









## Summary


Ruth Padilla DeBorst discusses integral mission, hospitality, and the importance of community engagement in reflecting God's love across cultural divides.


## Highlights


-  Ruth Padilla DeBorst emphasizes integral mission as a holistic approach to faith.
-  She defines biblical hospitality as welcoming and including others in our communities.
-  The importance of living sustainably and seeking the welfare of the city is highlighted.
-  She advocates for a community that breaks down barriers and reflects Christ's peacemaking role.
-  DeBorst believes that migrants can enrich Western churches with their sense of community.
-  She is working on a PhD focusing on transformative theological education in Latin America.
-  The call for Christians to actively engage and reflect God's kingdom in diverse contexts is emphasized.


## Key Insights

 **Integral Mission:** Integral mission is about engaging all areas of life under Christ's lordship, moving beyond a Sunday-only faith to a holistic approach that affects daily life and community interactions. This perspective encourages churches to help members understand how their faith informs their values and societal contributions.

 **Biblical Hospitality:** Biblical hospitality is not just about outreach; it's about creating a welcoming environment within our communities where barriers are broken down. This reflects God's inclusive nature and challenges the church to be a home for all.

 **Sustainable Living:** The call to live sustainably and seek the welfare of our cities goes beyond personal ethics; it's about community engagement and a commitment to justice, showing that the well-being of one is tied to the well-being of all.

 **Community Development:** Experiencing loss and hardship, as DeBorst has, can drive a deeper understanding of community development and leadership. This personal narrative enriches her perspective on effective mission work and the importance of resilience.

 **Transformative Education:** DeBorst advocates for a model of theological education that is life-oriented rather than siloed. It emphasizes practical engagement and holistic understanding, which can lead to transformative community action.

🌍 Third Culture Lifestyle: Living between cultures offers unique perspectives that can bridge gaps. This third-culture identity fosters an openness to different experiences and enriches the understanding of God through diverse cultural lenses.

😬 Challenging Prejudices: DeBorst highlights the necessity of listening and learning from one another, particularly across cultural divides. This requires humility and a willingness to question established norms, leading to richer communal experiences and deeper theological reflections.

00:00:11 thank you hello and welcome to the global church project I'm Graeme Hill born in Colombia and raised in Argentina by an American mother and an Ecuadorian father Ruth Padilla DeBorst brings a wealth of unique experiences and perspectives on Theology and Mission theologians are sometimes perceived as dry and irrelevant but that image couldn't be more wrong where she is concerned a leading Latin American Voice she aims to make theology more relevant to Everyday Life she's worked in Mission extensively and

00:00:46 lives an intentional Community her compelling story includes the loss of her first husband while on the mission field Ruth Padilla DeBorst is passionate about leadership development incarnational Mission intentional community community development and holistic mission Ruth Padilla DeBorst welcome to the globe church project thank you at what stage in life did you decide to join with God in his mission and what was happening for you at the time uh it's hard to even put a date I think it was a progressive understanding of

00:01:19 the fact that as God's daughter I was called to be part of God's work and that grew As I Grew um from when I was a child I grew up in a Christian family with a very strong sense of God's calling to all God's people how would you define integral Mission and how does the church engage in integral Mission today so integral mission is as churches as communities even the structures of society and so it has to do with the whole integral comes from the word when you have a loaf of bread we have grain you have a grain of wheat

00:02:05 and typically to make it white as the The Fluffy bread people eat you have to take things off you have to discard things but the integrality and integral bread in our context though the concept is used has to do with all of it there the wholeness of it present and so um how do churches engage I think um specifically um engaging in all dimensions of Life under Christ's lordship so um saying it's not we're not a Sunday called to just a Sunday Faith we're called to a Monday through Sunday faith that works itself out into all areas of

00:02:49 life and churches then would help their members understand their gifts and how their faith Bears on their values systems on their um relationships on their contributions to the larger society also you've written quite a bit on Christian Hospitality what does biblical Hospitality look like yeah I think sometimes we think about Mission as something we do out there yeah we have to go to do Mission work and actually I think more of the biblical calling is to be a people of God and to as we live that out then

00:03:28 um have Open Homes open churches open borders open to welcome to include because um you know I look at Ephesians 2 and the call of being a community that reflects Christ's um uniting peacemaking role in the world the community as such breaking down barriers that separate people is what shows most potently God's good purposes for God's world and it seems kind of um uh it's it's really almost shocking to think that we are with all our Brokenness all our prejudice all our greed that we as God's people are God's

00:04:13 willing place in the world and so if we are God's home in the world then we're called to welcome others into that home and you've said that Hospitality involves Building Homes and living sustainably in them our relationships our care for creation seeking the welfare of the city can you unpack some of those ideas for us yeah I'm really struck the biblical particularly and this nine and the call to a people in Exile being held by their enemy forces being uprooted from their land their idea of well-being of goodness could

00:04:54 have been to return to you know so they weren't very present in the land of Exile and yet God says have children have grandchildren let your children marry and have grandchildren plant you know plant and

eat the fruit a fruit tree doesn't yield fruit for several years until you can enjoy the fruit of a tree it means strike Roots it means really belong it means engage and then pray for the city the Peace of the city where you're located because the piece of the city is in the Peace of the city is Erp so you're intertwined with these

00:05:34 people that you consider enemies you're actually called to be a part of that place and to be to reflect God's the values of God's Kingdom in that place so it's an amazing call how do we welcome unexpected guests to God's multifaceted Multicultural banquet table it's a challenge because in these days with the movement of people and the the migrations Pro provoked by Injustice by Wars by by hunger by poverty the movement of people is just such a threat to things as they are and to my comfort if I you know if my things are okay and

00:06:15 I got what I need having somebody start knocking on the door of my country or my church or my house is threatening and I think the challenge really is that we cannot expect to live sustainably as Humanity with things as they are we can't just throw out a few little um crumbs to people to bring them up to develop them without changing our own Lifestyles if we have lifestyles of comfort that are built on an unjust system so it's even more threatening does the gospel mean I have to change does it mean I have to maybe let go of

00:06:57 some things of some of the privilege accumulated through ages of you know some of us with opportunities for education and such we have a capital that that we take for granted and doesn't mean I just try to give to others to bring them up to my level that's unsustainable the world cannot sustain the lifestyle of much of the West North without surrendering something I mean this topic of welcome and hospitality is a critical one always I suppose but at the moment it seems especially acute I mean watching recent presidential

00:07:34 debates and the kind of rhetoric that's going around all of this yes I wonder what it would mean for us as Christians to provide a different kind of welcome than the world is used to yes and the issue to me is this where does our ultimate Allegiance lie is our allegiance to some humanly constructed nation-state with all its institutions and its type Borders or is our Allegiance as sons of and Daughters of the Lord of all people is our allegiance to a kingdom that transcends those nationalities and then if that's the

00:08:20 grounds for our core identity then probably we need to start questioning policies and actions and attitudes and values that are excluding people um and I know I've been challenged on this because people say oh so then you think we should just open our borders and then what do we do and yes that we do we will have to Grapple with the reality that the structures of the world as it is are not sustaining life for all people and a few people are very comfortable and most people are dying either with Hunger or war or

00:09:00 Injustice or lack of opportunity for jobs and so I think Christians should be at the Forefront of questioning anything that's depriving all people of the Abundant Life that God intends for all people and the whole of creation I mean this debate is a very hot one in my country Australia as well as you probably know and I sometimes think that it isn't just that the people who are coming look different than us and speak different languages but also they hold different belief systems different religious systems for instance and it

00:09:35 concerns me that often it's the church can be seen to be at the Forefront of unwelcome yes and I find that disturbing and it relates to a lot of the issues that you're talking about right I think I think the issue yes definitely um it has to do with I mean sometimes I wonder how much our fear is um kind of cast in a fear for

religious change and influence and how much is that we use religion as a bit of a lacquer to cover up what actually is human greed and unwillingness to sacrifice or to change

00:10:19 um so I wonder at that you know um and and so is our and and the fact that Jesus and the early church the model of of living is one where people were willing to to let go in some way Jesus himself gives himself away so fully what does it mean then to follow in in Jesus footsteps um what's a third culture lifestyle and how does it affect the way in which we do fellowship and Mission today a third culture of Lifestyle yes so I grew up between worlds my mother is from the US my father's from Ecuador I grew up in

00:11:06 Argentina I've lived in Ecuador in El Salvador and Costa Rica I've had to live I live in Between Worlds I I'm fluent in English but my culture is more Latin um and I think that's taught me um a bit about this um where our core belonging is again are we are we just constricted to live within the bounds of one defined cultural milieu or are we called to build Bridges and and um and and go beyond it to an allegiance that is that is more powerful and more significant and more defining of our values and of

00:11:47 our lifestyle um and the question again well I'm wondering how it affects the way in which we engage in in fellowship and Mission and even our construction of our identity in Christ right so that that I think I addressed the issue of identity then having to pull in a way in my personal experience having to pull these different backgrounds together into one whole um was a was the work of the spirit in me releasing some prejudices I grew up very angry at the U.S because I was in Argentina watching the devastation

00:12:26 wreaked by political interventions all around Central America Latin America military dictatorships supported by the U.S and I had but I had a mother from the US I was partly that so how do I put together this in myself that was God's work of reconciling inside to put my identity together in as God's daughter um but then I think then the issue is can we so some of us will probably be more Adept at Building Bridges but um I think the challenge and the opportunity of all this migration and movement of people which some can

00:13:09 perceive as such a threat can also be such an enriching experience because we all experience God in ways that are related to our culture and our context and our personal experiences so if we can offer that to one another we have our God grows not God but our perception of who God is and how God works and and the the multiplicity the diversity of Expressions um that are God's way of also connecting with with Humanity through culture and art and music and and perspectives on things and so if we can if we can

00:13:47 release some of our our um our tight uh constructed selves built around nationhood and and social class and such then we can open ourselves up to a much richer experience of God and of our of our calling what do you think of some things that the majority world and diaspora communities can teach Western Christians today I had I did an interesting little piece of research once um with um churches interviewing pastors and leaders from churches in North America in the U.S specifically and um migrants from Latin America that had

00:14:31 come Christians who had come into those churches and asking that very question and um very clearly it was a sense of community um the the the the the migrant from Latin America coming into a very individualistic society that is also marks the church this individualism people share a cup of coffee after church and then they're gone and that's it um and and the migrants would come in and say well where you know let's come come to my home after church let's eat together let's share let's get to have

00:15:08 our children play together and just the building of community was something very powerful in all the instances another was just they said they opened our eyes um the fact that they started asking questions that the people in a certain little comfortable Evangelical ghetto were not asking they made them they opened our eyes to the rest of the world not just their country of origin but the world around us in our context um and they became Bridges they built they connected us to those people they didn't just open our eyes and say oh

00:15:45 there are other Latinos around or or pakistanis or Hmong people but they actually became Bridge Builders with those migrant communities um and so it it became a challenge to the church to be the church in multi-ethnic contexts where they had before that been very very closed I mean the reason why phrase did what can they teach us rather than what can we learn from them is because I I think there is something about the language that we've got to be aware of as well and the way in which we position ourselves in relationship to

00:16:22 others yeah so the thing is to me it's hard for anybody to be taught who does not choose to learn and and so it's a posture it's an attitude it's a it's an openness it's a willingness to recognize that we don't have it all together that we you know that we need one another in order to to get the full picture of the gospel and the whole picture of what we're called to be and do in the world now what's most misunderstood about the things you say so I guess um you know we respond to people out of out of the matrixes we've grown up in or

00:17:07 we've you know allowed to shape us and so um when things are are brought to us that don't fit our scheme we have to fit them in somehow and so sometimes some of us from Latin America are are classed as leftists or um radicals or liberationists because some of the way we approach scripture and we approach um reality and then consequently our mission uh don't fit exactly the categories that have been established probably mostly in the North Atlantic and we tend to question some of those boxes and so

00:17:56 um I think the the challenge is to really learn to listen to one another uh to to in some way just be be will have have a hospitable heart have a posture of well maybe before I classify and discard I should listen and and maybe in listening we can actually recognize that we have a whole lot more in common than than not and that maybe we can learn from one another um and that that it can be a rich exchange that gives us a fuller picture of of God what are some of the things that you're working on over the next

00:18:37 couple of years that you're really excited about just a couple well as many as you want as many as you feel willing to share well um no I'm very a very um we're involved my husband and I and um a team um were involved in theological formation we call it that it's not it's not your classic theological education in a in an academic setting it's um and it's not organized as classic theological education is around these kind of Euro inherited categories hermeneutics homolytics Old Testament New Testament

00:19:20 and each one in its own little Silo it's organized around life so our whole curriculum is our courses are organized around family work society and church and um and so I'm just very excited to continue with this both a master's program and a certificate level program that are influencing the church around Latin America and strengthening a broader perspective of the gospel and Mission um and and who we are as God's people in God's world so that's that's very exciting to me um and then also as I continue engaged

00:20:00 in Infamous the International Fellowship for Mission as transformation it's um seen this very same type of thing not an export from Latin America and plunk there because that would be the same kind of Imperial form that we have rejected but actually um offering out of Latin America this has been helpful for us this framework which is more organic more from the bottom up more out of life and for life has been helpful and so we're constituting working groups around the world of people who are taking this offering and

00:20:42 producing their own valuable curriculum and um and I just see such a need for that to nourish the church with solid Biblical theological Endeavor it's saying theology isn't just something you give to people a little package that I give and you repeat theology is something we do it's a verb it's something we we do theology as we build the bridges between reality our current context and what we understand of God's purposes and we do that for the sake of living more Faithfully in the world so I'm an educator at heart I don't even

00:21:20 identify as a theologian and um I'm more passionate about just seeing people discover the Wonder of being able to continue doing theology for life out of life and for life because I guess even models like theological education by extension or Diversified theological education they still have a tendency I guess to kind of present packages or Silo topics exactly so this is very interdisciplinary we're engaging people and saying you know there's no dimension of life that is not affected by Christ's lordship well what

00:21:55 does that look like how do grapple with the questions of you know some of the things we were talking about before migration and and um how do you what does it mean to be a church in today in Europe with all the the just hundreds of thousands of people coming clamoring at their borders what does it look like for Costa Ricans to receive nicaraguans and Salvadorans and what does it look like in relationships between countries that have always contested borders what does it mean to be a Christian in the midst of that and

00:22:30 what should it look like and then what action do we generate but we don't act in society out of some ideology somebody's program we are called to act out of a vision of God's kingdom and God's justice so we have to Grapple with those questions and they won't be given to us we have to work them out together in community and you're currently working on a PhD as well it's kind of impolite to mention a PhD to a PhD student what is the topic that you're working on your PhD so I'm working on a PhD at Boston University

00:23:05 and it's in messiology and social ethics and I'm actually looking at this very program that we're currently running but I'm looking at the roots of it who how when where and what exactly um were some of the particular dimensions of it that have been so generative of commitment and transformative engagement in context in Latin America as a bit of a grounds to say these are look at and make a proposal regarding some of those core ingredients and postures that are essential if theological education is

00:23:45 actually going to produce transformation and not just remain in the halls of knowledge and in books and libraries is there anything else you want to say to us today uh just um let's no matter where we we are uh who the we is if if the we is somebody in the North or the South or the east or the West um let's my I guess my prayer my yearning is that we be willing to submit to the to the um work of the spirit in weaving us into a body that does reflect the values of God's kingdom in the world um and uh and is open to welcoming uh

00:24:32 people who are different um and that it is in that Community which is very clear about its identity but has very porous edges um it's centered on Jesus but not bounded by Church affiliations or such that it's that

body that will reflect God's love in the world and contribute to God's purposes well thank you for joining us at the club church project thank you the global church project is located at [www.theglobalchurchproject.com](http://www.theglobalchurchproject.com) on our website you'll find a wide range of interviews and resources for colleges

00:25:16 universities and churches I look forward to your company next time from me goodbye