

NEWS ON THE HORIZON

A Publication of the Horizon International Schools

November 2008

Teaching for Life Transformation

In the past, many have questioned how online learning could have a significant impact on a learner's life. Can teachers and students really get to know each other personally in such an environment? Can this training really effect life change? In this article, one of Horizon's course authors shares his own journey from skeptic to advocate concerning the use of online learning in training pastors for effective ministry.

A New Paradigm by Robert Hanna

I have been involved in training pastors and church leaders for 36 years. For the last 27 of these, my Venezuelan co-worker, Custodio López, and I have been training Spanish speaking pastors and church leaders how to effectively study the Bible. Our goal has been to help them consistently apply its teaching to their own personal lives so that they are able to clearly and effectively communicate its message to their people. We praise the LORD that we have been able to offer this traditional, face-to-face training to more than 900 Spanish pastors and church leaders in Venezuela, México, Costa Rica and the USA. Therefore, when we initially considered offering our courses in an online format through Horizon International Schools, we had a certain degree of reservation, as our primary objective is not to merely offer information, but rather to facilitate change in the lives of the students. Since that time, however, our think-

ing has dramatically changed concerning this approach to training.

We had a certain degree of reservation - However, our thinking has dramatically changed.

Thus far, we have taught four online courses to nearly 90 Spanish pastors and church leaders from 13 countries, and as a result have become extremely excited with teaching in this format. In fact, I now prefer to teach a course online, rather than in formats that are more traditional. We have discovered that we actually get to know the students better and see significant life change in the students that dedicate themselves to finishing the courses online. For example, several of the students I am now teaching online were in one of my face-to-face courses last year, and I am getting to know these stu-

dents more intimately and thoroughly than I did through last year's course. There are several reasons why we believe this method of training is so effective:

The students tend to be less intimidated when sharing in the class discussions through the forums of an online course, and consequently often share more intimately. The students have more time to reflect on issues offering more meaningful responses. Students who desire to participate numerous times



Robert Hanna in Costa Rica

Prayer

- Authoring of three additional courses by Hanna for the "Effective Bible Study" series
- \$15,000 for the translation of Hanna's "Effective Bible Study course" into Portuguese
- November facilitator training in Brazil
- God's provision of personal support for the Horizon staff during these financially challenging times

Praise

- Russian Old Testament Survey course is near completion!
- Funding for the translation of three additional courses!
- The LORD's provision of additional volunteers to help with editing and course development!
- Ongoing spirit of harmony among Horizon staff, even in the midst of heavy work and travel schedules!

throughout the day have the opportunity to do so. As they post their responses, they receive continuous interaction from the other students, as well as the facilitators. The online courses tend to require more discipline and therefore help the pastors and church leaders develop this important quality in their personal lives and ministry. The online courses allow the pastors to have ongoing interac-

study the Bible. In essence, because of my responsibilities to my family and the people in our church, I have not been able to participate in a study program at a Bible institute, much less a seminary. This would have meant leaving my present ministry and going away to a theological institution. I do not have the financial means, nor the desire to leave my present ministry. So, I am very happy to be able to study online while still being involved in my present ministry.

Since I have been taking the online courses on how to study the Bible, through Horizon International Schools, my life has been changed. I study the Bible completely different now, with more eager anticipation of discovering what God wants to communicate through His Word. As a result, I have been able to communicate the message of God's Word more effectively to the people of our church.

A telling observation from pastor M.V.'s life, is that his son (27 years old), who also works in the same church, enrolled in a subsequent online course. When asked what his motivation was for taking the course, he responded that he had seen major changes in his father's life and preaching and therefore wanted to take the course.

E.O. a missionary pastor in Spain

I had the opportunity of studying at a very good seminary. There I learned a way of analyzing the biblical text (including the use of the original languages). This gave me a solid basis for discovering God's message revealed in His Word. However, I discovered that this method required more time than I was able to dedicate to it while

working in the ministry as a pastor. Horizon International School's online course has been a blessing helping me evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of my personal method of Bible study. Consequently, I have now developed a more practical study method. The online course has also motivated me to continually learn how to better study the Bible for my personal growth and has helped me be more effective in the preparation of sermons and studies for the people of my church.

I am convinced that every Christian (especially those who teach the Bible) has the obligation, "to present himself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." The online courses on effective Bible study through Horizon International Schools are excellent tools for just this purpose. Praise the LORD that now, church leaders can accomplish this goal without having to leave the ministries in which they are serving.

New Tools

Never before have students and teachers living in different parts of the world been able to learn together in such dynamic ways. New tools for online learning have opened these pathways, enriching personal communication and promoting life change. One can only imagine the profound impact that such an approach to training could eventually have on Spanish speaking pastors around the world.



tion and support from other pastors. This is something they, as a rule, never have in their own setting and culture. This allows them to help others as well as to receive help, a dynamic generally not culturally acceptable in face-to-face settings. The online courses offer the opportunity for pastors with previous theological preparation and those without, coming from different countries and church settings to interact with each other. This in itself provides diversity and encourages the pastors to expand their vision of the world and be more accepting of one another.

Listen to the testimonies of two of our online students:

M.V. a pastor in México

I have been a pastor for over twenty years and have had the desire to be more effective in preaching the Bible to the people of our church. So, I took a number of intensive seminars and attended many conferences, but I never was able to take an in-depth course on how to

Partner with Horizon

Your tax-deductible contributions toward the ministry of Horizon can be made online or sent via check made payable to ABWE, designated for Horizon International Schools:

ABWE
PO Box 8585
Harrisburg PA 17105
www.abwe.org

ABWE Canada
980 Adelaide St. Suite 34
London, ON N6E 1R3
www.canada.abwe.org

Horizon receives your full contribution with no administrative deductions.

NEWS ON THE HORIZON

Vol. 4 No. 3 • November 2008

Editor, Robert Hayden

3351 Claystone SE, Suite G22
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 957-9128 • horizon@abwe.cc
www.his.msites.com



**That the man of God may be competent,
equipped for every good work.**

— 2 Timothy 3:17

