

## Latino Trends: Hispanic Evangelicals 2.0

Is the Latino Church Purpose Driven and Seeker Friendly? Can Latino Evangelicals reconcile their zeal for Holiness a long with a Grace Filled restorative Gospel? More important, what is the missional Latino Church and what lessons can the entire church derive from her?

Emerging out of the plethora of streams currently inundating the Kingdom is the transformational narrative of a church that just recently experienced its Protestant Reformation. The Hispanic missional movement is defined in the heel of the first Protestant reformation in the Hispanic Church. The Roman Catholic Church prevented for centuries any significant penetration of the Protestant Reformation initiated by Martin Luther in the 1500's. Thus, the first serious Protestant impact in Latino America came via the Evangelical wing of the Church particularly the Pentecostal movement. Understanding this will enable the church at large to value, collaborate and strengthen the threads of what is the fastest growing segment of the American church, Latino Evangelicals.

The trends in the Hispanic church will reverberate within the walls of the entire Church, according to Pastor David Sandoval of Dallas, Texas. "Hispanic Evangelicals 1.0 or the first century of Latino Evangelicalism was focused on personal piety and experiential Christianity. Hispanic Evangelicals 2.0 will continue to do such however it will expand it's reach to include corporate piety and holiness a long side relational Christianity. For example, not just are we going to be preoccupied with personal holiness but we are going to address issues we neglected", stated Sandoval. In addition, Sandoval added "We focused for too long on the length of a dress, jewelry, hair styles and physical appearance, while our teens were getting pregnant, dropping out of school and totally disconnected to the church. We have, for the most part, emerged out of legalism, yet we are beginning to tackle the true bondages in our community such as sexual immorality, poverty, domestic violence, drug abuse, witchcraft, strife and lukewarmness".

Hispanic Evangelicals 1.0 focused on Latinos and Latin America. Hispanic Evangelicals 2.0 for the first time are looking beyond the culture and addressing the spiritual and social needs of other cultures and around the world. "Globalization has hit the Hispanic Evangelical Church. Over 99% of our outreach and 99% of our giving in the 20<sup>th</sup> century went to other Latinos. In 2001, for the first time, over 50% of all missions giving from Hispanic Churches went to such places as Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East", stated Dr. David Espinoza, Former World Missions Board member of the Assemblies of God and current Trustee of Global University. Pastor Espinoza also added that Hispanic are deliberately focusing on such places as India, Africa and The Middle East due to the fact the Latinos are embraced with a lot less trepidation than North American Anglos because of the current political environment. "Latino Missionaries are impacting nations where Anglo Americans can't reach due to media and historical stereotypes. When they us coming, there is no sense of imperialism, colonialism or a hidden agenda. What they see is a brother who was once bound but now is free. Although the stereotypes regarding Anglo Americans is incorrect, we believe the Latino Church can reconcile perception with reality and bring about the day when those stereotypes are shattered", stated Espinoza.

How will the Hispanic Evangelical missional thread impact the rest of the church? One needs to ask Dr. Albert Reyes, one of the most prominent Latino Evangelical leaders in the World. "Hispanics in America will continue to shape and influence our nation as population demographics emerge. When we think about the influence of Hispanic evangelicals on the evangelical church we will see several trends begin to surface over the next 20 to 30 years. We will begin to sense a paradigm shift for what it means to be an evangelical in America through cultural, social, ecclesiastical, and political venues. Hispanics will bring their cultural values to bear on evangelical Christianity with an influence of a collective worldview. That is, Latino/Hispanic evangelical Christians will be more interested in the welfare of the community at large than their own personal welfare. The locus of control for Hispanic life is in the community

and how well the community is doing seems to matter greatly to Latinos/Latinas. Hispanics will help evangelical congregations gravitate toward a balanced application of the gospel to include issues of social justice and equality for everyone in the community. Social issues will take center stage in congregations because the scripture bears witness to Jesus' focus on the poor, the prisoner, the blind, and the oppressed. Those in need are our primos y primas, tios y tias, hermanos y hermanas as well as our neighbors. In addition, Reyes added that Hispanic evangelical Christianity will change the texture of our congregations as they begin to reflect the Hispanic culture and community. "Worship, discipleship, missions, evangelism, church planting, etc. will have a nuanced Hispanic flavor in its implementation. Hispanics will take a more active role in the political landscape of our day while respecting the long held value of separation of church and state. Hispanic evangelicals will find their voice and speak their convictions from a biblical/theological perspective and a Judeo-Christian worldview that is distinctly shaped by Hispanic culture." Finally, Reyes concluded by prophetically declaring "As the decibel level of the Hispanic evangelical voice increases the message will become convincingly clear along the lines social justice, incarnational approaches to mission, contextually accurate congregational life, and political involvement".

At the end of the day, the Latino church may very well be the embodiment of a church that is both purpose and presence driven, seeker and spirit driven, prophetic and missional, and above all things; RELEVANT.

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