

◆ The Garcia Gazette

Reaching Mexico and the Nations for Jesus

March 2017 - Cuba Edition!



Link International
Ministries



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Reaching Mexico and
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Blessings dear family and friends,

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

We are told to GO and TEACH, to MAKE DISCIPLES in all the world. And after teaching, our answered prayer is a life changed, actively living the gospel – producing spiritual fruit both in their own lives first and then in others. This is the Great Commission.

We are so excited to report on the remainder of our trip to Cuba. As you recall in the short update that we sent you from Cuba, our first 2 weeks we held Discippler Training conferences where we taught pastors and leaders from the provinces of Cienfuegos and Villa Clara. We had 208 attendees in the two conferences.



Our Cuban national trainers took on a greater part of the conference. They led meetings, they taught break-out sessions and each had an assistant that they trained alongside them to be a facilitator for the next conference. They did dramas to illustrate the concepts of "spiritual parenting", "the character of God" and "what individual discipleship looks like". It was amazing to witness how they have grown in leadership and in their knowledge of the DTI material and the skill with which they taught and facilitated.

The next four weeks Pablo and I traveled and taught two-day

seminars on marriage counseling to pastors and leaders. The first day of the seminar we taught them how to take a couple through pre-marital counseling using a curriculum that we have used with numerous couples in Mexico. This curriculum can be used with individual couples who are preparing for marriage and can be adjusted to use in a small group setting for couples that are already married. The second day of the seminar we taught them how to facilitate a small group for marriages in trouble, using the video, video-segments and curriculum from the movie "Fireproof".



Most of the month we traveled. The first two weeks were shorter trips within the provinces of Cienfuegos and Villa Clara teaching in 3 different churches. Our "base" was in Palmira, Cienfuegos (where we had been for the DTI conferences). Because of being able to return to Palmira, we were able to host a small group in between travels. We met with 7 couples and took them through a shortened version of the pre-marital counseling curriculum touching on areas such as the biblical concepts of commitment, fidelity, acceptance, expectations, communication, and conflict resolution.



*Most of the couples from our
small group in Palmira.*



9 different churches during the month of traveling

The following weeks we traveled to 6 different churches in 3 Provinces: Mayabeque, Havana and Matanzas.

We shared with you before, that in a 2015 study it showed that Cuba has the highest divorce rate among all countries in Latin America, at 56%. *“There are several reasons for why Cuba has such a high divorce rate. The first has to do with the island’s terrible housing shortage as well as high poverty which forces married couples to live with their in-laws and other relatives. As you can imagine, having to live with so many other people can cause a strain on even the best of marriages. The poor economic conditions don’t help either. Cuba’s laissez-faire approach to divorce also contributes to its high divorce rate. It’s cheap and effortless, costing a couple about the equivalent of four U.S. dollars and twenty minutes of time. Because of the poverty, there are few possessions to divide, making divorce a truly simple process.”* <http://records.com/countries-with-the-highest-divorce-rates> This is something that we have witnessed each year – even in Christian marriages – and even in pastors and leaders. ***It has broken our hearts to observe this and thus the inception of the dream to stay longer to teach the biblical concepts of a Christ-centered marriage.***

Luis & Family



Initially, our plan was to stay only in Cienfuegos Province and teach couples in two different towns; Palmira and Camarones, hoping to invest in those couples and begin to alter concepts, if only in a few...

Two days before the end of the DTI (Discipler Training) conference, our host, Luis Hernandez, the National Director of the Brethren in Christ of Cuba, came to us and said “I think that staying here in Palmira is limiting the amount of people that can be reached by the marriage counseling curriculum that you are going to be teaching. I think that you should travel to several different churches and teach pastors and leaders how to teach rather than just impact 20 or 30 couples here close by... What do you think?! We have the leadership here at the DTI conference and we could sit down with them and work on an agenda for the next four weeks...” And so, the adjustment to “our plans” began!

We were to have a 3-day break after the DTI conferences to gear up for the rest of our time. That break became a time bathed in prayer, of planning and re-working of the entire way that we

were going to teach! How do you teach 20 chapters of information in 2 days?! We decided that we had to teach the “nuts and bolts” of each curriculum along with in-depth concept teaching, personal testimonies from our marriage and then active learning –



where the leaders participated with their spouses in a few, select questions from the homework that is assigned to the couples that they will later take through the curriculum. This way they would experience all the facets of what and how we teach.



They would be stretched. There would be tears...lots of laughter and somewhere along the way, those never taught, never talked about, concepts – a way of thinking that had never occurred to many; concepts of committed love for a lifetime, of fidelity... how to resolve conflict rather than walk away... Those concepts began to resonate deep within their hearts and we watched as transformation took place in their thinking. It was lifechanging for them and for us.



Leaders from San Jose de las Lajas, Mayabeque

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” We pray that the teaching they received would bear fruit as they first actively live out these concepts in their own marriages and then begin teaching others. Would you please pray with us?!



Leaders from Camarones, Cienfuegos

An exciting side note: 🎵

Teaching the curriculum in this way has sparked the desire to continue teaching leaders right here in Ensenada. We have counseled many couples from our church and through word of mouth, have also counseled couples from several other churches in town. However, we can only touch a few couples per year... Pray with us as we plan to talk to pastors and leaders locally to see if we can do this same 2-day training in their churches — or possibly a leadership conference/retreat...



THE Dreams

One other thing that happened in 2016 while preparing for our return to Cuba is the birth of a dream to take Kindles loaded with the beginnings of a pastoral library to several couples that we have been working with for the last many years. There are very few resources, yet we can only take one copy of a limited number of books with us as we enter the country. So, during the year we raised funds and were able to purchase six kindles and we loaded them with 30 books each! We dispersed them throughout our luggage and carry-ons and our dream came to fruition! Praise God! This was one of those “jump up and down” moments in life! What joy! Thanks to all who participated in this dream!

MUCHAS GRACIAS
Muchas Gracias



General Sessions



Break out groups



Practicing and planning for implementation



Home base!



A meeting led by a national trainer



Setting them up!



Figuring out how they work!



That jumping up and down moment!!

At each of the 9 churches we visited they had invited numerous churches from their town—multiplying the reach of leadership trained!!

Thank you for forever standing beside us with your prayers, words of encouragement and financial gifts!
Together we serve!



Pablo & Martha



Wifi in the park!