



March 1, 2023

Dear Ministry Partner,

I bring you warm greetings from the Canary Islands of Spain, off the coast of southern Morocco. . . .

And I bring you news that might surprise you: ***You can look back—and see the future.***

This weekend in the Canary Islands has been like the opening of a time capsule . . . because we began seeing God move and work here 22 long years ago. I've been thrilled to see how long—and how powerfully—the Lord has been using us together in His service here!

Over these past few days, I've met believers we worked with decades ago—people I wouldn't have recognized on the street . . . and who probably wouldn't have recognized me . . . because so many years have transpired!

But in spite of our aging, *God's work is flourishing, and growing stronger and stronger*. I think back to our first evangelistic campaign in the Canaries in 2001. . . .

We took Gospel literature to every home on all eight islands. We also partnered with a quartet called This Hope, broadcasting on radio and television to four of the islands simultaneously. *So many people came to faith in Christ!* What a joyful celebration! Such a campaign had never been seen before in the Canaries.

At the same time, we had just launched 600 churches in Cuba over the course of the prior year—a strategy more productive than we had seen anywhere else we had worked.

And when we told the Canary Islanders about the explosion of the Gospel in Cuba, they were overjoyed—because most Cubans trace their “Old World” roots to the Canary Islands. They cheered!

It was a time of celebration here again, this weekend—a victory party—as we looked back at the tremendous things the Lord has been doing here in the Canaries with your support in prayer and giving.

- For me, these accounts were like **“vignettes of heaven” which we have the joy of previewing here on earth.**
- We were experiencing the anticipation of what it will be like in eternity when we will meet endless chains of relationships . . . all woven together through the Lord's work—thanks to the synergy of our faithful service together.

It was moving to witness the Canary Islanders telling their stories, sharing how greatly encouraged they felt about what God can do when we walk faithfully with Him. Some spoke with joy about “missions accomplished” . . . or with a sense of regret over missed opportunities.



There were times, some said, when they now wish they had “hung in there.” They felt the sadness of losses and broken relationships and shattered dreams.

But here is the beautiful truth: **With the Lord, it is never too late!** I think of Ruth, the Moabite, in the Old Testament. She had absolutely no right to claim anything from the God of Israel. And her mother-in-law Naomi, seeking a better life in Moab, came back empty from the illusion of a great venture. These were truly “shattered dreams,” as Dr. Larry Crabb writes.

But even in their brokenness, these two helpless women made the best and winningest decision possible. They went back to the God of Israel. The decision was clearly not merely in favor of companionship. Yes, Ruth said, “Where you go, I’ll go.” But the overriding reason was bigger than that: “Your people shall be my people,” she declared, “and YOUR GOD SHALL BE MY GOD.”

What an understatement!

- *Your people will be my people.* She might have said, “My genetics are going right into the Davidic and Messianic line!”
- *Your God will be my God*—through the kinsman redeemer!

No, it’s never too late to start with God. He will always turn our brokenness into the most enduring riches: *eternal* riches.

The Canary Islanders were so joyful in the Lord, and so proud in the Lord, that God had used them in some measure to advance His cause—not only in their islands but also beyond their islands, to Cuba . . . and because of Cuba, to many other places around the world.

They were so gratified that the Gospel train came through their lives and continued beyond their lives to the multitudes. *They only wished they had been more keenly aware of what the Lord was doing so they could have done even much more!*

I have to smile, remembering how they asked whatever happened to “Dennis.” He was the head of the faithful family that started their church—over 50 years ago—against all odds. . . .

Dennis, an Irishman, was key in establishing a partnership with us so we could multiply disciples and evangelize the islands. He had a family with seven “keds,” as he called them with his Irish accent.

When the time came for the “keds” to go to school back in Ireland, Mary Pat and the “keds” went back. Dennis stayed behind in the Canaries. “We must bear our cross,” as Dennis put it.

It was more than a trite saying. He had been raised in a church where you were expected to identify a significant sacrifice that you were meant to take up for the Lord. You would work in spite of it, faithfully, sacrificially—you were to *know* it as your cross! It’s not the way most of us think about a “cross to bear,” but I believe it may be quite close to the biblical reality!



So Dennis and Mary Pat lived with this arrangement for nearly two decades—she in Ireland with the “keds,” for the sake of their schooling; Dennis in the Canaries serving faithfully, alone, in the ministry God had allowed them to establish. *For two decades, they only saw each other once a year.*

But I was happy to share with the Islanders the wondrous results of this cross Dennis and his family bore. I saw all four boys go through and graduate from Dallas Theological Seminary.

- David, the oldest, is a minister with his family in Florida.
- Jonathan is Dean of the Pastoral Ministries Department at Dallas Seminary.
- Paul is the pastor of a church in Belfast.
- Youngest brother Daniel is on the pastoral staff at Paul’s church.

And there is fruit, much multiplied, in generation after generation. . . .

- Jonathan is training hundreds of students to become effective preachers of the Word of God all over the world.
- A Canary Islander close to Jonathan, named Daniel, became a lifelong friend to our son Manny. They planted a church together in Madrid.
- Now Daniel is back in Fort Worth to pursue his doctorate—preparing to go back to the Canaries and serve the Lord there with his family.

A number of families followed us from the Canaries to graduate from our main program in Madrid. Most of those are in ministries today spread out across the world.

- One couple ended up in Langley, British Columbia, Canada, where we helped them to plant some 15 churches.
- Another is senior pastor of the largest church in the Canary Islands.
- Another one was an evangelist with our 18-wheeler “Gospel Machine” truck. (A wonderful story for another day.)

Actually, it would take *pages* to give you a full accounting of the whereabouts and exploits of all the others . . . but you can already see, I think, how **your faithfulness in prayer and giving has a ripple effect around the world!**

And the work continues. Looking back, we see the future. God has great things in store. As you read these words, we have emerged from COVID-19 with a reopening of our seminary extension in the Canaries. Our classes are filling up with fruitful and faithful Canary Islanders again!

What thrilling things will the Lord do through these humble and understated people? Pray with me that He will use them in yet mightier ways—as He uses you to serve as the vital root, empowering their training.



The work is never finished—and for this, I thank God.

- Before you read this letter, I will have moved on to finish a course on the Psalms with students in Madrid.
- Next: campaigns in Bilbao and San Sebastian, the two main cities in the Basque region on the French border.
- Then onto our annual Bible Conference in Madrid with Dr. and Mrs. Ron Hughes and visiting alumni and guests. (Every region represented has a full-fledged and growing ministry, each making a great impact to the glory of the Lord!)

Am I tired? (A lot of people ask me this. But they ask me because, as the person at the helm, I'm the only one they see. There's a big team at work.) The question should be, *Are we all tired?* The answer is that you have provoked such enthusiasm through your support, it's more than enough energy to keep us going till He calls us home! (My sincere prayer is this: Lord, let me be busy till the last moment of life, when I board my flight to eternity!)

A member of our board asked me recently, *What do you want us to do?* I can only respond by saying, *The question isn't mine to answer. What does **GOD** want you to do?*

This weekend God gave me a very special opportunity to look back at what He had accomplished through us together. But it's really a glimpse of the future. Envision the glorious celebration of all that we have had the privilege of accomplishing . . . when we gather in heaven!

It's never too late to join the Lord. We can make the winningest decision: "Your God shall be my God." As we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we have the promise that all else will be added unto us!

The disciples said, "We can't feed all these people!" Jesus simply asked, "What do you have?" This is the question before us today: *What do we have?*

What do you have? Please give to God's work. We've seen what He has done through us together. Let's see what He will do . . . next!

Thank you for being such a faithful friend. God bless you!

Joyfully in His service,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. You can look back and see the future. You can see how God has blessed you whenever you've given. This is His way. Please give today, and God will bless others—but we know He will also bless you. So I ask you with confidence, and joy, and hope for the future: *What will He do through the gift you give today?* We can almost already begin celebrating!

