

Signs of Transformation (Cont)

During the first trimester in the University Level, forty-seven students attended courses including: (1) New Testament I; (2) Indigenous and Afro-Latin American Religiosity; (3) Ecclesiology and Pneumatology; (4) Hermeneutics and Contextual Reading of the Bible; and (5) Liturgy. At the same time, in the Biblical Pastoral Institutes level (IBP) an additional forty-seven students attended courses including: (1) How to Study the Bible I; (2) Nourishing Families II; (3) Church, Community and Mission; and (4) The Pleasure of the Word.

Because the FBT Program is open to any Christian denomination students have enrolled who were previously unable to attend other centers of theological education. They have found at CEDEPCA a space where their leadership can be empowered and transformed. Such is the case of Gabriela Valencia, a student studying in her second trimester. She is an active member of one of the most recognized megachurches in Guatemala, but in her educational walk in the FBT Program, she has experienced what she calls “an impactful shock”:

My name is Gabriela Valencia; I am a CEDEPCA student. This is my first year studying here. The truth is that, for me, it was a rather large shock to learn and experience the curriculum they are teaching. The insights I have gained are quite different from the portrait of Jesus that I had previously been shown. I saw Jesus from a totally different perspective, a Jesus made evident in the love of my brother and of my sister, and not just a Jesus who is on his throne in heaven.

At the same time I began my studies in Bible and theology, I also began a leadership course in a different institution. I felt as if everything I was being told there was being imposed on me, and it had nothing to do with reality. But what I have learned at CEDEPCA has impacted me a great deal; it moved the very foundations of what I had known before. Now I want to learn more. Thanks to this opportunity, I plan to continue learning, and do more than just learning. I want to live the reign of God here on earth, which is what I believe to be the most important thing.

Personally, I want to share this story so that others can know the light; I want to help others learn what I learned. We are the ones entrusted to share this knowledge. We are charged with establishing that which Jesus commanded. We must devote our lives to others, to extend our hands to those most in need, and to apply this to our daily lives.

This type of experience is evident in the groups in the city as well as in the countryside. The effort is well worth it, from the Coordination team to the group of professors of the FBT Program and of the IBP program who occasionally travel hundreds of kilometers to reach those places where transforming education plays a role of bringing inspiration to the communities.

It is heartening, even inspiring, to contribute to the training and empowerment of new leaders who are situated in fundamentalist evangelical contexts. In the medium- and long-run they represent a voice that is critical, equitable, inclusive, solidary and just.

Once more we confirm the enormous importance of the educational process. Today we see women and men persevering week after week to unlearn, to analyze the Bible, to reflect, and to rethink new pastoral practices. We trust in God that the contribution of the FBT Program and of the Biblical Pastoral Institute will contribute, rooted in the pertinence of the gospel, to a society that is more just and equitable.