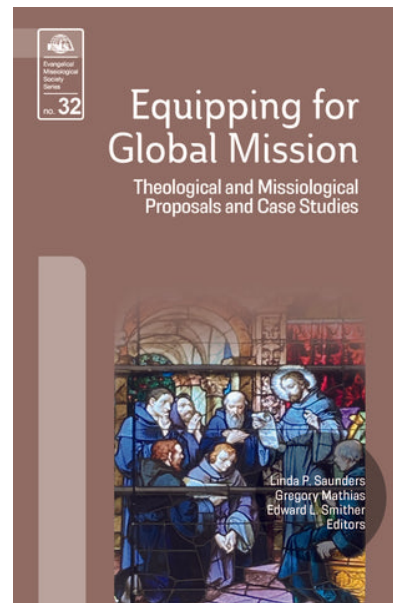


Saunders, Linda P., Mathias, Gregory, Smither, Edward L. *Equipping for Global Mission: Theological and Missiological Proposals and Case Studies*. Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2024.

Reviewed by W. Mark Johnson, IMB Personnel, American Peoples Affinity Group

Equipping for Global Mission: Theological and Missiological Proposals and Case Studies is a work of great ambition. In 258 pages, it attempts to present the best practices for global leadership training for worldwide Gospel advancement. Linda Saunders, Gregory Mathias, and Edward Smither edit the book. Saunders holds an adjunct teaching position at Liberty University in intercultural communication and cultural anthropology. Smither serves as the Dean of Intercultural Studies at Columbia International University. Gregory Mathias is the leader of the Global Mission Center at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. These three have been significant contributors to the Evangelical Missiological Society.



The editors gathered twenty-four evangelical scholars and missiologists to examine the most effective practices for global missional leadership training. Taken together, the articles present a comprehensive overview of the current best practices for educating global mission leaders worldwide. Anyone involved in training missionary leaders will be able to find something valuable in these chapters for their leadership training reality.

The book has sixteen chapters divided into three parts. Part 1 consists of reflections on education in missions. Part 2 focuses on proposals for

leadership training. In Part 3, six case studies describe proposals that are being implemented in different mission contexts.

This book is valuable for anyone concerned about or directly involved in leadership training in a national or global mission context. The impact of any given article will vary depending on the reader. Most readers will find something practical that can be applied to their own ministry. As a first step, I recommend a general reading of the book's context. Find something that piques your interest before diving into the entire book.

I found Chapter 3's research results on the effectiveness of missionary training in formal teaching environments to be encouraging. This article encouraged me to press on with the training of Great Commission workers in my ministry context. Chapter 4 provided insights into the future challenges and opportunities in training the next generation of Great Commission servants.

I would, however, offer some critical observations. My first concern is the arrangement of the articles. The overall presentation of the book would be strengthened by placing articles 3 and 4 as the first two articles. Article 3 presents theological and missiological education as still having a positive impact on missionary advancements worldwide. Article 4 highlights challenges that will be faced when training the next generation of Great Commission workers. In my opinion, this arrangement would have been more effective in setting the overall tone of the book. The tone of articles 1 and 2 was somewhat like that of an evangelical jeremiad. While jeremiads can be necessary, I initially thought it was the thrust of the book. A different arrangement would have set a different tone of expectation for the reader.

Another area of critique comes from my missionary experience in Brazil. I observed that there were multiple references in the articles to the work of Paulo Freire, a widely recognized Brazilian educator. Freire is a respected authority in his field of expertise. Nonetheless, his work is consistently linked to the religious and political left in Brazil, specifically those with strong Marxist tendencies. I am fully committed to pursuing justice and economic

well-being for those who are in poverty. I feel strongly that using an author known for Marxist-tinted social and religious analysis in a book that seeks to impact and direct evangelical missions is ill-advised. To determine the best methods and practices for advancing evangelical theological education worldwide, evangelical mission practitioners require theologically informed evaluation, not ideologically driven critique.

The younger leaders I work with believe appealing to authors who adhere to Marxist analysis is not the most effective way to achieve genuine missionary contextualization. To the contrary, Marxist analysis is the evangelical church's path to the Babylonian Captivity of the cultural accommodation. While advising the utmost caution, I want to reiterate my utmost confidence in the theological integrity and missiological intentions of this volume's authors.¹

This book has provoked much within me to consider. If you are involved in leadership training, you will want to read this book as well. You will find much in this book to set your heart to dreaming, your mind to thinking, and your hands to working.

¹ I am not aware of a robust evangelical missions-minded agency in the Americas that uses Marxist-tinted analysis to advance theological and missiological education. Among the young evangelical leaders with whom I work, Abraham Kuyper or Herman Bavinck are more favored than Freire or Gutierrez. It is a fundamental misreading of the cultures to think that genuine missionary contextualization passes only through the interpretive lens of some form of Critical Theory. For further study, see Will Brooks, "Allowing a Theology of Mission to Shape Theological Education in the Majority World" in *Equipping for Global Mission: Theological and Missiological Proposals and Case Studies*, Linda P. Saunders, Gregory Mathias, and Edward L. Smither, eds. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing, 2024), 71-84.