what things can be changed and others be left how they are. Because of the pilot group, the modular teachings will be better when they are presented to the whole congregation.

The main purpose of this project was for the whole church to receive the modular teachings and to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts by receiving one or more tasks in which they feel comfortable serving others. They had the opportunity to choose what they would like to do to serve the church (see Appendix A) and they seemed ready put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts. The rest of the feedback indicates that they understood the core message of the modular teachings and that they are ready to serve; moreover, it also helped to modify the modular teachings for the

better. The goal moving forward is now to share the teachings and the invitation to serve with the whole church so that they too will develop a spirit of service.

Summary

The pilot group at IMC received four modular teachings during June 2019. The project started in January 2019 and it took six months for me to prepare all the resources needed to share it with the pilot group. A group of ten wanted to be part of the pilot group. I was pleased to discover that by the end of the modular teachings, each of the members of the pilot group chose several positions in which they would like to serve the church. Feedback and input were accepted from the pilot group in order to modify the delivery of the modular teachings for the whole congregation. After this process and with the help of the Holy Spirit, the church will readily and willingly use their natural talents and spiritual gifts to edify their brothers and sisters in the congregation.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

IMC is a Hispanic non-denominational church with a Pentecostal background located in west Phoenix, Arizona. IMC transitioned from being a denominational Pentecostal church to an independent Pentecostal church. At the beginning of the project, IMC was experiencing a ministry challenge. Its congregants were not serving efficiently within the church. Each member possessed natural talents and spiritual gifts, but they did not apply them for the benefit of their brothers and sisters as written in 1 Corinthians 12:7, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” This project is divided into several parts. Part One explains the background of the church and its community. Part Two addresses the theological challenge that the church is facing in serving each other and its neighbors. Part Three contains an action plan for the church to adopt a spirit of service. The implementation process chapter concentrates on the results of the pilot group. Members voluntarily chose tasks and were encouraged to put their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice in the church.

Chapter one examines IMC’s history, demographics, ministry vision and goals, cultural and sub-cultural influences, core values and theological convictions. IMC is in a suburban area of west Phoenix in which many residents live at or below the poverty line. This area is unique in that several generations live there and many families share multi-generational homes. The Hispanic ethnicity is predominant, with both English and Spanish spoken in the area. Most of the neighborhoods around the church are Hispanic and middle-aged.

Chapter two evaluates several books and articles that will be useful in cultivating a spirit of service in the congregation. The literature chosen examines service in the

congregation, the effective use of natural talents and spiritual gifts, and the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit within the church. The project's goal is that each member of IMC would become a servant of Jesus so that they will use their natural talents and spiritual gifts to build up and minister to others.

Chapter three elaborates on the previous chapter regarding biblical leadership, the use of natural talents and spiritual gifts, and how to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit. The focus is explaining a theology of a Spirit-filled life. The church can be formed spiritually in Jesus' style of leadership or by worldly systems like power or dominance. By living and maintaining a Spirit-filled life, the church will not be as vulnerable to the influence of power or control, worldly leadership and other sinful desires. Therefore, the Church will be able to put in practice not only their natural talents but also their spiritual gifts so as to obey God, glorify Him and edify his Church.

Chapter four outlines a ministry plan that introduces and supports the cultivation of a spirit of service in the congregation by putting each person's natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice at IMC. Four modular teachings were given to the pilot group over several Sunday school meetings about living in the Spirit and putting natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice. The participants in the pilot project learned, were encouraged, and then given at least one task as a way of putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice.

Chapter five outlines the implementation of the doctoral project. It puts into practice the ministry plan developed in chapter four. First, I prepared all the necessary materials to run the pilot group. On the last day of the modular teachings, the pilot group was evaluated on their knowledge and application of their natural talents and spiritual

gifts. The results were used to inform and modify the ministry plan before presenting it to the congregation as a whole.

Finally, I am prepared to share the modular teachings with the whole congregation. The pilot group is eager for the whole church to become a part of this soon since they had gained a new understanding of the body of Christ based on the following verses: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7) and “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). Through the teachings, the pilot group came to understand the concept of the Church as the body of Christ. This is what was missing at IMC before this project, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are already cultivating a spirit of service by using our natural talents and spiritual gifts in the church. I plan to launch this new vision for the church starting in January of 2020 based on this project: The whole congregation will experiment what the pilot project went through; they will be equipped spiritually (filled with the Holy Spirit) and will receive the modified modular teachings to put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts at IMC and its community.

Sharing Knowledge with other Churches

In addition to developing the members of IMC, I hope IMC will also be an example for other churches, especially Hispanic churches experiencing similar challenges in being the body of Christ. I know many other pastors who may find this work helpful. Even though this project focuses on the ministry challenge at IMC, the same principles

(natural talents, spiritual gifts and living a Spirit-filled life) can be applied in other local churches or ministries. In this way, I will help others understand and apply what it means to be the body of Christ as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:27, “you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

Mentor and Coach for Other Pastors

I would like to be a mentor and a coach to other pastors and church leaders. Mentoring is about investing in the mentee and sharing one’s knowledge. Coaching is less about teaching and more about guiding by letting the mentee find answers independently. I would like to mentor and coach pastors and church leaders to cultivate a spirit of service in their congregation.

Cultivating a spirit of service is about the development of the Church to become what God has called them to be, the body of Christ. In general, local churches have lost its purpose due to straying from this specific identity of being the body of Christ.¹ “The church is a people called out to live under Christ’s lordship in anticipation of the final consummation of his reign over all the earth. In this sense the church is a missional people.”² Fitch elaborates on a more practical solution to the issue at hand:

I do not believe that the realization as evangelicals that we have “given away” being the church calls for some new technique, new fad, or new denomination. Instead, the great giveaway calls for us as pastors, leaders, elders, and congregants to gather humbly and discern together what it might mean for us to return to the practices of being Christ’s body. . . Perhaps together, out of Scripture and our life together under his lordship, God can use us to reimagine the church faithful for our times.³

¹ David E. Fitch, *The Great Giveaway*, 18.

² *Ibid.*, 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 228.

If the Church is to become the body of Christ, they need to be guided by the Holy Spirit. It is important that I must let my congregation and mentees know that the Holy Spirit will be their guide in their spiritual journey and ministry. By following God in this way, we will not only impact our church but also other churches: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:13a). Therefore, becoming the body of Christ is to be led by the Holy Spirit. And it is through the Holy Spirit that my church and other churches can use their natural talents and spiritual gifts effectively (glorify God and benefit others). All this will be achieved by maintaining their spiritual walk with God by living in the Spirit.

Personal Practical Insights

During this process with IMC, I have gained many practical insights. At the beginning of the project, IMC was unwilling to use their natural talents and spiritual gifts to serve the church. Each member possessed natural talents and spiritual gifts but did not apply them for the benefit of their brothers and sisters as written in 1 Corinthians 12:7, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” These reflections and insights have molded my way of thinking about the local church as being the body of Christ: biblical leadership, natural talents, spiritual gifts, living a Spirit-filled life, oneness in believers and love above all. IMC, a Hispanic non-denominational church with a Pentecostal background located in west Phoenix, Arizona, has been shaped by this project and has started to live a Spirit-filled life with putting their natural talents and spiritual gifts into practice for the glory of God and the edification of their brothers and sisters.

Biblical Leadership

Those who have natural talents and spiritual gifts in the Church, it is important for them to understand that they should not abuse these gifts from God with the people they serve. The worldly influence is strong, and it is important to not fall under their spell of power and control. We will not be able to glorify God and serve others effectively.

It is important to follow the leadership of Jesus. Jesus as a human being had natural talents such as he was a carpenter: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (11:29-30). As a carpenter, he would make the best yoke for his clients. Even though he was talking spiritually here, but it is understood that he was a carpenter by trade: “Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him” (Mk 6:3). He used his natural talents for the service of others; moreover, as the Son of God, he used his spiritual gifts such as teaching, wisdom, healings and everything else for the glory of His Father and the benefit of humanity.

Jesus came to earth for one reason only and that is read in John 3:16 and Luke 19:10: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” and “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10). He used his natural talents and spiritual gifts for that purpose.

As followers of Christ and members of His body, it is essential to also follow his leadership as shown in Scripture. Our natural talents and spiritual gifts are for the benefit

of humanity. The benefit for humanity is for them to be saved and grow in spiritual maturity: “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). We should not be distracted of the major purpose of why we have these natural talents and spiritual gift. Let God use us for his glory so that people can be saved and maintain their faith in Him.

Natural Talents

Natural talents are also called “natural gifts.” People in the Christian realm have put natural gifts as lower or inferior to the spiritual gifts written in Scripture. There was even a response to one of the points in the feedback (see Appendix B) that spiritual gifts are better than natural talents. Because of lack of knowledge in the Word, we can think like this. We forget that God used natural talents to build His tabernacle in the desert (Ex 35:10-26) J. Warner Wallace said that “Even before I started to look at the differences between ‘gifts’ and ‘talents,’ I recognized they all came from the same source. If we accept the premise that an all-powerful God is the creator of all matter and life, it is reasonable to conclude our abilities (even if we are inclined to attribute them to genetics or environment), must ultimately come from the source of genetics and environment: the God who created everything in the first place.”⁴ In other words, everything comes from God, since he is the creator of everything.

⁴ J. Warner Wallace, "The Difference Between 'Natural Talents' and 'Spiritual Gifts,'" <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/the-difference-between-natural-talents-and-spiritual-gifts/>.

Having this mentality that natural talents are also gifts given by God when the person is born naturally, people will feel confident in serving the Lord in the area they feel more comfortable. There is no judging or comparing what gifts the other person has, because everyone will know that they are all useful and necessary in the Church. Moreover, through these natural talents, people who are visitors of the church can help us too. They are potential candidates of the body of Christ. They are not there yet, but soon.

This brings to my memory a couple of people of my church. The first one was not a born-again Christian; however, he used to visit our church a lot. He was very active and was always there to help in any area he could in the church. If, for example, the people were serving food, he always volunteered to help serve the food to those who were seated at the table. He did many things that many people who were members of that church did not do, even more than those who had spiritual gifts. Now that I think of it, it was embarrassing that a person who was not a born-again Christian would have a servant heart. Through his actions, he was following the leadership of Jesus of serving others.

Moreover, this constant visitor asked if he could clean the church all the time. The pastor let him, so that he would not get discouraged. After a while of serving and going to church, he became a new-born Christian. He was always going to the church services and was always there in serving in everything. He later needed to move to Texas. We felt his absence greatly.

This visitor who later became a new-born Christian taught us how to serve the Lord. Some people were against him; they did not like that he served in the church, like cleaning for example, because he was not part of the “body of Christ” or plainly just because he was “not a Christian.” The interesting part is that these people who criticized

did nothing in the church. It was like if his action convicted them. It was something that they could not stand. They did not want to be humbled about it and recognize that they too needed to serve God with their natural talents and spiritual gifts.

The other individual was also a visitor of our church. He donated candy and soda. The pastor wanted to have a little store to raise funds for activities at the church. He volunteered with this responsibility of selling sodas, chips and water after every Sunday service. He did it with a lot of joy. His wife, who went to our church for many years, was overjoyed. She went to church alone for decades. Now because of this responsibility her husband and her went to church together. She and her husband never missed a service. It was through this responsibility that this man started to go to church and became active in the church as well. This gentleman still goes to our church. We see that the Word is making a great impact in him. The rest of his family has been impacted by this, even his son is going to church. What can we say? God works in mysterious ways, even through natural talents.

By these two experiences, we learned that if anyone wants to serve God in any area in the church, we should not stop them. This is an opportunity for them to serve God and understand what Church is about. During their service to the Lord, there is a great chance that they could get closer to God and become a new-born Christian if they still are not. Of course, there are other areas that they will not be able to do in church, just as preaching and teachings, because they will first need to have an encounter with God and be a testimony of salvation to others. It all depends, but we need to discern what will edify the Church and make others want to grow more in their walk with the Lord. It is never about us, but all about God.

Spiritual Gifts

God has blessed his Church greatly. How so? The members are blessed with natural talents and now with spiritual gifts too. It really opened my eyes when I read C. Peter Wagner on his thought that all born-again Christians have at least one gift.⁵ It is true what he said. 1 Peter 4:10 says: “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” This is incredible. That means that every person in the Church can be used for the glory of God. All they must do is believe that they have at least one gift.

I believe that we as leaders of the Church should help these members of the Body of Christ to believe that they have at least one spiritual gift; moreover, after they have found it, it is our duty to help them develop it, and if it is possible they can practice at the Church so that we can motivate and evaluate them at the same time. We should not let envy rule our life. If we see that there are people who, for example, preach better than us because of the gift they have, we should help them get better at it. Moreover, they will help us greatly in our ministry. Envy or sin does not make us see them as assets for God, such as with Paul for God: “¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel’” (Acts 9:15).

Steven Land and Frank Macchia stress greatly on the “priesthood of all believers.”⁶⁷ Frank D. Macchia elaborates more on this by saying: “The universal

⁵ Wagner, *Discerning your Spiritual Gifts*, 5.

⁶ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 18.

⁷ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World*, 19.

priesthood of believers cannot be confined to the priestly function of parents in the home but must shape fundamentally the life of the congregation in its public services and mission in the world. The church must burst forth with signs of grace in an increasingly graceless world, offering many the fountain of life in the Spirit.”⁸ In other words, there should not be one person preaching all the time, or the same person singing or doing any other services in the Church. Each member of the body of Christ is capable of working in any area they want to work in. Many times we want people to witness to everyone in the world. We sometimes encourage people to do mission works. However, they are not encouraged because they have not got the proper training; this includes having experience in our local church. It all starts in the local church.

“ . . . and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Before Jesus left earth, he said that we will start to minister from our own home, our Jerusalem. In this case is our local church. Then after getting the proper knowledge and experience, we will expand to other places. We will be witnesses of the spiritual gifts we have for example. We will bless those from our house first (local church) and then we can bless other people who are outside church; this could be the community or other churches.

I have a friend, a pastor here in Phoenix, AZ who does this. I have visited his church. He puts members to preach. The pastor rarely preaches. After a member preaches, he gives them guidance on how they could improve in their next preaching. He encourages them and guides them. I have witness this. For example, the first time I heard

⁸ Ibid.

this member preach, I was not convinced that he could get any better. His message was not focused and preached all nervous. I heard him again, and the same thing happened. After a while I went back and he was the one preaching again on a Sunday service. His preaching was actually pretty good. He was not nervous anymore. This taught me that all we need in life is to have a desire to serve in the Kingdom of God. If we look for Him, he will do the rest in our life: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt. 6:33). With proper guidance of people’s spiritual gifts, they will develop them, so that God can be glorified more powerfully; also, more people will benefit from those spiritual gifts.

It is interesting to point out again that all the passages (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:8-12 and 1 Peter 4:10-11) that talk about spiritual gifts have two things in common: 1) putting love into action and 2) to teach them that the gifts are to edify each other.⁹ It is never about us. It all focus on God, on God’s love. “. . . God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). These provisions of spiritual gifts come from the provider of love. Therefore, these gifts should be taken in that way. Jesus even said this: “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Mt. 22:37-40).” The spiritual gifts are included here too.

⁹ Bobby Clinton, *Spiritual Gifts*, 45.

Living a Spirit-Filled Life

God has called us to live a Spirit-filled life. Coming from a Pentecostal background, I agree with the definition of Pentecostalism given by Kärkkäinen, which means that their belief is all about experience and putting into practice their spiritual gifts; moreover, this is the reason that there are not many books and journals about their theology compared to other traditions.¹⁰ There are several verses that are used as stages to become filled with the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals believe that after the person has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they are automatically saved. In consequence, they get marked or sealed by the Holy Spirit ((Eph 1:13). After they have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, the next step is to be baptized by the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts 2; moreover, this happens when they speak in other tongues as initial evidence.¹¹ Then, at this stage, the person receives the spiritual gifts found throughout the Bible, like what 1 Corinthians 12 says.¹² The Christian will need to maintain their walk with the Lord after that; this is what is called living a Spirit-filled life.

Romans 8:14 says: “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.” It is clear that those who are of God, they ought to be led by the Spirit of God.

Galatians 5:16-21 is another passage that stresses on living a Spirit-filled life:

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to

¹⁰ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 73.

¹¹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World*, 9.

¹² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World*, 4.

the flesh. They conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Christianity is a lifestyle. Living a Spirit-filled life requires work. It is not to live a “fake life.” It is to live it twenty-hours a day. Like it says in Galatians 5:21b (“I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”) Living a Spirit-filled life depends on our salvation. Those who do not live a Spirit-filled life, sin takes over their life. It is only through living a Spirit-filled life that the Christian can conquer sin; it is not them but the Holy Spirit who guides that they are able to conquer sin.

Everybody sins every day, because this is human nature. However, it is all about repenting of those sins and not live in those sins. “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God” (1 Jn 3:9). That is why the apostle Paul says that if we walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16). It becomes all simple when the person lives a Spirit-filled life. They will be stronger to not gratify the desires of the flesh, because they are not guided by the flesh but by the Spirit. It is all about being vigilant: ““Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt 26:41). When we walk by the Spirit, we will be more alert to discern those things that come from the flesh, such as “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (Gal 5:19b -

21a). We will be able to discern those desires from the flesh through our senses. Like when we are watching something on TV or listening to a toxic conversation. Toxic is what makes us go back to live in the flesh. It is the responsibility for each Christian to renew their minds every day.

In Romans 12:2, the Apostle Paul exhorts the Church to renew their minds so they could be under the will of God: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Moreover, he says in Romans 8:5-8: “Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.” Therefore, it is when we walk by the Spirit that we are able to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). This does not happen if we are living in the flesh. The renewal of one’s mind is necessary for us to remain living a Spirit-filled life.

Oneness in Believers

Putting into practice the natural talents, the spiritual gifts and living a Spirit-filled life brings unity in the Church. Each of them is not centered on oneself, but for the benefit of others. This oneness is founded on giving; this is another word for Love. It is through these natural talents and spiritual gifts that people grow in maturity of oneness.

Each local church depends on the Lord and on the leaders that God placed over it.

There is no pastor without sheep nor sheep without a pastor. Each one needs the other, and Jesus is the guide who makes both groups find each other and follow his Word. The pastor, for example, and the congregation grow together in Christ to be the body of Christ as God commands. Both groups should have confidence and knowing their natural talents and spiritual gifts. As the body of Christ, they can help each other to recognize these natural talents and spiritual gifts in order to advance their spiritual growth and serve other better. The congregation is also commanded to be servants. By doing so, the pastor and the congregation serve each other and realize they are equal in God, since Christ is the only true head of the Church (Col :18). The church is the body of Christ that follows his Word and not commandments given by humans for their own interests. The Church's only interest is to serve God and grow more in him.

In the church, the pastor leads the group toward goals like distributing food to the needy, raising funds, worshipping God, reading the Bible, cleaning the church building and more. However, the pastor cannot do everything. The pastor's main job is to feed the flock: "So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said: It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables... We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4). The flock must help the pastor carry the load, because we are all the body of Christ. If it is not done like this, there is injustice.

This reminds me when we founded IMC. We started the first few months with a couple of families. Pretty much the pastor and his family did everything. There were times that there was no one to lead the worship, so the pastor did it. Many times the pastor started a service and led it all the way until the end. There was no one to help. Yes,

those people knew about God, but they never experienced serving in the Church.

Moreover, new people came in, but did not know anything about the Lord. It was until they had an encounter with God that we had hope for them to help the pastor.

It was a process of many months of giving the Word to them and training them in the process. It was until the end of the year that it was easier for the pastor to carry the load. There is a great difference between starting a church and being in a church that is already established. In the first scenario there is no structure, while in the latter there is structure that has been there for many years. In other words; in the latter the people know what to do and how to do it. The former, the people needs to be taught and guided during the process. It is through this process that the disciples of Jesus experienced with the Lord as well.

It is a privilege to serve in the Body of Christ. We are dealing with people who are sons and daughters of God and have been washed with the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus died for these people; therefore, it is a privilege to serve within the church as well as a delicate task. By leading groups that the Lord has ordained, the Church is fulfilling God's mission of converting people, growing them in the Lord and making them into disciples. The gospels of Mark and Matthew state, "He said to them: Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned..." (Mk 16:15-16) and "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Amen" (Mt 28:19-20). Becoming a disciple is when the believer is putting into practice their natural talents, spiritual gifts

and living a Spirit-filled life. There will be a multiplication of believers to grow in maturity of oneness.

Love above All

1 Corinthian 12 finishes with this: “. . . And yet I will show you the most excellent way.” The apostle Paul prepares the audience with something greater than spiritual gifts, and that is love. In the next chapter (13), Paul describes what love is; he also mentions that love will always be there.

1 Corinthians 13:8: “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.” By reading the context, we can see the Corinthian church boasted in having spiritual gifts; however, we see here that those gifts will come to an end. Those gifts (spiritual and even natural) are used only here on earth. There is no need for them after the people leave earth. God has given these spiritual gifts for example so that they can help each other while they are living. Paul reminds them that love is more important. It is through love that everything that God has given to us will be administered correctly; this means giving God the glory and helping our fellow brothers and sisters.

Moreover, it is through love that the Church will be living as the body of Christ. The reason is because “. . . God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). And it is only through that love that people can live a Spirit-filled life as well, and not a life that is false.

Final Thoughts

IMC, a Hispanic non-denominational church with a Pentecostal background located in west Phoenix, Arizona, has been shaped by this project which addresses its

particular ministry challenge of congregants not serving efficiently. Each member possesses natural talents and spiritual gifts but were not applying them for the benefit of their brothers and sisters as written in 1 Corinthians 12:7, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” After running this project with the pilot group, that group has put into practice their natural talents and spiritual gifts among their brother and sisters in the congregation. After I received feedback from the pilot group and adjusted the project accordingly, it will be shared soon with the whole congregation. The modular teachings were modified further since then as well. With the help of the Holy Spirit working through this ministry project, IMC will become fully a church known for serving one another and therefore become the body of Christ in the way that God wants it to be: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27).

APPENDIX A

Name: _____

Date: _____

Needs of IMC Church

Requirement to Serve: Desire

Your need/desire (your natural talents and spiritual gifts)

Write in what area/s would you like to serve in the church: _____

These are the Current Service Needs in the Church. Write an X in the Area you would like to Serve:

Clean inside the church = _____

Clean outside the church = _____

Fill the five-gallon bottles with water = _____

Throw out the trash in the garbage container outside = _____

Maintain order (e.g. children, adolescents) during worship and preaching = _____

Maintenance (e.g. change bulbs) = _____

Serve food in special events (e.g. Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, Thanksgiving) = _____

Pick-up trash in special events (e.g. Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, Thanksgiving) = _____

Open the church 20 – 30 minutes before the worship service= _____

Close the church after the worship service = _____

Organize social events = _____

Organize spiritual events = _____

Teacher for the children = _____

Teacher for the adolescents = _____

Buy the accessories for the Last Supper = _____

❖ **Special Note: Please don’t discourage anyone else in the church who wants to serve/help.**

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45).

APPENDIX B

Post-Evaluation

- Say what points (e.g. natural talents, spiritual gifts, living in the Spirit) you liked most in the modular teachings.
- Explain your experience in putting your natural talents/spiritual gifts into practice in the Church or outside the Church.
- Say and explain in detail how you will put into practice your natural talents/spiritual gifts with your fellow brothers and sisters in the Church.

Suggestion:

- In your opinion, what can we do better so to modify and present it to the whole congregation?

APPENDIX C

Pre-Evaluation

- Explain what made you want to be a part of this pilot group.
- Say what you believe is the main requirement to serve in the church.
- Define “natural talents” and “spiritual gifts.” Note: Don’t worry if you don’t know, because we will be talking about this later.
- Mention what you are good at whether in the church or outside the church.
- List the areas that you believe that the church needs help on.
- From the list you created above, say which ones you are available to serve in the church.

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