

Editorial Invitado: El impacto transformador de los Bautistas Hispanos en Texas

October 16, 2024

Rolando Aguirre cuenta cómo los bautistas hispanos han sido una fuerza transformadora en el tejido espiritual y social de Texas.

Editorial: Baptists shouldn't lose sight of who we are

October 16, 2024

Baptists have reason to celebrate for making a positive difference in the world. But what is to be celebrated isn't a what at all.

Editorial: Abortion is not a single issue

October 16, 2024

Abortion is not a single issue—a political soundbite, talking point or policy

matter—but a multifold issue we need to address completely.

Editorial: Enact sexual abuse prevention measures

October 16, 2024

I applaud the work of the Sexual Abuse Task Force and their recommendations. Let's honor their work by enacting their recommendations.

Editorial: Condemn false claims about Haitian immigrants

October 16, 2024

Editor Eric Black condemns the false claims against the Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio, for at least three reasons.

Guest Editorial: Advice from a pastor to pastors

October 16, 2024

As I reflect back on the many years I was a pastor and then an associational director of missions, I want to encourage “young” pastors.

At my age, “young” is relative. A young pastor could be 50 years old and starting pastoral ministry. Whatever your age, I hope this advice will encourage you.

Calling

Being a pastor is very important.

I remember when I started out, I had a scrapbook I wrote in, and I remember sharing it with my grandmother, and I remember her reaction when I had written in it: “I would rather answer God’s call to be a pastor than to be the president of the United States.”

That calling is the highest calling.

I never remember ever thinking I was somebody. I didn’t deserve it. I certainly didn’t earn it, but it was there.

Love

As far as how I saw my role, first of all, was that I was to love the people.

There were times when I got upset, but I never doubted people will overlook some mistakes if they know you love them and you are serving the Lord by serving them. Love covers a multitude of sins.

I really have felt so blessed through the years that the Lord gave me that feeling of commitment and love to really be a minister and to care for the people. Part of my sense of calling is to try to minister to them and pray with them.

Family

Yet, there were times when, looking back, I was more committed to doing those things than I was spending the balance of time with family. In every family, there are times like that.

Try to keep a balance between your ministry to the church and your ministry to your family.

There will always be church people who think you owe it all to them. At the same time, you just have to love them and go on the best you can.

Leadership

I never tried to be a ramrod. In my favorite ordination sermon, I always tried to point out the difference between being a shepherd and being a trail boss on a cattle drive. Jesus called himself the Great Shepherd. To me, that is a real distinction.

Peter talks a lot about being a shepherd and ministering to people and guarding them.

Treat people the way Jesus treats us—loving us, caring for us, showing respect.

Love again

Three words that stand out as far as our relationship with Jesus are grace, mercy and love. If we as pastors don't show those attitudes, something is missing.

Grace is getting what we didn't deserve. Mercy is not getting what we did deserve. Love covers it all. If you don't have love, mercy and grace, something is missing badly.

I don't care where you are, there's always going to be someone who is hurting, and a minister who chooses not to be there is missing something.

Preaching

If God hasn't called you to preach, then do what you need to do. But if he has, that's where you're going to find your fulfillment.

Preaching is a crucial part of your ministry. It needs to be biblical. We're there representing the Lord. We need to be telling his message, not some pet peeve or using the platform for your agenda. As the prophet said, "Thus sayeth the Lord."

Did God really say this? Is this really what he wants us to know? What is his message to us, and how are we to respond?

Somewhere in the message, you need to be telling the good news. People need to know there's hope and that Jesus saves.

It's easy for some to get sidetracked, and I think we're seeing a lot of that in our day today with the political stuff. There are people who have missed what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and they've tried to make it a political issue, rather than understanding we're here to represent the Lord,

and that we're to represent him well.

The Lord is the one who matters. It's about his glory and his honor.

Endurance

The thing that helped me as much as anything was when the church gave me a sabbatical. There were some people who understood it and promoted it; otherwise, I don't think it would have happened.

A sabbatical can provide relief before burnout starts.

A sabbatical says to a pastor, "We're a hundred percent in favor of blessing you, so in turn you bless us, and to giving you the opportunity to grow and to learn yourself."

You need to have a network with other pastors who can listen and pray for you. You have to be careful, though. There has to be trust developed. If you're not careful, you can share too much, and you wind up with people you thought were close gossiping about you.

You can't just unload everything. You need to have a good listener who is willing to come alongside and share the load a little bit.

Don't be too trusting, but don't be too cautious either.

Calling again

Whatever your age, stay with it, and be faithful to the end.

Editor Eric Black recorded this interview with his father-in-law Glenn Ward on Aug. 25. [Glenn died on Aug. 31](#). He stayed faithful to the end.

Glenn Ward was a pastor for 45 years—37 years at Acton Baptist Church

outside Granbury—and director of missions for Paluxy Baptist Association in Granbury for 11 years. This interview was edited for length.

Editorial Invitada: Llena el vacío de liderazgo hispano

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Jesse Rincones explica el vacío de hispanos en el liderazgo bautista del sur y cómo una nueva red satisface la necesidad.

Guest Editorial: Fill the Hispanic leadership gap

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If the more than 3,300 Hispanic congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention were their own state convention, they would be the fourth largest convention in the country, behind the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Baptist conventions in North Carolina and Georgia.

You might be surprised—as I was—to find out this important constituency has no representation on the SBC Executive Committee or its staff and no resourcing in the SBC budget.

Enter the National Hispanic Baptist Network to fill the urgent need for Hispanic leadership at the national level.

An ever-growing mission field

The growth of the U.S. population is driven by the Hispanic community.

According to [Pew research](#), from 2010 to 2022, Hispanics accounted for 53 percent of the population increase. However, between 2022 and 2023, “the Hispanic population accounted for just under 71 percent of the overall growth of the United States population,” according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).

By 2023, Hispanics comprised almost 20 percent of the population, making them the second largest group in the United States.

To see this community as Jesus once saw the crowds and felt compassion for them, is to declare in agreement: “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few” (Matthew 9:37).

The Hispanic churches in the SBC, though growing, are also few.

Since 2011, the SBC had a net gain of 111 Hispanic congregations, while Anglo congregations suffered a net loss of 1,337 congregations.

Nevertheless, Bruno Molina, executive director of the National Hispanic Baptist Network [notes](#): “Although Hispanics make up about 20 percent of the nation’s population, we only make up 7 percent of the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. Although a good number of SBC church plants are Hispanic churches, there is a 13 percent deficit in Hispanic representation.”

Hispanic congregations are at the forefront of reaching and ministering to almost one-fifth of the country’s population.

Never in our nation's history, have so few Hispanic congregations had so great a ministry opportunity.

Juxtaposed to this historical evangelistic prospect facing Hispanic churches in the SBC is the glaring void of Hispanic leadership and resources available to them at the national level.

Hispanic representation in the SBC

There is no Hispanic representation on the SBC Executive Committee, the denominations governing body composed of 86 representatives.

There is no Hispanic representation on the SBC Executive Committee staff. This means no Hispanics are in the president's office, communications, finance, advancement and relations, or facilities teams.

Contrast that with the richer context we see in Baptist work here in Texas.

Texas Baptists (BGCT) has 48 Hispanic employees. Texas Baptists en Español, the convention's department focusing on Hispanic churches and leaders, has three staff dedicated to their efforts. Notably, there are 14 Hispanic directors on the Texas Baptists' Executive Board.

SBTC en Español, the corresponding office of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, has five staff members committed to serving their Hispanic churches.

Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas—the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas—has four employees dedicated to serve the almost 1,100 Hispanic Baptist churches in the state.

The Hispanic constituency of the SBC is also absent from resourcing in the annual budget.

In 2023, [citing “current budget constraints,”](#) the SBC cut the position of the executive director of Hispanic relations and mobilization, the only Hispanic on the SBC Executive Committee staff.

In an SBC budget of \$1.067 billion—which is a \$235,000 increase from the previous budget—there is no funding for ethnic relations leaders. There is no funding for annual meeting gatherings of the ethnic groups. And there is no funding for contract workers to relate to the Hispanic churches even on a part-time basis.

Enter the *Red Nacional Bautista Hispana*.

The National Hispanic Baptist Network

The [National Hispanic Baptist Network](#) was formed to fill the leadership and representation void at the national level for Hispanic Baptist churches.

The seeds for the network were planted by the efforts of Daniel Sanchez (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) and Bobby Sena (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary).

Their vision was to create a formal and cohesive national effort that would serve Hispanic churches in the SBC. For several years, they gathered the Hispanic leadership of various state conventions and organizations to share insights about their work and explore the future of their ministries.

In December 2022, the leaders formally organized and created the National Hispanic Baptist Network. NHBN seeks to “fill the gap” of national SBC leadership by fulfilling its mission to connect on mission, to contribute and share resources, and to celebrate what God is doing among Hispanic Baptists.

Additionally, the NHBN will focus on facilitating communication and

collaboration among Hispanic Baptist pastors and leaders and the entities of the SBC.

Texas benefits from having two Baptist state conventions and the oldest and largest Hispanic Baptist Convention in the country. Some state Baptist conventions don't have a single Hispanic on staff for the entire state.

Where these state voids exist, the NHBN is helping establish Hispanic state fellowships to increase Hispanic Baptist congregations' collaboration in gospel dissemination, discipleship and Cooperative Program giving.

The NHBN consists of several teams that serve the Hispanic Baptist community to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

The Network already has several of these teams formed, including prayer, evangelism, discipleship, emerging leaders, women's ministry, church revitalization, education, finance, state leaders and church planting. Future teams include missions mobilization, pastors' support network, children's ministry, men's ministry and worship ministry.

¡Juntos podemos!

I urge the SBC to acknowledge the underrepresentation of Hispanics and take concrete steps to address it by providing Hispanic representation on the Executive Committee and its staff, and adequately resourcing the various ethnic groups' work.

Meanwhile, the NHBN will move forward to equip and serve Hispanic congregations and leaders, while reaching out to broader communities.

Together with state conventions, SBC seminaries and related entities, the NHBN will embrace opportunities for growth and will empower Hispanic Baptist churches to share the gospel, make disciples and facilitate the flourishing of the Hispanic community.

Together we can. *¡Juntos podemos!*

Jesse Rincones is board chair of the National Hispanic Baptist Network, executive director of Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas, and a member of the Baptist Standard board.

Editorial: Give an important end-of-life gift

October 16, 2024

It's not exactly pleasant to talk about our own death. It's even less pleasant for our loved ones if we don't talk about it.

Editorial: In praise of teachers, support them

October 16, 2024

The 2024-2025 academic year is underway. It's not too late to encourage and support teachers. Nor is it too early.

Editorial: High school, college and losing a tree

October 16, 2024

“We lost a tree yesterday, and I can’t help feeling like it’s a metaphor,” Editor Eric Black writes about a momentous day for his family.

Editorial: What if all we had was evangelism?

October 16, 2024

What would Christians do if all we had left was evangelism?

It’s possible we would argue and fight less.

I phrase the question with “had left,” because we have far more than evangelism. But let’s continue with the thought experiment.

What if we didn’t have all the accoutrements of Christianity as we know it in the United States?

No churches

What if we didn't have church buildings?

I can hear it now: "Where would we meet?"

There are Christians in the world today who meet under trees, in homes, apartments, movie theaters, parks, coffee shops and bars. We were fine up until that last one. I would circle back to my first question and the following sentence about arguing and fighting less, but I'm going to move on.

What if we didn't have church staff? I just felt a bunch of people get nervous.

What if we didn't have pastors and other ministry staff? What if we didn't have preaching, Bible studies, music ministry or any of the other organized ministries of the church?

Plenty of churches have only a pastor, no other staff. Plenty of those pastors are bivocational—often earning their income outside the church. There also are churches who have a pastor only part of the time, sharing that pastor with other churches.

If we didn't have church buildings, where would we invite people to come to hear the gospel? If we didn't have paid ministers, who would communicate the gospel? Would we even still gather, and what would we do when we're together?

These seem like silly questions.

No education

What if the only book Christians published and owned was the Bible? Because if all we had left was evangelism, we'd need at least the Gospels,

wouldn't we?

Imagine not having any Christian living or devotional books, no Bible commentaries or theology books, no Christian fiction. And no discipleship curriculum.

There are Christians in the world today whose only book is the Bible. There also are Christians in the world who don't even have a Bible.

What if there were no Christian media? No Christian news outlets, music, radio, TV channels, movies, social media. Would it be possible to communicate the gospel at all in our world if we didn't have these things?

What if we didn't have Christian schools—private or homeschool, primary, secondary, college or seminary? I just felt a different bunch of people get nervous.

Just as there are Christians who only have the Bible, if they have the Bible at all, there are Christians who don't have any kind of Christian media or education.

If we don't have any of these things, how do we disciple new Christians? Without these things, how do we go about spiritual formation? How do we prepare Christian children, youth and young people to be Christians out in the world?

These seem like ridiculous questions.

No broader concerns

So many Christians in the world don't have what we have in the United States. It doesn't make them lesser Christians.

What if we didn't have Christian hospitals, children's homes, adoption

agencies or other human welfare organizations? Or Christian advocacy organizations? Or Christian camps?

What if we didn't have mission sending agencies? Or conventions, associations, meetings, constitutions, bylaws, budgets ...?

It's getting hard to take this thought experiment seriously.

Even so, what if all Christians really had left was evangelism? What would we do?

What if all Christians ever had was evangelism? Where would we be now?

Core of Christianity

The fact is, Christianity started with evangelism—Jesus communicating God's good news directly to us by becoming human, living among us, dying for our sin and rising from the dead to give us eternal life. And Christianity grew out of evangelism. Every Christian organization has—or had—evangelism at its core, however far removed from evangelism it became.

Evangelism—while not all Christians are to be about—is central to being a Christian, and yet, so few Christians evangelize. Most of us leave evangelism to the “professionals.” What if we didn't because it's all we had?

Remember a baptism in your church. How did you and your church respond to it? If it's been a while, what do you feel when you hear about baptisms in other churches?

My educated guess is you and your church celebrated that baptism. I'm also certain, if it's been a while since a baptism happened in your church, you feel a longing to celebrate one.

If we just look at a single Sunday morning worship service, we know there is disagreement in the room over the song selection, style of music, announcements, the sermon, the people on the platform—any number of things.

But a baptism. The sleepy wake up. The bored brighten. People smile. There are cheers, applause, “amens,” “yeahs” and sometimes whooping or whistling.

Why? Well, for Baptists anyway, baptism signifies a person giving their life to Jesus. Baptism signifies the power of the gospel, the success of evangelism. What if that’s all we had left?

Challenge

Christians in the United States have so much more than evangelism, and all that other stuff has put us at a remove from the one thing we celebrate without much disagreement—people giving their lives to Jesus.

All that other has become the necessary business of Christianity for us. Honestly, I’m not sure how to make disciples—followers of Jesus—of all people without much of all that other, nor am I sure how to love God with all I have and my neighbor as myself without at least some of that other.

I’m not advocating for getting rid of all of it, but I am advocating for keeping all of it in perspective. We’re going to disagree about a lot of things related to all that other stuff. We *have* disagreed about a lot of things related to all that other stuff, and the world has witnessed our disagreement.

In light of that, it’s not such a silly question to ask, “What if all we had was evangelism?”

What would we do? How would we be different?

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