

Study Questions for “Learning by Crossing Cultures”

By Glenn and Linda Timmons

1. Glenn and Linda Timmons organized their study around a question, just as the Vital Pastor cohorts did. They asked, “What qualities, characteristics, skills, and spiritual practices do pastors need to better understand, appreciate, and serve the increasing cultural diversity of their congregations and the religious pluralism of their communities?” How would you answer that question?
2. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence has two underlying goals: 1) that pastors would identify themselves as transformational leaders, and 2) that pastors would demonstrate the ability to learn in an ever-changing ministry context. Pastors and congregations face an increasing number of changes and challenges related to cultural diversity. In what ways has your congregation had to adapt to changes in culture (for example, language, music, religions, and traditions)?
3. Eddie Gibbs suggests that pastors 1) study your ministry context, and 2) engage in some mission together. Even without statistics, how would you describe the community in which your congregation lives and works? Who are you communicating with? That’s your ministry context. Then talk about the mission of the congregation. How is the congregation reaching out to those people in the ministry context?
4. “As the world becomes smaller, our understanding needs to become larger.” Describe a cultural misunderstanding you’ve had or observed in the community. When it was over, how did it enlarge your understanding? What happens when people of different cultures insist on the understandings of one culture over others?
5. One pastor said, “It’s not about inclusivism, exclusivism, or pluralism. It’s about relationships, engagement, and a theology of embrace.” How have your feelings about another culture grown when you’ve learned to know someone from that culture personally?