

Why Cru and Destino?

“Why Cru and Destino?” Does the fact that you’re now reading a four page article on it make you regret asking the question? Don’t be dismayed. It’s a question many staff with Cru ask. And the fact that it requires a long answer means it’s a good question.

Both what we call “traditional”¹ Cru movements and Destino movements exist for the same reason: “so that everyone would know someone who truly follows Jesus.” Both ministries are also contextualized. That is, they endeavor to relate “the never-changing truths of scripture to the ever-changing human context so that they are clear and compelling.”² By this definition, *all* ministry is contextualized.³ Destino is more obviously contextualized around the cultural values of Hispanics and Latinos in the U.S., while “traditional” Cru movements are less obviously contextualized to U.S. majority cultural values. Of course, this fact is only “less obvious” to U.S. majority culture members. But for the very reason that something can be “more obvious” or “less obvious” based on your culture, deliberately contextualized ministries such as Destino exist.

You’re probably wondering: why does this matter to our question, “Why Cru and Destino?” Here is why it matters: the point of view from which you ask the question effects what it means. I’m going to address the common points of view that this question comes from, and offer my best answers.

Sometimes, the question “Why Cru and Destino?” comes from a staff or student in an established Cru ministry that knows little about Destino. In this case, the question often goes like this: “Why do we need both Cru and Destino - *the Hispanics and Latinos are welcome to come to us.*” I’m not questioning the genuine sentiments of anyone who might ask the questions this way. Truthfully, many Hispanics and Latinos might be comfortable in a more traditional Cru environment. Yet in these Cru movements, U.S. majority culture values are being assumed. So in this situation, my answer is: **because U.S. majority culture can be a barrier to the gospel.**

Welcoming someone from a different cultural background into a Cru movement is of course an honorable thing, but it is not always in the guest’s best interest. Early on in my Destino career, I had a 2nd generation Hispanic student come to Christ. She told me, *before Destino, I always thought Christianity was for white people.* Clearly, this student would not have done well had

¹ I here use the word “traditional” to get at what a typical Cru movement might look like, culturally speaking. The language is slippery; from an organizational perspective, every Destino movement IS ALSO a Cru movement. But the point here is to differentiate the two. Therefore I refer to “traditional” Cru movements to help make this distinction.

² Ott, C., Strauss, S.J., & Tennant, T. (2010) *Encountering Theology of Mission*. Baker Academic, p. 266

³ “If there is no single, context-free way to express the gospel, then contextualization is inevitable.” Keller, T. (2012) *Center Church*. Zondervan, p. 94

she been invited to a “traditional” Cru movement. And her sentiment may be more pervasive than you think.

Sometimes, the question, “Why Cru and Destino?” comes from a similar place, but it is getting at something more like this: “Why do we need both Cru and Destino - *does our scope really justify having both?*” In this instance, the person asking might be unaware of the Hispanic and Latino demographics in their area. Or perhaps they are very aware, but they are trying to approach building spiritual movements from an organizational-resource perspective. We each have a finite number of dollars, laborers, and hours to work with, and as stewards we want to invest those wisely. But we need to be very careful with our language. We never want to talk about our ministry solely in these terms, or imply that people in our scope must “justify” to us whether or not they are “strategic” or “worthy investments of our resources.” In this situation, I would answer the question by saying, **because every person is worthy of hearing the gospel in a way that is clear and compelling.**

In my first Destino assignment in New York City, we received funding to offset our expenses from a major donor who responded to a funding proposal. Part of the wording of that funding proposal was that we would be in the city for only a year, and therefore “we would not waste time trying to become cultural insiders.” From an organizational-resource perspective, I’m sympathetic to this idea, but from a contextualized ministry perspective, I now find these words offensive. This statement can be taken to reflect poorly on our own expectations as missionaries, and even on the gospel itself. Is it really a “waste of time” for any of us to learn enough about another culture that we can offer the gospel inside it in a clear and compelling way? Given the history of Western missionaries, and our tendency to import our own culture along with the gospel, perhaps those U.S. majority culture members like myself need to take the idea of becoming “cultural insiders” more seriously.

People might ask, “Why Cru and Destino?” in the early phases of a Cru movement, or maybe before one has even started. Increasingly, in these situations the question takes on new meaning, such as: “Why Cru and Destino - *when we could do a multi-ethnic or a multi-cultural movement instead?*” I often surprise people when I sing the praises of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural spiritual movements. As a member of a multi-ethnic family (I have two African-American children), I have worshiped in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural churches exclusively since 2011. I have also benefited immensely from different multi-cultural ministries. But I have a few different ways to address this question.

First, I might reply with a question myself: “Do you think Destino is a mono-ethnic or a mono-cultural ministry? **Because Destino itself is often multi-ethnic and multi-cultural.**” While individual Destino movements certainly vary, many Destino movements are far more multi-ethnic and multi-cultural than Cru movements that call themselves the same. Many Cru staff or students with “traditional” movement backgrounds are inexperienced in intentionally contextualized ministry. Often they overlook the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural dimensions in Destino because they fail to recognize the difference between visible diversity and invisible

diversity. Additionally, most multi-ethnic and multi-cultural movements with high levels of “visible diversity” have some invisible characteristic of homogeneity, such as socio-economic status, urbanized cultural preferences, or even just the quality of “we all somehow got into this competitive school.”

Another question I might follow up with is, “How will a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural ministry help everyone know someone who truly follows Jesus?” People often fail to recognize that just as majority culture in the U.S. can be a barrier to the gospel, so can any culture, and so can a multi-cultural movement. Think about it; might a multi-cultural movement create the unspoken standard that one must accept multi-culturalism to become a Christian? Aren’t there many instances in which it would be more accurate to say that becoming a Christian opens our hearts to different cultures, not the other way around?

Additionally, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural movements are plagued with long-standing controversy over a point in missiology called the “homogenous unit principle.” According to this principle, mono-ethnic and mono-cultural [homogenous] movements “usually grow faster than heterogeneous or multi-cultural ones.”⁴ In our ministry philosophy at Cru, we tend to favor the faster growing movements, and don’t typically think that the slower growing movements are as helpful for our mission to let “everyone [know] someone who truly follows Jesus.” These characteristics of multi-cultural movements, that they 1) can be gospel barriers and 2) grow more slowly, can be equally as true of Destino movements as they are of Cru movements. After all, it’s already been said that Destino is often multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. In most instances where people are asking, “Why Cru and Destino?” the staff I work with have never thought this through.

Multi-ethnic, multi-cultural movements hold some specific advantages over homogenous movements. In fact, there are many ways that multi-ethnic, multi-cultural movements might do a *better* job of helping “everyone know someone who truly follows Jesus,” particularly in discipleship.⁵ As mentioned before, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural movements usually have some invisible characteristic of homogeneity that is holding them together. In Destino, this is typically the “U.S. Hispanic and Latino experience.” I’ll never forget the coaching I once received from a veteran missionary in Africa with more than 20 years of experience building spiritual

⁴ From “The Pasadena Consultation” (1978): Homogenous Unit Principle. Published by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism. Retrieved from: <http://www.lausane.org/content/lop/lop-1>

⁵ “All forms of hatred, scorn, and disrespect between Christians of different backgrounds are forbidden, being totally incompatible with Christ’s reconciling work...The wall dividing Jew from gentile was not only their active reciprocal hatred; it was also their racial and religious alienation symbolized by “the law of commandments and ordinances.” This, too, Jesus abolished, in order to “create in himself one new man in place of two, so making peace.” (Eph. 2:15). From “The Pasadena Consultation” (1978): Homogenous Unit Principle. Published by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism. Retrieved from: <http://www.lausane.org/content/lop/lop-1>

movements with Cru. He told me, “nothing is dynamic until it is specific.”⁶ While a full defense of the value of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Destino movements is beyond the scope of this article, I certainly believe it can be made. And while some may approach multi-ethnic and multi-cultural ministry through idealism and inexperience, not everyone will. So when I’m asked “Why Cru and Destino - *when we could do a multi-ethnic or multi-cultural ministry?*” by the right person, I have a slightly different answer: **because no spiritual movement is dynamic until it is specific.** The special cultural realities behind the “U.S. Hispanic and Latino experience” are specific enough that Destino can build dynamic multi-ethnic, multi-cultural spiritual movements around it. I leave it to others who endeavor to start multi-ethnic and multi-cultural movements to find a better rally point. But speaking personally, I have found no better starting place for launching *multiple* spiritual movements, including many that are multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, than the model we have in Destino.

To be completely comprehensive, we must acknowledge that the question can sometimes be asked by someone who comes from a Destino movement background, and who really knows little of “traditional” Cru. If you are wondering who could be asking the question from this perspective, then you probably have never spent time in a Destino movement, because it certainly comes up! In these cases, the question sounds like this: “Why Cru and Destino - *because here at Destino, white and majority culture members (or anybody else) are welcome to come to us.*” But again, while the sentiment behind this question is honorable, the practice is not always helpful to the guest. My best answer is: “Because “U.S. Hispanic and Latino culture” can be a barrier to the gospel.” You can notice I have simply taken my first answer above and *contextualized it*. As I already said, all ministry is contextualized, and this just about brings us full circle.

So, there you have it. Four good answers to the question “Why Cru and Destino?”

1. Because U.S. majority culture can be a barrier to the gospel.
2. Because every person is worthy of hearing the gospel in a way that is clear and compelling.
3. Because Destino itself is often multi-ethnic and multi-cultural.
4. Because no spiritual movement is dynamic until it is specific.

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⁶ Thank you, Tom Dorsch, for this powerful and memorable insight!

Questions for Discussion

- Which of the four answers to the question “Why Cru and Destino?” do you like the most? Which do you like the least?
- Many other points about ministry in general were made in this article. What did you find helpful? What was confusing?
- Do you think differently about multi-ethnic and multi-cultural ministries after reading this? If so, how?
- If you were asked “Why Cru and Destino?” by a “traditional” Cru staff, how would you go about answering? Would you change your answer if you were asked by a supporter? What about an Hispanic or Latino leader in your community?