



***Julio Chiang – South America Mission, City to City
Gospel Ecosystems***

Hello, my name is Julio Chiang. I serve with South America Mission in church planting in the city of Lima, Peru. And I would like to share with you today about the **importance of working through Gospel ecosystems as an effective and practical way to have an impact in our cities**. Today, 55% of the world population live in urban areas.

According to the United Nations, by the year 2050, 68% of the world population will be living in cities. And this is a question: Are we ready to face these challenges? I want you to picture for a moment, any city where you could be present. Now you have many churches, denominations trying to make a sacrificial initiative to plant new churches to be able to reach the city with the Gospel. But this is a problem many of these churches don't last more than three years after they are planted. One of the reasons is because they don't have enough resources, enough fuel, but also because they're not reaching effectively the 20–30-year-old bracket that are so important and be able to have a long-term impact in a particular city.

In the other hand, you have these specialized ministries doing a fantastic job reaching to college students in college campuses. But the problem that they are facing is that they are having a hard time connecting these students into Gospel-centered churches. So some of these organizations, what they're doing is they're trying to start new churches, but then they face another problem when they realize that they are not experts in church planting.

Let me share with you another example. Imagine a city where you have a lot of seminaries, institutions that had their glorious days in the past and they were able to influence and train hundreds of leaders. But year after year, they're having less and less students looking to have training at these theological locations, places. And many of them are having to close their doors and close their buildings.

But in the other hand, you have these ever-growing church plants and churches around the city having a huge essential need of training the next generation of pastors, but don't have the resources to have a good solid Gospel, theological education for their leaders.

Now, can you see the problem? All these four different initiatives trying to fulfill their vision and their calling, but they're not talking to one another? They are totally isolated and disconnected. Can you imagine what could happen in a city where all these different agents would intentionally talk to one another, see what their needs are and what the other one has to offer, and be willing to partnership for the advancement of the Kingdom? That is what a gospel ecosystem is about. It's about bringing together all the different organizations, all the different ministries that God each already have in place in a particular city and invite them to talk to one another to pray together, to recognize the brokenness of

their city and to be able to work together for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in that particular city.

With a group of leaders in Latin America, we were able to write this definition of a gospel ecosystems that I would like to share with you. Different organizations, again, not only churches, missions organizations, specialized ministries, theological locations different kind of organizations, sharing the centrality of the Gospel. This is what brings us together. That we have this desire to see the Gospel having a measurable and real impact in a particular city and intentionally collaborating with one another for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Not to the advancement of our own names or our own institutions, but for the advancement of the Kingdom of God and for the glory of God, facilitating transformation and initiatives through the local church for the cities of Latin America.

Six years ago, my wife and I've moved back to Lima, Peru, a city of 12 million people. With the dream and the desire to plant a church, but also to be part of a bigger movement that went beyond ourselves. To be honest with you, the first years we were very discouraged because we didn't have any success. We started noticing how many organizations were already present with so many dreams for the city, but we noticed these problems that they were all isolated. They were not talking to one another. So we had the great privilege to partner with South America Mission that helped us fuel that initial part of the project. That they wanted to see churches started by nationals, but who willing to be an inspiration to work together with all other churches to be able to have an impact in the city.

South America Mission started partnering with us and then City to City came alongside. City to City, their specialization was in training and be able to equip church planters and leaders to understand the brokenness of a particular place and be able to plant churches that were effective. Not only to continue their Ministry of Evangelism and Discipleship, but also to bring justice and mercy initiatives that are able to address the particular needs of that particular city. And also equipping faith and work initiative, training the people from the churches in their vocations to bring the Kingdom of God through their work.

I remember the first time when we had this conference, we called The Vision for the City, The Gospel for the City. We invited all the contacts that we had, different pastors from different denominations, different mission organizations, visions that were present in the City of Lima and we invited, and we gathered together at a hotel. And we had this presentation where we were able to present the brokenness, the bigger brokenness of the city of Lima that was beyond any of us, that something that we couldn't fix. And we started talking about what would it be like of Lima if we were willing to talk to one another despite our own differences and partnership together to launch some initiatives together for the future of Lima.

Well, the next thing that happened was that we had a group of about 11 or 12 pastors that started working together for the next two years - praying, learning, understanding what the needs of the city were. And God made an enormous advancement through this group of people from different, again, from different denominations, and coming from different backgrounds in the same city.

Let me Fast forward six years and we are here in 2021. We have a group of more than 50 pastors and leaders. Different denominations - Baptists, Presbyterians, Assemblies of God - coming together, representing not only many denominations, but many, many different cities around the country. More than 13 different cities and we're being able to see together, dream together, to cooperate with one

another to advance the Kingdom. What a beautiful testimony we have seen what the Gospel is capable to do when the people of God is willing to come together, work together for the advancement of the Kingdom.

Let me tell you another testimony from a group of an ecosystem in the Villa Maria, Chile were two different denominations that were part of this ecosystem already and had this dream to see the Gospel in their city, partnership to fuel and launch a new church plant with a third church planter from a non-denominational church.

Another miracle of when we see the Gospel working through gospel ecosystems. Or for example, the story in Barranquilla, Colombia. An effort by South America mission team and also City to City partnering with the local church in Barranquilla, not only to plant a church but also to launch an ecosystem to reach the northern part of the coast of Columbia. That's another miracle we have witnessed because of the Gospel working through these gospel ecosystems.

And then I could tell you the story of a bi-vocational pastor in Buenos Aires, Argentina, that he was a pastor but also a professor at a university. And he raised up a generation of bi-vocational pastors and together they understood the importance of equipping young university students, understanding how they can bring gospel transformation to the city through their vocations, and then partnering with City to City and other organizations that also were able to launch a bigger ecosystem around Latin America called The Faith and Work Initiative. Many churches from different denominations, from different cities and backgrounds around Latin America will benefit because of this partnership.

So let me encourage you with this as you go back to your missions places, as you go back to your ministries, to give it time to pray and ask God what would it be like over your particular city if your organization, if your church would be willing to put down the barriers and be able to sit down and learn from one another, partnership with one another, for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Just by my own experience, let me tell you what you're going to see. You're going to see God glorified by the unity of His Church, expanding the Kingdom of God in a way that will really have an impact in our cities. God bless you.