

March 1, 2011

Dearest Friends,

May the great Shepherd of the sheep be leading you and your loved ones . . . that you may lack nothing!

I am happy to write again with wonderful news of victory in the fields. I bring you **BIG BREAKTHROUGH NEWS TODAY from Cuba!**

I thought this latest visit would be low-key. We're under scrutiny by the Cuban government because of the amount of activity our ministry is generating. So we decided to take a smaller group . . . to meet in smaller venues with our workers . . . and to introduce a new sister organization to the work so their workers could help us with this mighty harvest!

We asked our coordinators to gather our workers in the different areas and invite to the meeting those who are working with them on a voluntary basis so we could consider them for full-time status.

The first meeting was our first surprise. The worker had gathered 31 people who are working with him—planting churches under his direction! We were astonished to discover that he had a whole church-planting movement of his own. And we were about to discover that he was not the exception—he was the norm!

We heard testimonies that revealed that the advance of the work is not only volunteer-driven, but it's also happening everywhere, and it is explosive. Each volunteer is planting an average of two to four churches!

I figured this surprise at our first stop, in the western part of the country, was just wonderful news—but it got even better as we went.

The leader of the sister organization was so excited . . . yet he wondered how this work was possible. How do these volunteers earn a living and still dedicate so much time to the work of church planting? He asked me if we could specifically ask the workers at the next meeting to share how they “make a week work” so they have time for secular work and also church work.

At the next site, the paid worker had 43 volunteers who are planting churches and opening up additional “preaching points.” Posted in the church auditorium was an enlarged map of the province where they're working and several surrounding provinces. No fewer than 100 thumbtacks pinpointed the towns and neighborhoods where they're working. It was an incredible sight to behold. (We'll post pictures on our web site of both the trip and the map.)

If the big vision was stirring, then the personal picture was even more so. Individual testimonies were deeply moving, even heroic. We asked about the “how” of managing work and family while conducting such productive volunteer ministry. The testimonies began to flow.

- We heard the testimony of a shoe repairman. He is a leader of what they refer to not as *house churches* but as **neighborhood churches**. He fixes shoes in order to put something on the table for his family, and then he gives himself to the larger “more full-time” job of planting churches and leading others to plant churches.
- He introduced another man in his late 40’s. The man looked as if he’d been *baked* by the sun. He gets up at 6 a.m., has his devotions and study, then heads off to the back-breaking work of cutting grass with a machete for seven hours a day. He comes home and takes a shower, eats, and heads out until after dark to do evangelism and church planting. He is planting four churches!

One of the friends in our party asked him, “How long have you been a Christian?” The man answered without any pride or emotion: “Eight months.” We were astonished, again.

A follow-up question from our group: “How did you come to Christ?” The man answered, “I was hitchhiking, like we do to get from one place to another. Two Americans picked me up, and they were nice to me. They gave me a little paper that explained the gospel. I read it and prayed to receive the Lord. Then I looked for a church to attend.”

Nothing magic about that! The “preaching cobbler” called it “**New Testament Christianity and New Testament strategies.**”

- We heard testimonies about a man who makes ice cream and then sells it so he can go do the “real work” of planting churches.
- We heard about people who “fix nails”—give manicures—so they can do church planting!

The next stop revealed more of the same. Our worker in this area has scores of volunteers serving with him, people who are serving God because of what God said He wants us to be doing. In their hearts and minds, “God said it and we must do it.” It is a simple and **very powerful conclusion**.

Our friend from the sister organization was beginning to reach some deep conclusions of his own. He was overjoyed at the prospect of joining what he called a “most successful” movement in progress. He was baffled by the fact that his organization had prayed and approached several ministries who are known to be working in Cuba, but every one of them chose “not to share” information on logistics that might allow them to come alongside and help these groups.

There was no flattery meant in his remarks, but he was surprised that we were “willing to share” . . . especially since it’s a very successful ministry opportunity. Unfortunately, he says, other Christian organizations aren’t willing to do what World Link Ministries is doing.

A day or two later, we were behind schedule, so we weren't going to get lunch for another two hours. I had some Power Bars which my wife had packed for me, so I handed them out to the guys in the group.

There was nothing heroic about it; I have seen multiple examples of people doing the same. But my friend—still pondering the “sharing” issue—just had to ask me again. This time he was more probing in his question:

“Where did you learn to share?”

The question provoked a chuckle of disbelief in me. A Christian is asking another Christian where he learned to share?!

He persisted: “No, really—to what do you trace your attitude of sharing?” He really wanted to pinpoint the source. The obvious answers were not good enough: “Sunday school?” “No, I've known too many Sunday school attendees!”

I had to think for a moment in order to pinpoint it. It really wasn't in Sunday school. In an indirect but profound way, it was at the military school I attended in my early teenage years . . .

Every one of our teachers had the rank of captain. We had a teacher for drafting class who was a “soft touch.” He too was a captain, but nobody really feared him. Each day as he came to our class, he would get busy on a project, which we were supposed to reproduce in our drafting notebooks. He wasn't barking at us all the time. He was a very nice guy.

So the whole class was just a chatting room. “Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” The teacher seemed like he wasn't paying attention, like he didn't care.

Finally, on the day we were to turn in our drafting notebooks, no one had theirs finished. I recall the teacher's benign smile as he went by every desk and got all the lame excuses. “Okay,” he replied over and over, “That's fine.” We all began paying attention to each new “creative excuse”—to see what the teacher would say.

We didn't realize we were being “**examined**” . . . and were “**found wanting!**”

The day the final grades came out, we discovered *he flunked the whole class!* It was the most shocking experience in military school! We felt he couldn't do that to us! We thought that if **he** was going to be that serious, then **he** should have been the one to “bark” the most. **He** had been “sneaky,” according to some. **He** had been “a traitor,” according to others. “**He** should have warned us more!”

We ALL had deep convictions about all the things **he** should have done. I don't remember a single voice mentioning what WE should have done!

The fact is, he did say how we would be graded . . . but he wasn't cracking a whip every moment of every class. The amazing thing is that *he was paying attention the entire time*. We just misinterpreted his kind smile as *approval* of what we were doing.

I had a lot of time to think about that captain. More than any other teacher at military school, he taught us *a lesson for life and for eternity* . . .

I hear God's Word taught and preached, and I see behind it God's gracious smile and kindness. I see God's amazing patience. But I remember that captain! Someone has defined **the fear of the Lord** as **"the continual awareness that God is watching and weighing every one of our thoughts, our actions, our words, and our attitudes."** *He does not pay at the end of every month, but in the end he pays!*

"Learning to share" is not really about "sharing"; the issue is about **obedience**.

Jesus told us to make disciples; he gave us the Great Commission. Many people, like the Cubans, *who have nothing*, are doing their dead level best to be found **obedient**.

*Their obedience is not intended so that **those of us who have more** will be excused to do **less**.* We need a profound obedience so that together we will multiply the impact, **matching our obedience with their obedience**.

Many people see the breakthrough of using nationals as simply **"a cheaper way to do missions."** Those who are mindful of God's right to have our obedience see the same scenario as **an opportunity to be more effective and multiply the impact in an explosive way.**

Because they do so much with so little, should we do less with the "much we have been given"?

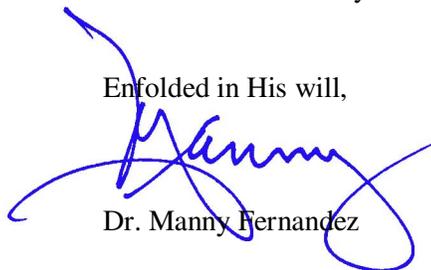
How fully have you learned to share? How completely have you learned the "fear of the Lord"? Will you join the Cuban equation—bringing your genuine obedience alongside theirs to empower those whose ministry efforts **could explode all the more** if they were working "full time" in the harvest?

Please help us to hire more workers. A gift of \$200 per month can plant close to 25 neighborhood churches. A gift of \$100 can plant 12 churches if sustained monthly.

But any generous gift you can give right now will be helpful. We have seen with our own eyes that **MUCH MORE CAN BE DONE** if we **support the local leaders and workers who are on the front lines**. This is the eternity-shaping difference that you can make today as you give out of a heart of love for God, a heart of authentic obedience!

Please get back to me as quickly as possible. Step into the gap that God is pointing out to you, so we can also add our obedience to the equation and see God's mighty soul harvest gathered in. Let us hear from you in genuine obedience and faith. May God bless you . . . please come running!

Enfolded in His will,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. The need is great but only because the opportunity is great. In Cuba, in Spain, in Mexico, and everywhere God has opened doors to us . . . we see by faith what can be done for the kingdom if we have the faithful support for the workers in the field! Thank you in advance for being a part of what God will do in the days ahead! God bless you!