



P O Box 160
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August 2016

The Ortegas Newsletter

Dearest ones in Christ Jesus,

Hot, heat and humid are the words to describe our Southwest Texas weather. But, I'm so very glad to inform that all the hell we're going to get is in the form of our three digit temperatures we currently live in. So, if you happen to live in any other kind of weather where it's cooler than this, well, enjoy it.

Of course, not all things are as bad. In fact, there are many things to be thankful about. For example, after a three-month training program, where ten facilitators were properly, we launched a small group ministry at Maranatha. We ran the pilot program since January to May and the results have been very favorable. Every facilitator has gained valuable experience, lost fear and they are excited to be teaching God's Word. I impart the lesson every Monday night, supervise groups on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights. Then on Friday, I hold a Life Group myself. The only difference is that my lesson is in English. Of course, I continue to make hospital and house visits, counseling, and other ministry related activities. There are many valuable and beautiful experiences that this new ministry offers. What a joy to see men and women who are being taught the Word teach it to others.

Our dear friends from the Fellowship Bible Church (Tulsa, OK) have once again been by and have done an amazing job for the Lord. Our congregation and our community are all very excited about this yearly visit. Year after year they bring so much enthusiasm and life into our midst. Children from near and far come to hear and watch the gospel presentation live and in full color. This Jr. High group is simply amazing. They always work like a very well organized army of youngsters with the idea of serving Jesus among us – and do they honor God with their sweet spirits and servant-like hearts! One of their most visible marks that they have left behind this year was a brand new and beautiful church sign they brought and set up.



A wonderful sign of love from our FBC friends

As I was preparing for my Cuba trip a few weeks ago, on the very day before leaving, Mary suddenly had a sort of black out where she lost vision and felt

extremely dizzy. I rushed her to the hospital and she was immediately taken in for exams. This ordeal came in at a very interesting time in our lives. She was apologizing for “ruining” my Cuba trip, but at that time, I was only thinking about her. After pretty much the whole day there, the doctors concluded that the last pain medicine she was prescribed for severe headaches was causing a very negative effect. Several hours later, my dear wife was giving me her blessing to keep the Cuba trip and serve the dear pastors who had organized themselves to receive us.

Now, about our Cuba trip. I must say that this was by far the best one yet. This is the first time that I’ve been involved in taking a small group of youngsters from Frontier School of the Bible (La Grange, WY). I must say that everybody performed to the very peak of our abilities. Genesis (from our church) and I were the best suited for the kind of very hot and humid island weather, but even we were sweating so profusely day and night that at times felt rather strange.

Here’s a brief recount of our trip: We had ministry opportunities at two main Baptist churches. We were picked up at the Havana airport and taken to El Bejucal with Pastor José Carrión for our first meeting. We joined a number of believers on house visits where we shared the gospel. Later on Steve Roderick shared on Jude, while I spoke on Elijah, the Prophet of Fire. Our ladies spoke to their women, our young ones shared with the church youth group and our senior had the opportunity



Juan José Melero is a faithful warrior for the Lord.

to address the golden aged ones. After a few days, we left for another Baptist church with Pastor Brache González in Pinar del Rio, the furthest west of the island I had ever been to. This is where, according to Cubans, the best cigars in the world are produced (no, I did not smoke one). Heat and humidity also welcomed us there. That, however, did not keep us from taking on all the ministry adventures that came our way, including going deep into some remote and distant villages to tell people about Jesus. I had the chance of leading two individuals to Christ on two separate days. Now this church has quite a team of pastors, missionaries, church planters and other workers, most of which have no formal Bible training. Mr. Melero is a 74 year-old godly man who has planted 8 missions, one of which he labored hard in for five consecutive years without a single person to attend his church. He started his ministry in

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Pastor Omar in his small frame church sanctuary.

the 80's, when most pastors were sent to prison. Omar Cabrera, a former alcoholic womanizer, came to faith in Christ in 2010. Now he is the pastor of one of Mr. Melero's missions. His church is in serious need of repairs. When I asked him about the cost for the repairs his response was: "a lot of money, brother". When I asked him how much was a lot, he said: "about \$700.00".

Of course, this is a lot of money, especially when you consider that his church offering is about \$20.00 per month. Emilio Crucea spent 10 years in prison for murder. He accepted the Lord in 2012 and is now a lay pastor in a fishing community. He has established two churches, is currently pastoring on his third and has 4 new mission fields. I could go on and on with these stories. I am very thankful for the great opportunities God is opening for me in Cuba. Again, God is doing amazing things in this country and I am so blessed to see it happening and consider myself highly privileged to be accepted into their midst. I have wide open doors to return again there and teach, and yes, to be taught, as well. I so long to be able to help in this much needed country where the gospel is radically changing lives and their conversions to Christ are so very vivid and real. This is like first-century church in the book of Acts. I'm looking for good and godly people to follow me down there. I'm looking for churches that are passionate to see these lay pastors be properly trained so they can continue to reach out to others with the gospel of Jesus Christ.



Emilio has invited me to his mission field and help in training his new leaders. What a personal honor that would be!

Praises:

1. We are so very grateful that God is allowing my dear wife some respite from her severe headaches.
2. We are eternally thankful that God has granted Sylvia life to enjoy. She will be 15 this coming Saturday. Incredible!
3. We are so appreciative of God's grace on my last trip to Cuba and a clearer vision into the future.

Prayers:

1. That God would find us faithful in our relationship to Him, focused in our marriage and firm in the ministries before Him.
2. That God would continue to expand our small group ministry at Maranatha, as men and women grow in their roles as facilitators.
3. That God would grant me a partnership with churches and individuals with whom I could share my vision and passion to train Cuban pastors who have little or no formal Bible training to carry on the ministries He has entrusted to them.

By God's Grace; For God's Glory
Franco Ortega

Additional Photos



These are some of the Pastors' packets I usually take as gifts for them.



Of course, there's time for Cuban coffee



This is the back of Pastor Omar's church.



A young mother makes a decision for Christ



Visiting the elderly in a remote village

