

Mission Focus

2017/2018
Cuba Report
Issue 18

Cuba

I had the honor and privilege of going to Cuba for 10 days in December 2017 on a mission trip with Mexican Medical Ministries. We were a team of 9 who partnered with a Cuban church in Havana to bring hope and healing to the lives of people in their community. We saw God answer so many prayers – smooth passage through customs and immigration, health, team unity, fruitful ministry and great fellowship, to name a few!

Cuba has many statues honoring men, yet the largest statue that I saw among them was one of Jesus. This was strange to see in an atheistic country. It had been erected in 1958. With the revolution in 1959, the new leaders wanted to tear it down, but were afraid to dismantle it. There it still stands on a high hill above the mouth of their beloved harbor, the vulnerable heart of Havana. Directly across the water is the castle of defense with guns that was built to protect the harbor. To begin our service in Cuba, we gathered there under Jesus to pray and worship together. The Holy Spirit showed several of us that during our time in Cuba we would be part of laying foundations in Cuba with God. He wanted ground. Wherever we walked would be impacted for eternity – that, as Christ’s ambassadors, our presence alone would change the future of Cuba. It began that night as we prayed and worshipped up on that hill. The whole atmosphere became charged with the breath of heaven. I witnessed the behavior of the locals change from distracted activity to peaceful engagement with one another. Throughout the trip, we walked almost everywhere we went, taking different streets each time, claiming ground as we went.

Many of the streets of Havana that we walked on were narrow and cobblestone. There was never quiet in the city. Often the sound of honking horns could be heard, but the sound which was constant was that of human voices.

We had so many amazing encounters with people, both planned and unplanned. We held church in people’s homes and prayed for healing on the streets. One evening, we – Cubans, Mexicans, and Americans – gathered together in a room on the 8th floor of an apartment building designed by the Russians where we worshiped Jesus together and prayed for each the other. Powerful!

I came home changed and grown by the experience. I can’t explain to you in just what way, but I can feel it in my spirit. Following is a collection of stories of some of that experience. It is a bit lengthy. My hope is that you will read it piece by piece at your leisure.

In this issue:

- Cover Letter
- Prayer Preparation
- Irma
- Lunch Baskets
- Gloria
- Nations Gather
- Elma & Noelio
- Prince Kendri
- Pineapple Lady
- Nancy
- Georgia
- The Team
- In Closing





Jesus statue overlooking the mouth of the Havana harbor.



Our team worshipping in the park as we begin ministry in Cuba.



Jesus statue erected in 1958 before the revolution.

Cuba Report

Prayer Preparation

As we prepared in prayer to go to Cuba, several of us team members had been given **Isaiah 61**. This whole chapter speaks of what God was about to do and is doing in Cuba. He is rebuilding the ancient crumbling walls, healing the brokenhearted, freeing captives, bringing good news, giving joy instead of doom. And we would find all of this in abundance in Havana.

We were also going to deliver the blessing of Paul's prayer in **Ephesians 1:18-21**

Most of the other words given were regarding warfare!

No weapon fashioned against you will stand. **Isaiah 54:17**

Armies of angels will be fighting on your behalf! **2 Kings 6:16-17**



Robert visiting with Raúl, who lived at the top of several stories of steep steps. He had an amputated leg.



Boys making music on the streets with a discarded piano board.



A grandmother walking her grandson home from school.



Cuban neighbors visiting.



After delivering a meal, the team prays for a blind man who lives alone.



Visiting through window bars after delivering a meal.

Irma

The day we met Irma, we were hosting a social event for the seniors who receive daily lunches from the church. On this day they had all gathered in the multipurpose room at the church. We began singing happy birthday to Irma when I felt an impression from the Lord to go lay hands on her while we sang. With her permission I reached out to lay my hand upon her, she took my hand and pressed it to her heart and held my hand there. She was dressed in all white and I sensed a very stoic person. She began to weep. I noticed her right hand atrophied and I felt this faith rise up in me for her healing. Chad and Dez joined me as we prayed for healing. We asked God to awaken the sleeping parts of her body. She wept and received. She then led us to a gaping indentation on the upper left side of her skull. We came to learn more about Irma as her story unfolded through two people who knew her and through Irma herself. This is what we learned. Irma could not take what was in her mind and speak it. She is intelligent and understands, but could not speak what was in her mind. She had a brain tumor removed which caused paralysis on her right side and also a loss of the majority of her words and speaking ability.

As we prayed and massaged and stretched her hand and arm, it did begin to relax and open up some. We shared the gospel with her. We told her about Jesus and encouraged her to call out to Jesus, which she did. We encouraged her to say thank you to him, which she did. Yet when we asked if she wanted to receive Him in her heart she hesitated and stood still on her ground, so we did not press. Dez, Chad and I continued to love on her and pray for her as the program continued with the other seniors.

This is what the Holy Spirit showed Chad as we prayed. He saw an image of an angel holding a bowl, filled with a golden liquid, kneeling next to her, holding it up and pouring it into that side of her head. The damaged section of her head was glowing. Chad heard the Spirit saying "He is coming, He is coming, He is coming." He then felt the Presence of the Lord and knew that Jesus was ministering to her personally.

I felt the Presence of Jesus ministering to Irma personally but, what I saw was Chad kneeling next to Irma pouring into her. He was doing what he saw Jesus doing.

At the end of the program, it was my honor and privilege to lead the prayer time for the seniors in closing. The Lord gave me a wonderful message of truth and encouragement. Earlier, Pastor Rafa had shared the gospel and gave an invitation, but no one said 'Yes'. So I once again gave the invitation to receive Jesus into their hearts and I saw three hands raise up. One of them was Irma!!!!

I would come to understand that she had been a priestess in the Santeria religion. This was why she was dressed in white. Each day we went to her house to deliver her meal, she shined brighter and brighter. Leaving off the white clothes and wearing more color. Her face just shined.

That burst of faith that I had for God healing her hand was what opened the door for what God really wanted to do which was heal her heart, her life.



Irma is weeping as we sing Happy Birthday and begin to pray for her.



Chad on his knees, continues ministering to Irma. The portion of her skull that is missing can be seen in the photo.



Irma comes to greet us at her door as we deliver her lunch. She is wearing color under her white jacket.



Irma's face shining, finally dressed in full color. It is amazing how saying 'Yes' to Jesus changes our countenances.

Lunch Baskets

One of our many privileges was to help the local church deliver lunch baskets to seniors in the community each day after the church kitchen staff prepared the meals. We often got to pray for those we delivered to or at least have a visit with them. Sometimes we were invited into their small dwellings, sometimes we just met them at their door, and sometimes we would put the meals in baskets attached to a rope & pulley that would lift it up to a balcony. When the wealthy folks left Cuba after the revolution, their large homes were divided up into sections, like small units, and given to the poor to live in. As families grew the dwellings were divided up further. It was their home yet they didn't have the privileges of ownership. When we went in to what seemed like a giant front door to a large home, inside we would find long narrow hallways and steep stairwells several stories high. Over the 59 years since the revolution, the new government did not invest in the upkeep of these buildings and so they were deteriorating. Often the only natural light came from the crumbling roofs and often the ground floors were just filled with trash or debris from the deterioration. We were led from home to home by Javier from the local church. He is a pastor to these seniors and his heart shines with Jesus.

Gloria

On one of these lunch visits we went to the home of Gloria, an elderly woman who is being cared for by her two adult daughters. They are all believers who belong to the church but because of Gloria's needs they had not been able to make the trek across town to attend worship. So we took church into their home. Dani led worship on her ukulele and Pastor Rafa shared the Word. Then we all prayed for the family.

I want to share with you what the Lord was showing Chad as we prayed. "I could see the Spirit placing a pillar in the home; it struck straight down through the ceiling so deep the 'the enemy will never find the bottom'. This pillar was a launching point, while most or all of the other pillars felt like God's desire to protect and claim ground. The ground in this home was already claimed and would be a position to strike out from. I got the picture of angels using it like a scouting tower." He prayed for a limitless blessing on their home, that like the widow's oil never found its end, their own resources would never run dry as they shared them. **2 Kings 4**

How amazing to have church in this home!

Nations Gather

One of the very few times we used transportation, we took a bus across town to a home church which is a plant of the church in which we were working and staying with. There we were on the 8th floor of a building designed by the Russians, celebrating Jesus together – Cubans, Mexicans, and Americans. As the many male voices in the room joined together in worship, I began to weep. It seems the Presence of the Lord fills the space so heavily when His sons join their voices together toward Jesus. There is this deep nurture in His Presence there.

I was transported back to my home church, Inland Vineyard Fellowship in Corona, CA, where I would experience this through my Christian brothers. Their voices joined in unison with their hearts and faces turned to Jesus always ministered to me. I miss this! I miss the friendship of brothers!



Amy visiting with seniors.



Sisters visiting us from their balcony.



This picture shows the steep steps that had to be traversed to reach the dwellings of many seniors.



Pastor Rafael bringing joy!



Dani, Kathy and Dez shining with Jesus!

Elma and Noelio

We went to the home of Javier and his wife Tahimi. They have an elderly couple living with them while their own home is being repaired. Elma (92) and Noelio (89) have been married 60 years. In this home the Lord showed me that this place was already an established citadel that is being fortified while all these believers live together and care for one another. I could sense the light of Heaven filling this place as we worshipped.

Javier and Tahimi, ministers to the seniors.



Noelio and Elma, fellow believers.

Prince Kendri

On this visit we went to the home of Kendri and his family. His mom had passed away several years back. We went to encourage the family. This 12 year old boy was born handicapped and has to be strapped into a chair in order to sit up. He is well cared for and loved by his family. I felt I was in the presence of royalty, hence I dubbed him Prince Kendri. I could see he is a huge blessing to his family. I could see love flowing from his father and aunt who care for him. I sensed the Lord using it all for eternal purposes. What a beautiful heart this young prince has! His face lit up as we sang worship over him. What an honor to be a part of this visit!



Prince Kendri.



Dez and I ministering to Kendri.



Holding the hand of royalty!

Pineapple Lady

As we walked from one place to the other, I saw a woman on the street sitting next to her small box of produce for sale. She was not doing any business. As I walked past, I felt an impression from the Lord to turn around (with a bill in hand) and approach her and tell her that “Jesus sees you, He is with you.” When I put the money in her hand she tried to refuse it, but I told her that it was also from Jesus. She showed me pictures of her two small children and asked me to pray for them. As I laid my hand on her heart and prayed for her and her children, the Presence of the Lord was so tangible. As we finished, many people approached her and began buying produce from her. It was as if the Lord told me to step in and ‘prime the pump,’ then the Lord began pouring blessing upon her. He is sovereign and omniscient over each person’s needs!

Later, she approached me and handed me a small pineapple. As I received this from her, I felt both of our blessings double. All of the team members were able to enjoy a slice of the sweetest pineapple ever.

Dani and I with the pineapple lady.



Our team ministering in the streets.

Nancy

As we went into homes to visit and minister in Havana, we also had many opportunities to minister to and pray for people in the streets. Nancy is a woman who approached us on the street outside of the door of another of our visits. I could see in her eyes that she was troubled by darkness. I felt caution go up in my spirit as I sensed several traps set. We prayed for her and loved on her and held her while she cried. She moved between several of the team members for prayer as we were waiting on the street for Javier to locate the home of our next visit. I sensed much demonic activity in the place we were standing, so I opened God’s Word to **Psalm 116** and began reading aloud. Soon the flurry of atmospheric activity ceased. So I encouraged Nancy to open up the Book of John that we had given her and read aloud over herself. She refused. She moved back over to Dez, who prayed for her and loved on her and held her while she cried. Later, Dez told me that Nancy kept asking her to give her something personal, anything that belonged to Dez. And she kept insisting that Dez go to her house with her. Dez told me that caution went up in her own spirit as well.

It felt like Nancy was trying to cause a scene in the street. I continued to read God’s Word aloud until peace came in that place. Nancy would have none of it so she left.

I must admit that when I looked into her eyes, I did feel a bit afraid and I put a shield up. As I asked the Lord why I was afraid, He showed me something that I didn’t know was there. I saw my own pride that was afraid to be put to shame, not wanting my inadequacy to be exposed. In that moment, I was believing that I was on my own. But I refused to leave this lie hidden in the dark. I asked the Lord for forgiveness for this failure to love well. I bring this into the light by confessing to you my brothers and sisters and by proclaiming the truth that the battle belongs to the Lord! **1 Samuel 17:47** He never abandons us to do it alone! He fights for us! **Exodus 14:14** I thank the Lord for exposing something in me that He wanted to address, to heal. I was humbled by the experience.

Georgia

On our first visit with Georgia, we found her frail, emaciated body on a urine saturated mattress. In the center of the mattress there was a large indentation in which her body was uncomfortably curled up. She greeted us with a huge smile as we brought her daily meal. I went to her side and held her hand. She gave great eye contact. She had no family available to help her. The young worker that was assigned to care for her was a neighbor who seemed to be high on drugs. As we prayed for her, I laid my hand on her heart. The Lord had sent me to Cuba with some money that was to be used for a specific need I might find. As we prayed, I sensed it would be to purchase a new mattress for Georgia. Yet more importantly, the Lord wanted her heart. Our team poured love on her as we prayed and worshipped over her.

On our next visit, we shared the gospel with her. We again poured the love of Christ on her. This time I noticed the dolls that were stationed on a shelf beside her bed when she glanced up at them just as I thought she was going to say 'yes' to Jesus. I surmised that they were idols of some kind. She was so caught up in her misery that she declined the invitation to receive Jesus into her heart. Yet, I knew it was important to meet her immediate and practical need. So after the visit, I spoke with leadership about purchasing her a new mattress.

Of course, finding a mattress to purchase in Cuba was an entirely different matter altogether. However, we did hear of one place where a mattress might be found and Javier committed to visiting the store for information. On his first attempt, it was closed.

On our last day in Cuba, we were gathered together for worship. I was still hoping to have time after the service to purchase the mattress, go to Georgia's home to clean her body, toss out her old mattress and make a new, clean, fresh bed for her. She had been so close to saying 'yes' to Jesus on our last visit. I felt that I had connected with her in a deep way and hidden in my heart was a hope that her heart would be won for Jesus before we left the country.

During the service, as our time there was running out, the Lord spoke something into my heart. The Lord assured me that Georgia was fruit that He would bring into His Kingdom through Javier. Javier is the one who sees her every day to deliver her meal. He is a servant in the church and he is a pastor to the seniors in the community. He does not have his own church building. His church is in the streets, in the homes of these seniors that he ministers to daily.

So I made a card for Georgia telling her – "I am going to heaven and I want to see you there. Continue to think on making a decision to give your life to Jesus. When you are ready, talk with Javier, he will help you. The door is in front of you. The door is Jesus. It is your decision to walk through it to new life." I gave the card and money to Javier, who promised to get the new bed for her. Furthermore, it just so happened that one of the things that I had brought on the trip was a set of sheets. I was not sure why when I packed them, but then I knew: they would make the bed complete.

After we returned home, Chad would share what he experienced from his perspective. I want to share that with you as well. "There was an older woman, whose body was twisted and bed ridden, who spent all her time in a room containing several little black doll idols. Lots of things happened here, our team overflowed with love onto her. On our first visit, as I prayed, I could see the Spirit sending rows and rows of angels above and below the walkways up to her home and heard the familiar sound of 'He is coming, He is coming, He is coming' being spoken by them. Later, when we revisited, the Spirit led me in prayer against the idols (small creepy dolls) that she had in her home. I was led to pray for their destruction, their literal and sudden deterioration, that they would crumble to dust. We prayed for her to cast them aside and I could feel the full power of the Spirit waiting on her decision. Sadly, that did not happen during the visit, but we had group members who felt strongly led that it would happen very, very soon."



Bringing light and love to Georginia.



Our amazing Cuba team!



She desires the affection of Jesus, but can't say 'yes' yet.

The Team

There were 9 of us who traveled to Cuba - Amy Fuller (our leader), Bob & Kathy Young, Pastor Rafael Ventura, Marcos Lee, Dez Baker, Dani Zarling, Chad Armada and I, Cris(ty) McCoy. We were 2 Mexicans, 7 Americans and we joined 1 Cuban, Javier Valdes Sanchez who led us through the streets of Cuba to connect with the lives and needs of those in the community. The Lord was so sweet to not only bring us to Cuba but to give us each other to minister together and love and support one another. I was honored to serve with this group of believers. The Lord gave each of us something to bring to the table and those pieces fit beautifully together. And when the Lord would give us a word, He would give the same word to 2 or 3 of us separately, which helped us to clearly hear and operate in unity.

In Closing

In going to Cuba, I had such faith for healings. I thought we would get to pray for and see many healings. Though we didn't get to witness as many as I had hoped, we did see God on the move, alive and well in Cuba. I would like to close this report in the words of my teammate Chad Armada. He says it so well and speaks my heart too.

"There were many places, many people, and even more prayers. Our leader told us before coming that people near her had been praying and hearing we could have a rough trip. In one sense, this was true. We didn't get to see all the healings we prayed for and desperately wanted. However, the Spirit told me that nothing we did had been done in vain. We had opened the doors Jesus wanted open, we had claimed the ground the Father wanted claimed. I didn't hear this verbally, but I could feel the Holy Spirit was well pleased. It's an interesting thought that a trip can feel hard (mostly emotionally), that a place can feel dark, that the power we know is there is not appearing, but that everything went according to plan. That behind that is a Father who is exceedingly proud. The Spirit was telling me that we were laying the foundation. That our prayers for healing would be answered by those who followed - that we had claimed the ground."

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*Ps 46:10 Be still
and know
that I am God.*

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