



Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Isaiah 30:21

Marching along the way does not necessarily mean that there are no digressions, delays or discouragements on the road of life. But it does mean that we are eventually making progress toward the goal. By the way, the main goal in life is not comfort or prosperity, but glorifying God in life... or in death. More on this subject later on.

Cuba Call In spite of several roadblocks on my way to Cuba (January 10-20), I must say that it was quite a delight, an absolutely amazing ministry adventure. At the end, one great pastor friend from Mitchell, Nebraska (Mitchel E. Free Church) joined me, and what a delight he was to my heart. In fact, he arrived in Havana one day before I did. Pastor Chris' contribution in Havana and Pinar del Rio (two different pastors conferences) was a breath of fresh air. My dear friend Bill Marietta and grandson (Mitchell) also flew in one day ahead from La Grange, Wy. Bill's sense of humor and ministry experience has always made our trips very enjoyable and profitable. This is the second time Bill has joined me in Cuba. Lastly, three great friends, Neal Beasley, Coy Hayes and Kim Campbell from Tulsa, Ok (Fellowship Bible Church) made a major contribution with their different personalities, ministry expertise in their own church and on the mission field in different parts of the world. Their main focus was a fantastic discipleship material that I've been personally exposed to for a couple of years. There's such a great need for it in Cuba. After some mechanical challenges caused us to miss our Dallas-Miami flight (and subsequently our Miami-Havana flight), Neil and I arrived one day late and jumped right into action the minute we stepped out of the plane. Our Havana conference was absolutely great. This was a congregation with very deep wounds from the previous pastor and in much need of comfort and healing. Who did God bring in to help in the healing process? That job was for Pastor Guillermo and wife Yade Ramos, who after 8 miscarriages had been unable to have a single baby. Yes, so often God uses those with broken hearts to help and to heal others in similar situations, just as God ministers to them. It is rather interesting to note that in the road of life, those who have often been broken and stranded are the ones used by God to encourage and help others who have also broken down. From Havana, Bill, grandson Mitchell and Neil returned to America while Chris, Coy and Kim pressed on westward toward Pinar del Rio for another conference. Pastor Brache and wife Day received us as warmly as they did last summer. I picked up with them right where I had left off. Many pastors came from remote villages and small surrounding towns. Time and space



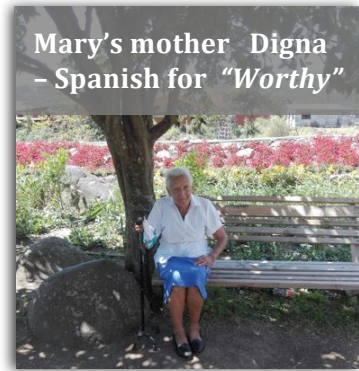
Emilio, Marco and Papo -
La Trampa - What a victory!

does not allow me to describe the type of men and women who make up this vibrant ministry. So let me just briefly share about a few of them. Emilio (mentioned on my last Cuba trip), once a hardened criminal and now a powerful missionary reconnected with old vice friends from his B. C. years. Formerly these three men had been prostitution ringleaders, but now Marcos has also professed faith in Christ. "*Papo – La Trampa*" is the last of this terrible threesome to become a believer in the very days preceding my arrival. While conducting a baptism service at the beach, I had the privilege of leading Papo's wife to the Lord. Juan Carlos was an alcoholic man who would constantly beat his wife Yuni, until one day, tired of her husband's mistreatment, she pulled out a knife and stabbed him. After medical treatment, both turned to Christ on Sunday January 1 of this year, as they attended Pastor Brache's church. What a way to start the year! There are many such stories with which my life has been so enriched. Once again, my sense of appreciation of how strong and life changing the gospel is in Cuba only grows on every trip.

Maranatha Matters The pace at Maranatha on the days leading up to my Cuba trip was quite intense. Upon my return I was 10 days behind my domestic ministry. We are seeing some great results from our Life Groups. Our fantastic facilitators are enthusiastic and excited. Rafael, one such facilitator and his wife were quite discouraged after moving from their previous house. Making new contacts was not easy. After several low attendance meetings, they wanted to give it up. I challenged them, they went door to door and all of a sudden their small apartment was quite full with many new neighbors who wanted to hear the gospel. On another LG, we've had to open a new location to accommodate new people. This new place is quite strategically located because there's a park just across the street and this provides many new contacts. In fact, a group of first comers from Hope in the City (Austin) will be joining us for ministry at that very park on this coming spring week. We are very encouraged with their visit and look forward to making a clear presentation of the gospel.

Issues of the Heart After a very rigorous pace, I hit a bump on the road. Two immediate relatives of very close church members were hospitalized on the same day (different reasons and different hospitals) almost at the same time and both ended in death. I was called to officiate on both funeral services but the last one landed me at a heart hospital, with a sharp pain on my chest, breathing difficulties and a rather stiff left arm. Of course, this is not the kind of symptoms you want to ever experience. I'm very glad to inform you that I did not die. After two days and many exams, the cardiologist ruled out a heart attack, but could not exactly define the reason for my symptoms. The only thing they found in my heart... was Jesus! :) After visiting my family doctor and going over some past experiences, he concluded that my episode was stress related and that I needed to back off from the ministry. Stress? Me??? There is no stress in the ministry! Is there? Ok, so I've been prescribed pills for stress and anxiety and I'm taking them as needed. I also have to bring down my troublesome triglycerides, which my metabolism can't seem to properly process. I'm glad to inform you that I've gone from 360 to 229 in less than two weeks. I guess my real heart attack will come when I get all the hospital bills, Ha!

Panama Plans As mentioned on my previous letter, my beloved Mary's mother will turn 80 on March 25 and my wife has not been in her native country for her mother's last 35 birthdays. My need to take some time off from ministry comes in as if I had perfectly planned it. Given the fact that I have no heart problems, my doctor has cleared me for flying and has in fact recommended that time away. I am really looking forward to giving Mary those 10 days with her mother, who, by the way, has not been all that well. In fact, she's had to be hospitalized twice in less than a month.



Priscilla's Plans Another reason I can't die yet (other than having to pay my medical bills) is the fact that our dear daughter, Priscilla, will be getting married on June 11, the Lord willing. I mean, after all, we really don't have ANYTHING going on in June, of course, only Priscilla's own birthday on 17, our own wedding anniversary on the 14th and then my and Sarai's birthday on the 26th. Other than that, June is completely clear. Oh, yes, our dear friends from Fellowship Bible Church are also coming on the first week in June. ☺. But other than that, we have absolutely NOTHING going on in June. Now going back to Priscilla. Ever since she was quite young, my dear wife and I had strongly encouraged her not to rush into marriage, but to wait for the right man to come along. Well, we never thought that she would take it so literal – his name is Brad "Wright". So, our prayer is that God's mercy, blessing and guidance be upon them both as they join their different paths in life to now head in the same direction.



As we keep marching on in life, I want to take the time to express our deep sense of appreciation to those of you who have come along in our ministry journey and prayed for us, especially in our Cuba and Maranatha ministries. Really, thank you folks so very much for your spiritual and material investment in our lives to reach out people in two different cultures.

Final Prayer Requests:

1. Our ministry week with Hope in the City youth group in a few days.
2. Our trip to Panama on March 20-30.
3. Our June tightly packed month.
4. Our health and that of Mary's mother.
5. FBC's June trip at Maranatha.
6. For our Cuba plans for the remaining of the year.