

MANUAL FOR IMMIGRANTS WITH A PURPOSE



EDITED BY
Misiones En Conjunto
MISSIONS TOGETHER

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The leaders of the work of God in Spain and Latin America salute you.

Over the years we have observed how immigration has been a blessing for the work of God in Spain. Understanding the current trend of immigration, in a September 2008 meeting Assemblies of God superintendents felt the burden to see how to channel this trend for the church and the work of God.

After a process, this manual was born. Its motivation is to guide other Christians so their immigration has a greater purpose than the usual reasons that originate that effort.

We hope this manual will be a blessing to you and to the work of God.

God bless you.

The Ad Hoc Immigrants Commission

Daniel de los Reyes—Mexico

Juan Carlos Escobar—Spain

Brad Walz—Argentina

DeLonn Rance—El Salvador/USA

Samuel Rodríguez—Venezuela/Peru

Daniel Pelozo—Argentina/Costa Rica

Lisandro Bojorquez—El Salvador

Enrique Vargas—Costa Rica

María Luisa Palma—Honduras

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INTRODUCTION

By Juan Carlos Escobar and Scott Smith

Immigrants have a role in the evangelization of a nation. Throughout history all countries have received the gospel through foreigners. We can also say that even Israel received the gospel from the One “who was made a little lower than the angels,” who left His throne and Father and came to save us from our sins. Just a little later, Peter and Paul would head the missionary efforts of the Early Church that changed the world.

In 1991 God led the Assemblies of God of Spain to start a missions department. Our first missionary was sent about three years later.

At that time God moved around the world. Many of the countries that have received missionaries have begun to send missionaries. Argentina was a pioneer in many aspects, but many other countries also raised their eyes, looked at the fields, and did something about it. Spain has received many men and women who gave their lives unselfishly to see the gospel spread to so many in this country in spiritual need.

However, the spiritual need in Spain and in most Western European countries is so huge—despite the effective help of missionaries in Latin America, Korea, Scandinavia, the United States, and elsewhere—that the Spanish population has not been reached yet. Spanish Christians comprised less than 0.5 percent of the total Spanish population for a long time. This means that over 99.5 percent of Spanish citizens do not have their names written in the Book of Life.

When two major factors converged—Spain’s low birthrate and its growing economic prosperity—the need for immigrant labor began to increase in a country that had provided labor throughout the twentieth century for many other countries in Europe. North Africa, an obvious candidate to provide that labor, was not enough to meet the existing demand and certainly was not a positive contribution to the national church. So God opened the doors for Latin Americans.

A majority of that first wave of Latin immigrants was young men in their twenties and thirties, and it has been observed that a large percentage were Pentecostal Christians. Estimates vary widely, but currently more than 500,000 Ecuadorians and more than 350,000 Colombians are living in Spain. Although less than half of these immigrants are born-again Christians, no organization in the world is capable of sending so many believers to another country. God brought spiritual laborers to Spain. Additionally, many more came to the Lord, because when they left their home and families, they experienced a great homesickness that led them to seek Jesus.

Two events have been observed. First, the impact on the Spanish church was immediate and positive. New residents came looking for places to congregate, and the effect was immediate and undeniable.

Among the benefits of the Latin influx, we can mention the following:

1. **A wider testimony.** Many Latin Americans seemed not to have problems when testifying to their Spanish neighbors at work or when inviting them to church.
2. **An increase in spontaneity and variety in worship.**
3. **A clear respect for the ministry of the pastor.**
4. **A significant increase in offerings and tithes.**
5. **An increase in worship attendance and participation in the ministries of the congregation.** One organization says that 65 percent of the people attending evangelical churches in Spain are from Latin America.
6. **A reduction in the time to start new churches in almost every village.**
7. **A dramatic increase in the number of Latin Americans preparing for the ministry in both residential and distance programs at the seminary.** God willing, this will have a positive impact in the future.

However, according to our observations, there were also negative spiritual consequences among a relatively high percentage of Pentecostal Latin Americans.

A Spiritual “Cooling”

In Latin America many congregations hold services six or seven days a week. In our opinion, the daily worship service has replaced many Latinos’ personal devotional time, which prevents them from developing the daily habit of spending time in the Word and in prayer.

In Spain a typical Assemblies of God congregation has one service Sunday morning and a Bible study and prayer meeting during the week. That is less than half of the services Latin immigrants were used to having. Consequently, when they came to Spain and realized a large part of their daily lifestyle had been removed, many of them felt disorientated and upset, feeling that the churches in Spain were not meeting their needs.

Another factor to consider is the high price paid by born-again Spaniards—ostracized by their families, embarrassed in the community, and despised in public, among other things—which makes them more receptive to joining a community of believers and being disciplined in a more personal way.

It should be noted that the popular sentiment toward evangelical Christians has improved, although there are still gaps, particularly in smaller towns. Comparing congregations in Spain to the generally-larger congregations in many Latin American countries, we see that in Spain, discipleship is more eagerly desired by new believers and more readily offered.

In many cases, this intensive discipleship to new converts in Spain helps them avoid many pitfalls of the enemy. The impression we have is that many Latin Christians who arrived in Spain received

neither individual discipleship nor small-group discipleship because their congregations assumed the daily service would supply this need. Consequently, many of these Christians have not known the inherent need for personal discipleship. Therefore, many of the Latin believers who emigrated to Spain know the slang and typical behavior of the evangelical church but lack doctrinal and biblical training. Even their own lives (individually as well as in their families and marriages) do not always conform to biblical principles.

Testing or Trying the Delights of the World

Suddenly, many Latin American immigrants had more money and more free time. Perhaps the daily church service supplied a great social need in the lives of these believers when they were in their own countries. Without this daily activity, boredom became a danger. Additionally, their Christian family and friends were no longer present to encourage morality, unlike in their homeland. So many Latin believers were found in a strange city, feeling alone and bored, and with money available. Having more money and more leisure time resulted in more powerful temptations. Sadly, a percentage of Latin Americans who were true believers in their countries of origin fell away from the Lord. Others became people under high pressure, with schedules that led them to seek an escape. Many people with responsibilities in their churches and ministries —such as youth pastors or children’s leaders— succumbed to worldly temptations.

The Spanish government did not help in this regard either. In most cases, the government demanded that immigrants live in Spain for a year before bringing spouse and family. This resulted in some Latin Americans having two families, one in the home country and another illegal one in Spain. This behavior occurs among only a minority of the immigrants, however.

The Double-Minded

For many Latin Americans the reason for their migration to Spain was a bad starting point. A large percentage of Latin Americans who emigrated to Spain came to earn money, but few had sought God to actually know His will. As a result, their attitudes and commitment were not as good as they could have been. In the past five years many have confessed that emphasizing the economic rather than spiritual aspects of life was a big mistake. Many have repented. These are not people who left the church for a life of sin; rather, they are brothers who had regularly attended services and lived decent lives. However, they had been double-minded to try to serve God and money, an endeavor that is not only difficult but impossible. They were storing up treasures here on earth to return to their cities and maybe start a business or buy a house. But Jesus did not say to be careful when storing up treasures here on earth; He said we mustn’t do it at all. As a result, these believers have not been as effective spiritually as they could have been if they had sought the guidance of His Spirit in Spain.

Other problems have improved with time. For example, the first Latin Americans who emigrated to Spain were shocked by the cultural differences. They assumed that their adaptation would not be as intensive as it would have been in England or Germany because of speaking the same language, though communication among immigrants already in Spain and the newcomers did make the cultural clash easier to tackle.

Another factor complicating the adaptation even now is the contempt many Latin Americans experience by Spanish society. This is almost nonexistent in the church, but this does happen in the rest of Spanish society. Many deal with these attitudes every day, so they end up seeking refuge among people of their home country, which often leads to a kind of nationalism at church. If pastors in Spain are not careful, they could, for example, cause divisions among Christians from Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Remember that the kingdom of heaven is like a big net that collects all kinds of “fish” — rich and poor, educated and illiterate, Jew and Greek, Colombian and Ecuadorian.

Spain has had several opportunities for revival in the last 35 years. God has moved through charismatic Catholics, Gypsies, drug addicts, and now immigrants. We are excited about having Latin American Christians among us in Spain. We believe they were sent by God in quantities no missionary agency in the world could match. They have been a tremendous, powerful, and positive influence in the churches here. We believe if the churches of Latin America and Spain join efforts, immigrant believers can easily become what Spain needs and what God had in mind from the beginning.

REFLECTIONS ON RUTH'S LIFE

By Brad Walz

The board of Missions Together, together with the superintendents of the Assemblies of God of America, chose Ruth as a project theme.

When we think of immigrants in the Bible, many come to mind. Abraham was an immigrant in many ways. Even Jacob, Isaac, and Moses were immigrants. We also think of Daniel, the three Hebrews, or Joseph. The Bible is full of examples of immigrants, but when we discussed Ruth in our meeting, we were shocked by the similarities with our Latin American situation. Her spiritual example is what motivated our title, *Immigrants With a Purpose*.

What Can We Learn From Ruth?

Ruth's immigration seems necessitated by personal crisis (widowhood), but was actually a spiritual decision. Her husband had come to the country as a young man, driven because of drought and lack of food. A few years later, due to personal and national crisis, Naomi decided to return to Judah because the situation had improved there. Although Ruth was encouraged by Naomi to stay on their land, she decided to follow her mother-in-law to Judah, but not because of a crisis in her country. We can say Ruth was motivated by spiritual reasons to accompany her mother-in-law.

Ruth 1:16–18 (NIV) reads,

Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me. When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Now, regardless of personal crises or problems that motivate emigration, it is important to have a spiritual reason to provide purpose. Purpose gives us life. One reason for the essays in this manual is to provide a spiritual and not just a personal motivation in immigration.

Ruth had the heart of a servant. She did not go with a servant's attitude, but with a servant's heart—there is a difference. We see how she wanted to bless her mother-in-law. Her attitude was key, not only to bless her, but also to open the door to the blessings in their new country as well as with her future husband. It is important to remember that the attitudes we carry with us to the new country are crucial to bless the country and that they also result in blessing for us.

God opened doors for Ruth. God gave her favor with Boaz, and he was impressed with her testimony and motivation to bless her mother-in-law. He also noticed she went "to a land with people she did not

know before.” God protected Ruth through Boaz. It is very important for immigrants to find God’s protection first and then, when possible, find a church that can help them avoid the lack of protection in a new land.

It is important to recognize that only God can open the necessary doors. But God can also use people, nations, and the Church to cover immigrants and guide them so they avoid innocent mistakes (as Boaz said in Ruth 2) by ignoring the new country and culture. Both the church and spiritual people can help them and cover them.

She impacted her new nation. Because of Ruth’s commitment to Naomi and through circumstances arranged by God, she ended up making a big impact on the new nation she chose to inhabit. A few generations later her descendant David became king and gave us many psalms. Jesus himself was part of her descendants.

Because she remained committed to her purpose for going to Judah, Ruth had a great impact on the nation. Therefore, we encourage Latin Americans to emigrate with a purpose.

Conclusion

The story of Ruth is the biblical story that comes closest to the current immigration reality. Naomi was in Moab to seek prosperity, and she returned with Ruth for economic reasons. Similarly, European emigrants went to the New World to seek prosperity, and much like Ruth and Naomi returned to Judah, many Latin emigrants go to Europe for economic reasons. Ruth was fragile, but her spirit and Boaz’s protection brought salvation to the coming Messiah’s family.

If Latin American emigrants keep a vision and a purpose in their emigration, they will have a greater impact on Europe. Europe needs God. May no emigrants go to Europe concerned only with their particular situation. May they be a blessing to the nations in which they settle. We must learn from Ruth’s life. She had a life of purpose and blessed her new nation and, as time passed, the nations.

RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE LEAVING

By Lisandro Bojorquez

The purpose of this essay is to guide emigrating believers and the pastors who send them so their departure will be well organized and successful.

First, it is important for an emigrant's pastor to assess the family situation. They should also take time for prayer, seeking confirmation from God about the trip and guidance on the appropriate timing. The apostle Paul said: "I went up again to Jerusalem.... I went in response to a revelation.... I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain" (Galatians 2:1-2, NIV).

Paul became a successful missionary throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire. This was a result of adapting himself to God's direction and understanding the opportunity given to him at that time. Relying on God's direction led Paul to avoid seemingly ideal opportunities. One example was Paul's desire to meet needs in Bithynia, but God guided him to go to Macedonia instead. This guidance by the will of God changed Paul's life and ministry. Those desiring to emigrate must focus on the will of God and not "run in vain."

Second, many people migrate to flee ethical problems in the judiciary sphere, at church, in the family, at work, from the government, and otherwise. If Christians do not resolve situations first, it could have an effect on their standing in the church where they serve. Because pastoral letters of recommendation are requested, this can be problematic. Another recommendation is to encourage emigrants to extend the kingdom of God in the country through their Christian experience and ministry and through the gifts given by God, rather than seeking better economic opportunities.

The pastor of the Christian emigrant must find out information about the new country before the emigrant leaves by asking the national office of the U.S. Assemblies of God church names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses in the city where the emigrant wishes to go. The pastor then must put the emigrant in touch with the receiving church. After this, the pastor should provide a letter of recommendation specifying the behavior of the emigrant, ministerial performance, family status, and other aspects needed for incorporation into the membership and ministries of the church. It is important that the pastor send an emigrant believer's information to his or her own national office to make them aware of believers getting involved in the Ruth project.

Last, and not least, all emigrant believers should be guided in the responsibility they have with the receiving church, such as to attend; be involved in evangelism; have respect for the leaders; be faithful in giving tithes, prayer, and fasting; and encouraging the expansion of the kingdom of God and others.

WHY DOES THIS MIGRATORY PHENOMENON TAKE PLACE?

By Daniel Pelozo

The processes suggested in this essay are born from the self-preservation of a species rather than an individual. They are a comparative evaluation of the environment where a person lives, in terms of available resources and possibilities, and a different environment, in which there is a perception that these resources and possibilities can be bigger and better.

In the case of migration processes Christians are involved in, we can redirect motivation by giving it direction and meaning, so if they face a loss of valuable investments or possessions, they can realize there was a purpose for it. It is an opportunity to serve the Lord, and they can be a blessing wherever they go, especially in areas of urgent need of the gospel. Therefore, spiritual meaning can be added to an emigration that might not be born out of a missionary calling. Migration has different motivations, as described below.

Movement Caused by Economic Reasons

This type of migration is where more or less massive groups of people settle in a new place provisionally, seasonally, or permanently to find a better quality of life. Although not all attempts have been positive, remember Christ's example in Philippians 2, who for love's sake became poor and provides a serious and commendable model of mission.

1. **Migration and poverty.** This kind of migration could be judged as invalid or questionable, but if we bring purpose to this type of migration, the receiving national church may still be favored.
2. **Migration and wealth.** This subgroup includes people who can afford short-term travel, and the trips are used charitably. They probably do not understand missions, but being in contact with reality may open their hearts to support missions (as in the case of David Wagner and fishing trips).
3. **Work migration.** Companies that operate around the world require specialized senior staff to move to different markets. They can be guided to see their trips across the world as a missionary way of helping the church.

Movements Caused by Social Reasons

Generally, social problems faced on a continental level make those who have their roots in the Old World want to go back.

1. **Migration and persecution.** Some biblical examples are repeated today, such as the Exodus out of Egypt, with refugees of war or religious persecution. Abraham, who left with a purpose, is

now represented by people who migrate in search of new opportunities. Also do not forget that the establishment of the Gentile church was mostly a response to persecution.

2. **Migration and reconstruction.** Countries devastated by war, natural disasters, or aging of the population (France, Great Britain, Germany and other Central European countries, etc.) require much labor, often supplemented with people from European colonies in Africa, Asia, and America.
3. **Migration and decolonization.** From the 1960s a mass migration of people occurred, mostly from Europe. The flow of immigrants was more related to settling in a new land of opportunities. Today the social problems of our continent are encouraging the return of these immigrants to their roots and homeland in search of a new horizon.

What Is the Result?

Persecuted believers carry the most valuable thing they own: their faith in Jesus Christ. When they reach their promised land, they will want to sow the Word there, because it is the only thing brought from their homeland.

GETTING READY TO BE A BLESSING IN THE NEW LAND

By DeLonn Rance

The immigrant who believes in Jesus Christ can be assured that, no matter what happens, the Lord guides and redeems his or her steps. The Word of God says, “A person’s steps are directed by the LORD” (Proverbs 20:24, NIV). “In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps” (Proverbs 16:9, NIV). “The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him” (Psalms 37:23, NIV).

For the immigrant, as for a missionary, it is important to recognize and affirm that one is sent by the Lord and not scattered throughout the circumstances of life. Although the immediate reason for moving from one country to another can be for reasons of violence, natural disasters, or other economic opportunities, the child of God by faith affirms that He directs the steps of the righteous and redeems negative situations, because the Word says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, NIV).

Thus, the self-perception of all Christian immigrants is that God has them where He wants them with a divine purpose: *to be a blessing in the new land.*

To be a blessing, the immigrant must prepare. In the economy of God all blessings comes from Him, but He allows human beings to collaborate in His work (2 Corinthians 6:1). This essay intends to facilitate the immigrant’s preparation, identifying key areas of preparation and some tools for cultural adjustment. Preparation must start before the immigrant leaves the country of origin and must continue when arriving in the host country.

Previous Preparation

Before leaving, it is recommended that immigrants communicate with national church leaders. They can be a source of important information as well as moral and spiritual support. They can provide:

1. Practical and spiritual advice.
2. Recommendations and presentation letters for the host country’s leaders.
3. Names and addresses of national church leaders, local pastors, and other helpful contacts in the host country.
4. Other useful resources.

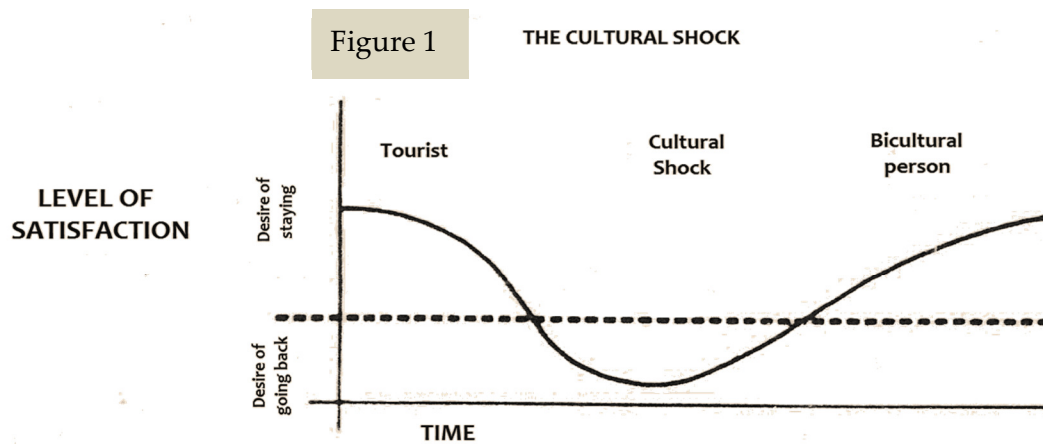
Also, the immigrant should be prepared for the cultural adjustment he or she will experience when entering the new country. Recommendations include:

1. Taking time to pray for the people and churches of the host country.
2. Studying the history, culture, and language of the host country and city.

3. Examining cross-cultural communication and cultural anthropology.
4. Studying the history, culture, and current conditions of the host country's national church.
5. Preparing spiritually to be Christ's ambassador, remembering that "to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21, NIV).

Preparation in the Field

Immigrants must know that when they get to the host country, they will experience a feeling of confusion when meeting people in the local culture. Anthropologists call this "culture shock" (see Figure 1 below). Each culture has its own way of life that is a result of formal and informal rules. Passing from the rules of one's culture to the unknown rules of another culture leads to confusion and disorientation. At first, everything is new and seems "romantic," but the new person eventually feels the difference. Culture shock and the desire to return to the home country sets in. Each person is unique, but for most people who immigrate permanently, culture shock occurs from six months up to a year after moving to the new country.



Symptoms of culture shock include:

1. A sense of disorientation while among local people.
2. The desire to leave.
3. Comparing the two cultures.
4. The rejection of cultural norms.
5. The feeling of being trapped.
6. Feelings of hostility.
7. Loss of spiritual vision.

8. A sense of failure and self-rejection¹

Any person who moves from one culture to another to live long term goes through some degree of cultural shock or stress. The immigrant can overcome the desire to leave and become bicultural by becoming dedicated to the principles of acculturation and by seeking the Lord's help. Suffering culture shock does not indicate a lack of spirituality, but it can impact a person's spiritual life if care is not taken.

To overcome cultural shock and stress, an effective ambassador of Christ should practice the principles of acculturation detailed below.

PRINCIPLES OF ACCULTURATION²

Follow the Rules of Conduct of the Host Culture

The immigrant should seek to follow the rules of conduct of the host country if this conduct does not violate the standards of the Word of God and the immigrant's conscience. That is, the immigrant should speak, walk, greet, interact, move, dress, sing, pray, worship, congregate, etc., according to local regulations, as long as these do not cause the immigrant a loss of identity in Christ.

For example, in some cultures, as they did in the New Testament, people greet one another with a kiss. For someone from a culture where people greet one another with a handshake, kissing a person will be a challenge at first, but it does not violate the standards of the Word and, with practice, will eventually feel normal. However, if the host culture's behavioral norms allow sex outside of marriage, the immigrant who is a child of God must reject the local norm because it violates biblical commands.

Judge Conduct by Host-Culture Standards

The human tendency is to judge the conduct of another person as one's cultural norms. However, to acculturate, we must judge the behavior of individuals according to their own behavior. The Latin American who emigrates to Britain might say, "What happened to these people? They drive their vehicles in the wrong lane!" because according to the rules (and law!) of Britain, people must drive a vehicle in the left lane.

Another example might be that in many churches in Latin America, public worship includes dancing. A Latin American arriving in a less-demonstrative culture would be wrong to assume the host church lacks vitality because the worship does not include dancing; the cultural expressions of worship are simply different. To acculturate, the behavior must be judged according to local norms.

Build a Platform for New Ideas

¹ Larry D. Pate, *Misionología: Nuestro Cometido Transcultural* (Miami, FL: Editorial Vida, 1987), pp. 130–131.

² *Ibíd.*, pp.132-141 *Ibíd.*, pp.132-141

The immigrant should not introduce ideas, messages, and important innovations until a platform has been established from which to penetrate the minds of listeners. What underlies this principle is that to be heard and understood in a local culture, the immigrant must learn to develop friendships and relationships with its people. Christian immigrants must seize every opportunity to share the gospel, but they must learn how to speak the language and communicate in that context, or the gospel will be distorted in the ears of local people.

Contribute to the Gospel's Transformation of People's Worldview

By knowing the local culture and establishing a communication platform, an immigrant must contribute prophetically to transforming that culture's worldview. Every culture has good points that should be affirmed, because its people were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). But the evil in a culture is a reflection of the fall of man, and this must be confronted with the gospel. By contributing to people's transformation in a spirit of humility and love, the immigrant will feel like a member of the local culture.

Trace a Profile of Basic Values of the Host Culture

Facilitating cultural adjustment helps identify cultural aspects that differ from one's culture. With help from people in the local culture, the immigrant can trace a profile of that culture's basic values (see Figure 2, next page).

For example, the first value helps the immigrant identify the concept of permanence or change, so the emigrant from Guatemala who goes to San Francisco, California, might identify Guatemala as more of a traditionalist culture (between the extreme of 0–1 or moderate level of 2–4) and California as a culture very open to change (at the other extreme of 9 or 10).

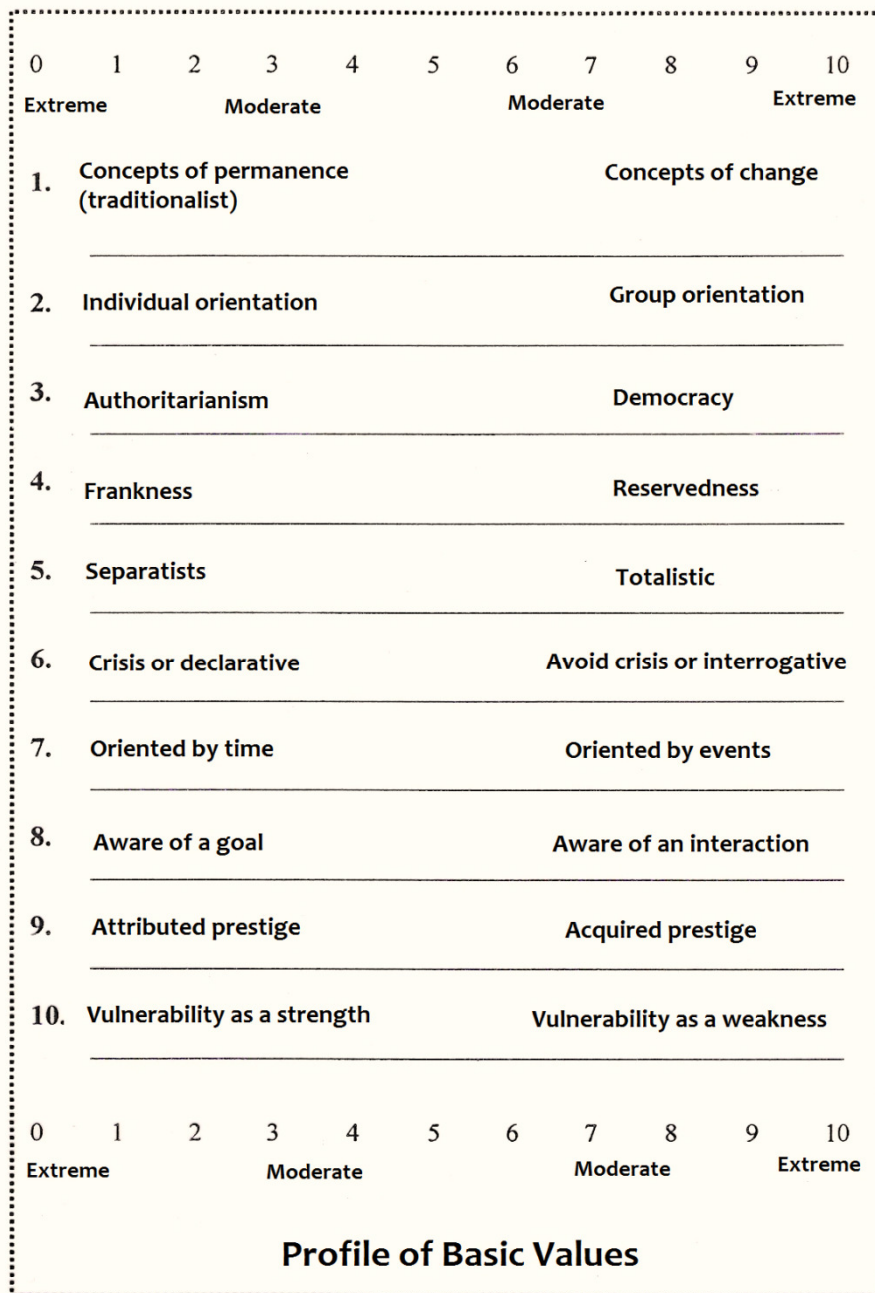
It's not that one culture is better than another; a significant cultural distance on the scale simply means the immigrant must be aware of this cultural area. The more cultural distance, the bigger the cultural adjustment. But if the immigrant culture is identified as an 8 and the receiving culture as a 9, then obviously, the adjustment will be smaller.

For more information, please note the book by Larry D. Pate, *Misionología: Nuestro Cometido Transcultural* (Missiology: Our Transcultural Mission), and recommended books at the end of this essay.

Conclusion

The cultural, physical, and spiritual challenges for immigrants are great, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, immigrants will become a blessing to their new land. It requires effort, preparation, and commitment, but immigrants who operate in the power of the gospel and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, nurtured in their spiritual life, will be blessing to the host church, an ambassador for Christ, and a light to the nations.

Figure 2



Helpful Books

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BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF IMMIGRATION WITH A PURPOSE

By **María Luisa Palma**

Introduction

Migration is normal in this day and age, so nations are seeking positive ways to channel the flow of people who come to their countries. Parameters are marked so that the country can effectively take advantage of the presence of foreigners.

If nations are concerned about considering immigration at a secular level, then the Church should even more so. It is necessary for Christian immigrants to understand that each step we take in or out of our country has divine purpose. When we realize this, our migration will help spread the gospel, which is the desire of God's heart. We will discuss some biblical characters who fulfilled their divine intentional purpose as immigrants.

Nehemiah

God had promised the people of Israel that they would return to their land. This promise was fulfilled in the days of King Cyrus (2 Chronicles 36:22–23). Nehemiah was part of the intentional migration at the time. He communicated with other immigrant Jews and found out the people's needs (Nehemiah 1:3); sought God's will (Nehemiah 1:4–11); asked key people for help (Nehemiah 2: 1–10); explored the terrain where he would fulfill his purpose; informed, motivated, and organized the people; and started the reconstruction (Nehemiah 2–4).

God's main purpose for Nehemiah as an immigrant was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, a task that had been paralyzed for 16 years. Nehemiah prepared his team in Babylon, from where he would emigrate. He joined Ezra, who did the "spiritual" work in Jerusalem while Nehemiah did the physical work. One built physical walls, and the other spiritual ones. This is a beautiful example of love that immigrants must feel for the place where they were born. Nehemiah was responsible, spiritual, and faithful in his host country, but when he was blessed, he did not forget his commitment and was sensitive to the divine call, even if it meant danger, hard work, and much spiritual searching.

In different nations one must work with teams to communicate the expansion of the Kingdom. When Nehemiah did this, it allowed him to fully comply with God's purpose for him and his people.

Daniel

This immigrant leader excelled in the governmental aspect of the host country, becoming the third governor of the land (Daniel 5:29). He served in this role under four kings (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius) and three empires (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek).

The wisdom of Daniel, along with his prophetic gift, let him see the big picture of God's global agenda, starting from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the second coming of Christ to earth to establish His millennial kingdom.

Daniel was not contaminated by a culture with pagan worship; instead, he had a permanent devotional life despite the danger involved in doing so. His unshakable faith and sensitivity to God's voice, as well as his social and intellectual inheritance, enabled him to fulfill God's purpose as an immigrant.

The Three Hebrews: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

These Jewish officers, contemporaries of Daniel, made a difference by daring to challenge the king and being different than thousands of pagan Babylonians, efforts that were notorious throughout the Babylonian empire. They did not accept the contaminated food of the king or worship his statue, so they were cast into the fiery furnace. Even though it was heated seven times hotter than normal, God saved them (Daniel 3).

Three highlights stand out in the lives of these young people: they were persecuted, they persevered, and they grew in the kingdom where they were immigrants. Like these three immigrants, the Lord uses pastors, missionaries, and educators to support and expand the work of God to the ends of the earth.

Esther

Esther was an immigrant sent to preserve the Jewish people from being exterminated (Esther 4:14). She teaches us that immigrants often don't understand their divine purpose at first and can refuse to obey.

Esther's profile shows a beautiful young woman who was spiritual and obedient. Once convinced of God's purpose in her life, she looked for divine support and set strategies. We note that despite being a woman, a foreigner, and a wife who had to wait for the king's directions (difficult circumstances at the time), she took on the challenge of God to preserve her people (Esther 4:15-16).

Like Esther, may Christian immigrants accept God's challenge, do not underestimate their sociocultural situation, and do not let their past limit their present or their nation's future.

Joseph

Joseph received God's revelation of his life's purpose in childhood, but he didn't understand its timing. He rashly tried to prematurely accelerate its fulfillment (Genesis 37). Joseph teaches us how important it is to understand God's plan and timing.

To go or to stay at the pertinent time may lead us to live under difficult circumstances like Joseph's (Genesis 37: 5-11), but these made Joseph mature. How rewarding to recognize the fulfillment of the Word: "We know that in all things God works for the good."

In Joseph's profile, we see him as a good son, a loving brother, spiritual, responsible, a loyal companion, and a faithful administrator.

Immigrants, like Joseph, must know that they will go through a process in order to fulfill God's purpose for their lives and nations.

Ruth

God's purpose in the life of Ruth was to show us His plan to extend redemption to the Gentiles—so much so that Ruth is part of the Messianic lineage (Ruth 4:17–22).

Despite her pagan background, Ruth was an obedient, determined, sensitive, courageous, hard-working young woman, which allowed her to faithfully fulfill God's purpose for her life and for humanity.

Conclusion

In the previous six cases all were immigrants, and we can see that each one fulfills his or her purpose in the time, place, and way God provided. Also, the variety of personalities and characters shows God's respect for individuality and the process of enculturation every immigrant can experience when willing to comply with his or her divinely appointed plan.

These also showed how blessed the hosts were by the ministry of these immigrants. It is a successful triad of God, the immigrant, and the host—but only if the last two understand God's purpose for them. In these times of migration, may both immigrants and hosts accept God's plan for their lives so that the gospel may be spread to all nations. It is the Lord's purpose to make every immigrant a full ambassador of the Holy Spirit who can be part of the last revival before the rapture of the Church.

THE HEART OF A LATIN AMERICAN LEADER

By Daniel De Los Reyes

After leaving the Garden of Eden because of sin, man became migrant. Sociology will emphasize that nomadic man became sedentary after discovering the domestication of animals and agriculture, but the first migration is because of sin. Adam and Eve had to leave comfort to face a new reality.

In the course of time, Abraham became migrant by divine mandate to seek the land to which God had called him, in order to multiply his descendants and prosper him greatly:

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." So Abram went, as the LORD had told him" (Genesis 12:1-4, NIV).

"Go from your country" became an indispensable command for the achievement of God's vision in Abraham's life, establishing a source of blessing in his life and on all the people on earth. Because of this blessed servant who obeyed the Lord, we now walk on the path of God's provision from this champion of faith. He had to migrate to a land that would be shown to him so he could increase as a nation, bless and be blessed, and have the promise of a great name.

Then over time his descendants had to immigrate into Egypt for lack of bread, with a plan God had revealed to Abraham:

Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions" (Genesis 15:13-15, NIV).

Slavery for 400 years was hard, but it produced the wealth and character needed to return to the land in a more definite way.

Then during the time of Moses, migration was caused by freedom from slavery. The people had to move to the land of milk and honey. People changed their residence for the sake of life improvement. This type of move has a high cost we are not always willing to pay. The example of the Israelites in the desert illustrates the desperation of the people and of the servant leader who leads difficult people.

Centuries later David migrated to adjacent kingdoms because of the political situation with Saul's kingdom. Later the people divided and migrated into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. When the kingdoms fell, God's people fell captive and once again became migrants, and God had to raise prophets to warn them to walk in the Word.

In the New Testament we find that Jesus' family migrated from Israel to Egypt because of Herod's mandate to sacrifice children under two years of age. Later John the Baptist went into the wilderness to baptize, and Jesus visited cities and villages of the country to preach the gospel of repentance. The Early Church migrated in the midst of persecution, and wherever they went, they spread the gospel and established the work of God.

We see the apostles traveling the world to fulfill Jesus' command to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. If the gospel is going to be spread, immigrants must bring in their luggage the Word of God. The trip must not be perceived as a simple adventure, but a mission to carry the gospel.

Whether because of sin (as in Eden), calling (like Abraham), freedom (like Moses), political extradition (like David), captivity (like Israel), threats (like Jesus), or persecution (like the New Testament Church), the population flow moves over time.

Whatever the reason for migration, God's servants are seen as tools to help people develop their lives in the reality of where they are moving. We must remain alert to help people in their aspirations so that what appears to be a human injustice or disposition leads them to meet the Lord's purposes for their lives.

Both the ones who send and those who receive have to educate their people on the basic needs of cultural adaptation so they can understand that, rather than employment plans or prosperity, providence has prepared something for their full development. Until then, may we find ourselves believing the same.

AFTER CROSSING SOME BORDERS

By Miriam Cejas

Let me share with you some lessons I have learned in my own experience crossing some borders. God called me to teach, but I can surely say I am first in line for learning. I hope you find my lessons useful.

Years ago when my plane took off and I left behind my beloved homeland of Argentina, in a soft whisper the Holy Spirit said, “Now you will be a world citizen.” My first destination was Belarus, a country of the former Soviet Union. Three years later I was in the Czech Republic. Now in my third stage, I work among Latin people in the capital of the European Union.

Studying and speaking a nation’s language is certainly an important achievement, but behind the words of a language lies the deep heart of people whom we must strive to know and accept. The transcultural worker carries a message that can change those people’s eternity, but the worker must be willing to be transformed into appropriate channels. This is a demanding process.

Put Your Feet on the Ground

We must know that neither a place nor its people will change because of our arrival. We will have to modify, replace, and adjust our lives to accept our initial possibilities. As time goes on, we eventually recognize that life was not so hard, and it is then we discover new ways and unknown resources we were blind to because of our foreign mentality.

Develop the Ability to Listen; Strive to Understand What You See

We discover codes of communication through such simple things as greeting, offering hospitality, or celebrating an event or a moment of pain. People from five continents live in my region of Brussels, and my Bible school students are from 15 Latin American countries. That is a good place to learn.

Keep a Constant Attitude of Gratitude

Be grateful to God for the privilege of investing our lives into His work. Be grateful to all those in our home country who enable us to remain on the field (family, church, missions department, leaders, intercessors, etc.). Also be grateful to the valuable people whom God has called us to serve.

Celebrate Every Achievement

Celebrate each step that takes you closer to the goal: learning the language, making a new contact, or moving forward in a process.

Balance Character

Unfamiliar terrain is less difficult if we wear proper and comfortable shoes. We need to develop and maintain strong convictions toward nonnegotiable, absolute truths, while at the same time being flexible with customs that may seem strange at first, but are not unbiblical.

Stay in His Presence

The place or places where we will serve are temporary, since we are called to “live before Him,” but where we are at home, sitting at His table in a home environment, and where we maintain our identity and sense of belonging no matter our geographical location.

“Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God” (Psalms 43:4, NIV).

Someone has said, “The measure of a Christian is not in the height of his grasp, but in the depth of his love.” If we are to remain in this cross-cultural work, may we be willing to give and love sacrificially—to invest it all and start as many times as necessary for the purpose of God to come true. I pray that our motivation is a genuine love for the Lord and for the people we were called to serve.

IMMIGRATION: HAVING THE RIGHT MOTIVATIONS

By Samuel Rodríguez

What Is Your Motivation?

Leaving your country of origin and deciding to live abroad is surely a product of a motivation, and this motivation will directly influence in the expectations we have for this new life. This motivation needs to be reviewed so that we can evaluate whether it was right or wrong to avoid disappointment and frustration. The first question to make clear is, What is my motivation?

Below are some examples of motivation:

1. Personal development related to education (universities, research).
2. Vocational (good job offer or a missionary calling).
3. Improved quality of life because of better opportunities in a foreign country.
4. Family reasons.
5. Medical reasons (for access to a specialized medical system, surgery, or treatment).
6. Escape from the country of origin.

Is It Worth the Money?

Once we have defined our motivation, it is time to evaluate if the move will be beneficial or if we will suffer a personal loss. Is it worth leaving family members, friends, or church and the value we place on material or personal achievements? We know it's a choice, and we must be sure of what we might gain or lose.

Proper motivation is a key that lets our migration achieve a spiritual purpose, not just an economic or personal one. What we can do is redirect our motivation to give it direction and meaning.

If we have to invest or lose valuable things, then may it be with a purpose beyond our needs, may it be an opportunity to serve the Lord, and may we be a blessing where we go, especially in areas of urgent need of the gospel. This will allow us to achieve perfect peace in our migration, and God will be happy to know that He can use you and that you will fulfill the desire of His heart—making disciples of all nations.

AN IMMIGRANT'S ROLE IN THE EVANGELIZATION OF SPAIN

By Scott Smith

[Editorial comment: this was originally written in 2001.]

The “immigrant” phenomenon is nothing new. Migration from areas with fewer resources to those that have more economic opportunities has occurred since ancient times. I think this reality of the global society can be very positive for the expansion of the gospel.

Much has been said in recent years about evangelizing immigrants who come to study or work in Western countries, especially those coming from Islamic nations. However, Spain, in contrast to other European countries that receive many workers from Islamic and former communist countries, receives many Latin American immigrants, and it seems this trend will increase. Many are believers. These “nonprofessional missionaries” may be real “tent makers” and a blessing for the country that receives them.

The following observation comes from a class at the University of California at Davis: A country can grant a temporary work permit to a “guest” from another country. This can be beneficial to both the home country and the host country. On the one hand, companies that employ foreign workers are usually benefitted by the temporary and cheap labor, and the workers go back to their home countries with money that benefits their economy. Normally, guest workers travel from poor countries to more developed countries. The University of Michigan on November 21, 2000, estimated that 6 million immigrants with work permits lived in Europe.³

According to a study by the United Nations Population Division, “In the next 25 years the EU will need up to 159 million immigrants to maintain the current proportion between workers and the growing number of retirees.”⁴

If we look specifically in Spain, where my wife and I are missionaries, one of the major banks in the country, the Banco de Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria, estimates that “in the year 2020 there will be 1.8 million guest workers in Spain.”⁵ This number may be underreported. The *Christian Science Monitor* wrote: “Unlike in Germany, France, and Austria, which have enacted more restrictive immigration laws in the last decade, in response [to the increase of anti-foreign sentiments] Spain has legislated this issue in a more relaxed way. With one of the lowest birthrates in the world, Spain is seeking in the increase of immigration a solution to the steady decline of its population. By some estimates, Spain will have to accept 12 million foreigners in the next 60 years.”

³ “Migration Dialogue,” <http://migration.ucdavis.edu>.

⁴ “Migration, International Data,” www.personal.umd.umich.edu.

⁵ El Norte de Castilla, 3 May 2001.

Spain has the lowest birthrate in the European Union and a rapidly aging population, and Spanish society is becoming more affluent. This has led to the need for foreign labor for jobs that once covered the Spanish people. Most of these are immigrants from North Africa or Latin America. I think this gives us a golden opportunity for the evangelization of Spain.

We have a solid biblical basis regarding evangelism conducted by “immigrants”: Naomi moved to Moab to survive. There she met her daughter-in-law, the future great-grandmother of David, and instilled in her the devotion to the only true God. Naaman’s young slave woman told him of the great works of God done through the prophet in her native country. Naaman was not only healed but also vowed that “your servant will never again offer burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord.” Other biblical examples can be found easily.

One day while speaking with a US missionary, he gave me two good, current examples. He said there wouldn’t be a church among the people of one Arab nation if it weren’t for the Asian immigrants. He also noted that Islam in Western Europe and the United States is gaining ground thanks to Muslim immigrants in these countries.

In the past year and a half the church here in Valladolid has enjoyed the arrival of a wave of Pentecostal Christians from Ecuador. The vast majority of them are male. They have been looking for work, mostly in the construction sector. We have been blessed with people of great spiritual quality; however, even among these committed believers, my observation has been that these Ecuadorians brothers tend not to evangelize or reach out to their own community. There are several possible reasons, but I think the main one is the fear of rejection by the people of the country they have come as immigrants.

Latin believers have been well received in our church, but it seems that some of the non-Christian society here in Castilla think differently. Many of the young Christians who came to Valladolid from Latin America came from a large church and belonged to a community where being an evangelical Christian or Pentecostal is not a stigma. Here in Castilla, it still is. Furthermore, racism is increasing in the secular Western Europe. Here in Spain we have suffered very little of the violence they have experienced in other European countries, but Latin Americans tend to be viewed by some Spanish with a condescending attitude or even with contempt. Some youth of our church have observed this while spending time with Latin people. If to all of this we add the ingredient of being an evangelical Christian, rejection will come more easily. What I suggest is to make a concerted and intelligent effort on both sides of the Atlantic to maximize the spiritual fruit of Christian immigrants in Europe, and especially in Spain. They need to be prepared to know that when they arrive here, they will find much smaller churches and face possible rejection from the unconverted Spanish population.

Weekly church services may be a serious problem for many people that used to have daily services in their country of origin. It appears that economic prosperity brings new “entertainment,” previously inaccessible and forbidden, which leads to new temptations. Some Ecuadorians fell away from the Lord, putting the blame on the fact that there were less church services and more economic opportunities. We have to advise them about these dangers before they come. But most important is that we must inform them that we believe their migration to Spain is within God’s plan and that the

reason for their coming needs to be more than just a matter of economic improvement—God must be allowed to use them according to His purpose.

On this side of the Atlantic, we pastors have to be aware of our responsibility and take care of them. Yes, we are our brother's keeper. We must be aware of the needs and potential temptations faced by these brothers, and above all, the blessings they can provide to the church. We also need to encourage Latin believers, despite the opposition many suffer here, to do evangelism not only among themselves but also among the Spanish population in general.

I am convinced God wants to do something great in this country. In my opinion, God has given us two opportunities in the 26 years I've been here similar to the one we now have for the evangelization of Spain. A few years ago there was a move of the Spirit among the Gypsy community, and many were converted. Unfortunately, there was little evangelism from the Gypsy community to the secular Spanish population. There was another move of the Holy Spirit among drug abusers. Yet they also were "isolated," and in their evangelistic efforts, they mostly preached the gospel to their own subculture, not to Spanish society in general.

Spain needs a special move of God. Even with the low birthrate as mentioned above, the population of Spain is increasing faster than the church in this country. We're losing ground every year. If the church continues to grow at current rates, the work will be never performed. The work is of God. He is coming, and we need to shake this country. God willing, this is our moment.

We want to thank our missionary brother, Scott Smith, for his vision, which was ahead of its time when he wrote the original version of the final note of this manual in 2001. Thank you, Scott, for challenging us and teaching us to understand something that God was already using to make an impact in His world.

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If you have any questions, please contact us at actsoneightproject@gmail.com.

