

Jesus'-style Seminary in the Slums

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Where is the wise man? Where is the Scholar? Where is the Philosopher of the Age?.... Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God (1 Cor 1:20,30).



I was in Manila at the launch the MA in Transformational Urban Leadership, preaching about the passage above and the contrast between Jesus' style education and the education of the academe. For Jesus was an educator - a brilliant mind. He recruited learners around him.

He knew of the Greek philosophic systems that Paul rejects here, and could have taught within them. For he grew up in the Decapolis, (10 Greek cities), lived 4 miles from Sapporis, one of these leading cities, where all the philosophies of the world crossed. He maybe built houses there. But he chose a different methodology for his educative process. It involved action-reflection more than philosophy, and built from the stories of the people, proverbs, and parables as these interfaced with God's story and the conundrums of the trinity.

Following Jesus in the 21st C context, this MA is an *action-reflection* degree built around a process I call *Transformational Conversations*, a process of discerning truth through *holistic story-telling*. Some academics think this is not *kosher*. That truth can only be found through Platonic logic. Jesus was smarter. It's the same argument Paul also is addressing.

His syllabus began with 40 days of prayer and fasting, so we begin with *Urban Spirituality*. Then in the power of the Spirit he began to preach, build a team and disciple, elements of *Urban Poor Churchplanting*. What he preached was the Kingdom of God, so an overview of the scriptures, *Writings, Reign and Realities*, with particularly referencing the Kingdom of God, poverty, oppression, societal structures, and other issues for slum dwellers.

Of course his declared focus was the poor. In fact, the next course is one on *Rescuing the Marginalised* –



prostitutes, street children, drug addicts.

He understood the issues of the day. What do you think a rebel leader like Simon the Zealot and a tax collector discussed over supper along with ohn, the son of one of the leading families. Jesus discussed ways of understanding the signs of the times, so a course on *Urban Realities and Theology* helps students understand the context of the city and poverty.

He expected his disciples to bear much fruit. *Movement Leadership* grapples with multiplication. Jesus was very engaged with the rich. In fact, Nicodemus came to him because he was caring for the poor - issues of *Advocacy and Justice* connecting rich and poor, were important to him. And he was involved in healing, caring for lepers, thus a course on *Primary Health and Caring for HIV/AIDS victims*.

A quarter of his teaching was on economics, so *Community Economics* and a course on *Entrepreneurial Management* along with developing *Slum Education*, so that every pastor can train his eldership in small business and each church can become a viable economic unit and solve the property barrier through an associated school.

Jesus mentored. All these are taught by action-reflection methods, with a balance of extensive practicum, classroom reflection and guided readings. These are integrated with mentoring by churchplanters and by leaders of ministries throughout the degree in two *Field Education* courses. Since we do have to interface with the academe (descendent of Plato), the reflection is refined in a final *Integration* course project or thesis.

This is our humble attempt to follow Jesus' style education in the slums, to get the seminary into the slums.