

STAGE 2	LATIN AMERICA	CARACAS, VENEZUELA	CHURCH REPRODCUTION THROUGH CELL GROUPS
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The greater metropolitan area of Caracas has 3 to 4 million people. Although Venezuela is considered to be 11% reached (Operation World 2010), the Evangelical population of Caracas is less than 1% of the total. The crime rate is high, and people lock themselves up in high-rises for security.

The Dios Admirable (Wonderful God) church began in the Charallave district in 1965, as an evangelistic Bible study targeting university students. The first two church planting pastors were well-respected missionaries (Lowell O.

and Wilfred A.). The church was formally organized, and pastor Francisco L. came with the idea of starting daughter churches.

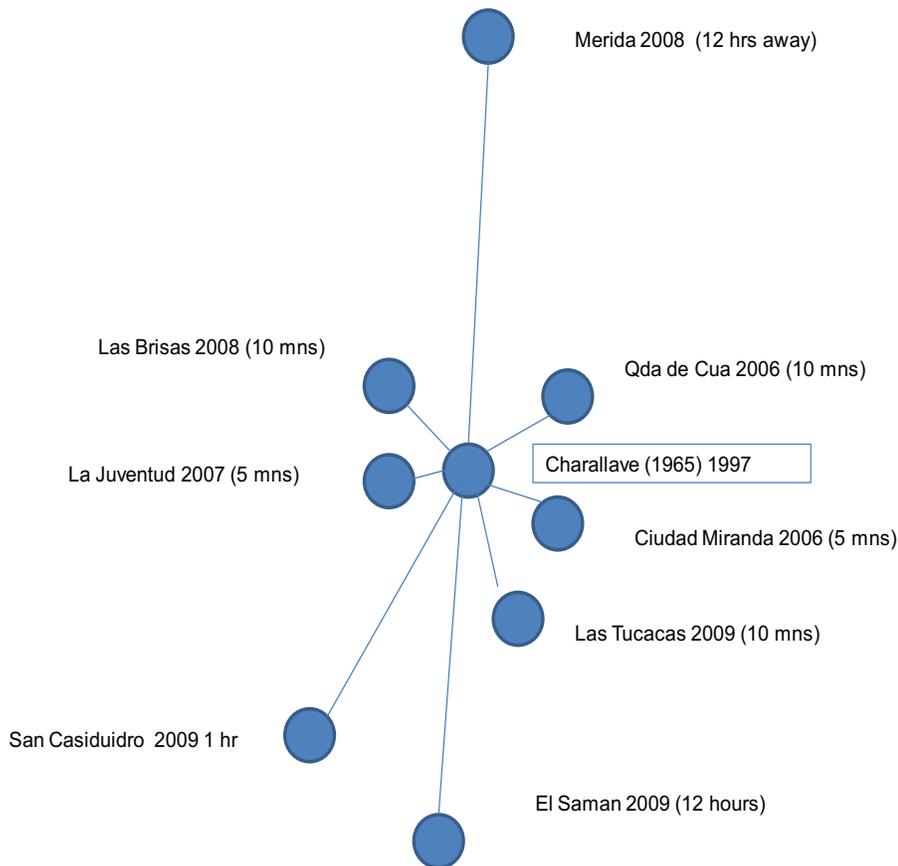
His vision was to do it by developing lay leaders in home groups. By the 30th anniversary of the Dos Admirable church, 30 home groups had been started, and five of those had become daughter churches. In the meantime, the mother church had grown from 200 to 400 people. They called the home groups “Grupos Básicos Discipulado Cristiano” (Basic Christian Discipleship Groups). They prepared for the launch of each new group with one to three months of prayer. The home groups prioritized and prayer and outreach. For these believers being a disciple means praying, caring and sharing with their neighbors. Each group has as its goal to “multiply,” in order to reach another neighborhood in God’s timing.

For many years the daughter churches functioned as satellites, dependent on the mother church, and led by its leaders. Then, starting in 2006, under the leadership of the current pastor, they were empowered and released to become full-fledged churches, at the appropriate time. This move was made to reduce dependency and allow them to become all God intended them to become. They were also free to develop ministries tailored to their neighborhoods, and to serve God in their distinct ways. They also became responsible to manage their own resources and finances.

One of the daughter churches grew to 70 people and another 150 people (besides the 450 of Dios Admirable). The Charallave church has not abandoned the daughters but functions more as a big brother now. This move has also freed it up to be involved in other church planting efforts. Unfortunately, some of the smaller groups have shown little progress and still function pretty much like satellites. Six of the eight new daughter churches still have less than 50 people meeting regularly. The primary obstacle to maturity seems to be a leadership deficit. The

Charallave district has a lot of professionals while in some of the outlying neighborhoods lack resources, education and leadership. This is reflected in the church growth.

The following chart shows the rapid deployment of daughter and grand-daughter churches. The date the church was started and the driving distance from the Charallave are given. Because of traffic poor conditions of the roads, it is customary to give distances in travel time by car.



Cell churches have different types of gatherings, small home groups and larger celebration groups, but the basic community life takes place in the home group (also called cell groups or life groups). In the late 1990s Mikel Neumann was granted a scholarship from the Billy Graham Center to study common strengths of cell churches in five major cities in the world (Chicago, Bombay, Caracas, Accra, Moscow). He looked at two cell-churches in Caracas, one was the Dios Admirable. His conclusions can be found in *Home Groups for Urban Cultures*, 1999, William Carey. These churches integrate the following strengths: Caring, worship, structure, leadership development, teaching/discipleship, evangelism and prayer. The study guide will help you consider what “shape” would best serve God’s purpose in your context.