



March 1, 2019

Dear Ministry Partners,

“Marriage in trouble.”

Who comes to mind?

I imagine you’re thinking of someone right now, because virtually everyone today knows of someone whose marriage is floundering. *Marriage trouble is epidemic.*

And not only here in the West. I’ve just returned from Spain where the divorce rate is now 60 percent—surpassing that of the United States, which is a heartbreaking 53 percent. (Even more alarming, the church in the U.S. has one of the highest divorce rates of any demographic group.)

There was a time when marriage and family were absolutely sacred in Spain. But secularism and hedonism have swamped the country. Families are fracturing as a result.

But I also bring good news—because there is hope. We determined not to simply weep and wring our hands about the tragedy in Spain. **We decided to deploy the Word of God**—focusing our annual spiritual development conference on the issue of marriage.

Dr. Ron Hughes of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in the Atlanta area served as our main speaker and titled the conference, “Understanding the Love of Your Life.” Our students and guests were deeply impacted as they discovered surprising insights about themselves and one another. Every day of the conference was an amazing, eye-opening experience!

With the authority of the Scriptures leading the way, we came to see how our unique makeup causes each of us to see things from a perspective very different from that of the next person—including our spouse. And each unique personality is neither right nor wrong, neither superior nor inferior. *Each participant in a marriage is God’s gift to the other.*

The challenge, then, is to acquire the skills needed to communicate across this “perspective chasm” as we navigate the events of daily life. So over the course of the conference, we learned crucial skills for conflict resolution.

This conference will strengthen the marriages of our students and workers—and they will need to be strong. The mission field in Spain and the Canary Islands is growing intensely difficult for marriages and families. The culture has become brutally “anti-child.” Even though the population is shrinking, it’s widely considered irresponsible to have more than one child!

Our workers in the Canary Islands have actually been confronted—verbally abused—at a grocery store because they not only have two daughters, but the wife is visibly pregnant. Perfect strangers made no secret of their outrage. One woman lambasted them as “ignorant” and “irresponsible.” Having three children is classified these days as a “numerous family.” They are perceived as people who will sooner or later be a burden on society!



Ministry in the face of this cultural opposition is not just emotionally challenging, it is hazardous legally.

- ☐ If you quote Psalm 127:3-5, “Children are a gift of the Lord . . . How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them,” **you can actually be sued** for supposedly dragging people into ignorance.
- ☐ Believe it or not, if you preach that “wives are to submit to their husbands,” you can be **sued and sent to jail!**

How are Spanish believers responding? I’ll show you:

We’ve had the privilege of sending some of our graduates from Spain to pursue their postgraduate degrees at Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. They’re following the news from back home in shock and dismay. But this is what they’re saying, with a beautiful, Spirit-infused resolve: **“Let us get trained so we can go back and preach and go to jail!”**

I can’t help but think about Thomas in John 11:16 saying, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” Many have scorned the pessimism of “doubting Thomas.” But it turns out he was speaking prophetically of the destiny of several of the disciples! (Thomas’s own death is recounted in a church museum in Chennai, India!)

Where will our faith lead us? We cannot know what the future holds for us—but certainly developments today in many regions of the world seem to spell *turbulence ahead*.

We shouldn’t be surprised. Jesus told us about this. In this world, He said, we will have tribulation. But He didn’t stop there. He went on to offer good news: “But be of good cheer, take courage, I have overcome the world.”

You and I have great reason to rejoice. We have seen the truth of His proclamation. When we started this ministry, there were very few on our team. Today, thousands have been trained and deployed. As you read these words, they are at work in hundreds of settings, places where you and I couldn’t go ourselves. These dedicated workers are now standing in the gap, proclaiming God’s Word into situations of darkness and need!

It was the genius of Christ to instruct us to *make disciples of all nations*. And it has been our privilege to obey. I thank God that you have answered the call along with us!

Look at just one tremendous example of how God is at work through your support of this ministry—in the work of Unai Arretxe. Not a typical Spanish name, is it! That’s because Unai is Basque. He has had great success launching and building the *fastest growing* church in the northern swath of Spain. I have watched his work with growing admiration.



But I'm not the only one. Let me tell you the amazing things God has been doing in Unai's life and ministry over just the past few weeks. . . .

In spite of the great success of Unai's pastoral ministry—with the church flourishing like very few in all of Spain—he told his wife Rebekah some time ago that he felt they should begin praying for the Lord's clear direction for 2019. He said he sensed God prompting him to pursue a “new overture in the Gospel” in this new year—though he wasn't clear what this might actually mean.

Rebekah was alarmed. Unai is entering middle age. Was this just a midlife crisis of some kind?

But then came the answer.

There's an international association in Spain that intends to deliver the Gospel to every home via literature. The group has been active for decades. They've joined numerous evangelistic efforts across the nation. But lately, the leader of this ministry has been planning to retire; he's been diligently seeking his replacement. Having seen the results of Unai's work over the past decade, he asked Unai to pray about leading the organization nationwide!

There was no question—only relief and rejoicing! God had clearly led Unai and Rebekah into a place of prayer and expectation *anticipating this extraordinary opportunity!*

But as I prepared to travel to Spain, I hadn't yet learned of this development. Knowing I was coming, Unai contacted me and asked to meet with me—on the very day of my arrival, he stipulated. I was willing, but a number of our ministry party would be arriving on another airline; it might not be feasible to rendezvous with them and still meet with Unai that day.

Unai persisted. *I'll meet anytime you say*, he insisted, *day, evening, or night*. I began to feel that he might be dealing with some urgent problem at the church. With growing concern, I assured him that I would look for the earliest possible opening.

I connected with our friends, who were coming to participate in the marriage conference. They were eager to stay awake to beat their jet lag, so they wanted to be shown around immediately. By the time they ran out of steam—finally begging for sleep—Unai was eagerly waiting for me. So I agreed to meet him for an “early dinner”—at 8:30 p.m. (It's Spain!)

Unai was apprehensive. He was concerned about how I might react to the offer he had received. I was so relieved! I agreed with this move 100 percent! Through Unai's new assignment, ***God has given us a brilliant opportunity to launch thousands of evangelistic initiatives throughout the nation.***

We have hundreds of alumni and partners in our network throughout Spain. Unai is a very well-known graduate and a winsome leader. From the hour of that dinner conversation, we began in earnest to envision and discuss possibilities for Gospel outreach in many different directions, in combination with many different graduates of our seminary. What a great evening of dreaming of great Gospel strategies to reach multitudes all across needy Spain!



It feels wonderful to be in tune with what the Lord is doing among His people to enact the plan of salvation in these challenging times!

It's often said that the best ministry strategy is to "discover where God is at work and join Him." Today, I'm thrilled to see how God has been leading us, preparing us for greater and bigger plans! And I praise the Lord for the way He has woven you and me, along with so many others, into a grand tapestry of redemption for so many people. As I write this letter, I am celebrating YOU as part of God's joyful equation!

A few weeks ago, I couldn't have predicted writing you with such news. God keeps surprising us. Change is God's way. Nothing is automatic in the spiritual life. There is definitely nothing static about the spiritual battle. **We are never "stable": we are either *progressing* or *regressing*.**

So today, I pray that you will stand with us again in generous giving—knowing that God is orchestrating every action, pointing to a resounding victory for the rest of eternity.

- It was the generosity of a friend like you who enabled us to equip Unai Arretxe for ministry.
- It was the generosity of a friend like you who empowered the training of each and every one of our graduates in Spain and the Canary Islands and in so many other mission fields.

**God maps out our path—but it takes the generosity of a friend
like you to send us down that path!**

Thank you for your vital role. Please press on with me, with the assurance that God is in this, guiding us to victory! Let me hear from you quickly. Be as generous as possible. And I pray God will bless you abundantly for your sacrifice of love for the sake of the harvest today.

Rejoicing in His affirmation,

Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. With your strong support, we are sending couples into the harvest fields *stronger than ever* in their marriages . . . *more committed than ever* to proclaim the good news . . . *better equipped than ever* to lead the lost to the Lord and build up believers in the faith. Thank you again. I salute you in Christ Jesus and look forward to seeing how God will use you again, in the days to come, to impact our world!