



December 1, 2023

Dear Ministry Partner,

Joy to the world! The spirit of Christmas travels the world all year long!

There are no Santa's helpers, there are *Christ's ambassadors*—you and I are in their ranks! We are proclaiming to a lost and dying world that *unto them a Savior is born!*

And the reason God sent His Son to the world to be born that He might die? The answer is only this: *the infinite love with which God loves us.*

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, let's remember the profound significance of this season. Unto us a Savior has been born—and His name must be proclaimed to the whole world. *This Savior is the world's only hope.*

In a world of darkness, we are called to be bearers of the light. The shepherds were visited by angels of light, and guided to the humble manger where the Light of the world lay. In the same way, you and I are entrusted with the ministry of proclaiming this Good News to all people—sharing Jesus, the Light of the world. He has come to heal the “sickness of darkness.”

This is the ultimate message of Christmas!

And not just on Christmas Day. Every day is an opportunity to share the hope and joy that we have found in Jesus. Let's keep working, keep sharing, knowing that *the time of His return draws near.*

This is why I was in Cuba last week! In this island nation, **we see the power of your generosity proclaiming the Christmas message every day.** On average, thousands come to faith there every month!

A pastor and a church leader came with me on this trip. They were happy to see so many professing faith in Christ, but they wanted to know . . . What happens *afterward*? Is there any confirmation about their living for the Lord?

YES! Hundreds of churches are being planted by those making these “professions”! They eagerly proceed to learn, to grow, and to multiply the effort by reaching others.

→ They are living so much for the Lord that they quickly become proclaimers! *They are planting churches themselves.*



A church in north Texas asked me whatever happened with the 100 churches they hoped to see planted when they gave a major gift three years ago? So we got the numbers from Holguin, Cuba. The result: 260 churches. Oops! *They were too on fire for the Lord to stop and ask permission to go beyond 100!*

You may remember that I shared with you about the unique history of Cuba. Historians refer to the “special period” when the Soviet Union broke up and help for Cuba from the Soviet bloc came to a screeching halt. . . .

You and I wouldn’t call it a “special” time. It was horrible. The average Cuban lost 14 pounds between 1990 and 2000.

But today, Cuba is in what we might call the “extra-special period.” It’s gotten worse—and now, there is no one to help. Covid hit Cuba with a perfect storm—not only medical, but economic. Tourism died, so multitudes were out of work. Many still are.

On top of that, fuel has run out. Our group was only able to move around the island because of a network of friends who had stashed supplies of fuel. Along the way, we saw lines at every gas station—lines in some cases *days long*. And when you finally get to the front of the line, you may be able to receive only a ration of two or three gallons at a time.

Even with the foresight of preparing to get fuel from place to place, we ran out of fuel seven kilometers from one town on our itinerary. (And diesel fuel has ceased to be sold to the public. It used to be the number one fuel because it was cheaper and could be readily found on the black market. Now, only regular gasoline can be sold to the public—so people are desperate to replace their diesel engines with gas engines.)

Meanwhile, hotels and restaurants are short on supplies. Not more than a few basic choices are available for breakfast. You can have a quarter of a waffle, not a whole one, no butter nor syrup. You can put some jam on them—but peach is the only jam available.

Many have bought electric motorbikes or electric tricycles made in China: No need to buy gas. But you have to recharge during the six hours when electricity is available due to rolling blackouts!

In the midst of our evening service every day, the electricity was cut off. Our soloist, a Cuban who lives with this situation daily, just kept singing *a cappella*. Without amplification, I shouted my way through each message.

→ Yet in our short week of ministry, *250 people came to faith!*
This is the power of your generosity, by God’s grace!

By the final night of our campaign, my voice was ragged. Someone found a generator; it saved the event. And I can tell you this: We’re getting a generator to take with us everywhere next time! We must—because sadly, the rolling blackouts are here to stay.

Yet here is the beautiful truth: **In spite of overwhelming obstacles, God is moving more powerfully in Cuba than in any other field of our endeavors.** The more other fields work like our brothers and sisters in Cuba, the more people come to faith in Christ and become church-planters!



At the same time, I'm saddened to see that some Americans have very short attention spans. . . .

I remember a time when the chairman of a church missions committee was planning to visit Cuba with us. I was warned that his opinion of our work would determine his church's future support of our work. He was "tough." He might "bless" what we were doing—or he could give it "the kiss of death."

I wasn't fearful. I was excited to let him see all that the Lord was doing there. He came and heard the reports of many church-planters. One by one, they went up to a map of Cuba and shared the region of impact where they were working. The committee chairman—who in his professional life was a senior organizational consultant—began to weep as he heard the testimonies and reports of breakthrough and victory.

He was crying, even with convulsions, as he heard our soloist praising the Lord and challenging us to "go light your world!" When the chairman and other members of his group addressed the Cubans, they said:

"You have overwhelmed us. We were coming to tell you how you can do things better, and how you can get better results. But now, we want to learn from you! How do you get new converts to turn right around and share the Gospel and plant churches right away?"

It was definitely a mountaintop experience.

But for all the emotion and excitement of the moment, that same consultant two or three weeks later talked as if having come back from an ordinary tourist trip: "We've done the 'Cuba thing.' Now let's see what else out there is exciting." No follow-up. No further efforts.

→ *I thank God that you are sticking with it. Not giving up.
Not being distracted by the latest fads.*

I know a man in Oklahoma who owns an oil well and has made it the funding source for decades of "mission-eering." He is amazed that the well has not run dry as so many around him have. He continues to be grateful, and prays that God will allow it to keep producing for years to come—so he can keep giving to the work of evangelism!

Here's what I take away from this: If you have a gold mine, you don't quit working it after two years. You don't care that the landscape is all too familiar, that there is "nothing new" about the highway that takes you there. You want to work that mine for all it's worth!

In terms of evangelism, *Cuba is a gold mine*. We have seen it for decades. We've seen so many salvation miracles there—and we continue to see them. My prayer is that we will continue to flow with what God is doing in this "extra-special period" . . . for maximum production!

I knew a LASIK surgeon. He was much in demand, and he was a perfectionist about his trade. (His patients were grateful for that!) So people came to him from all over the U.S. and the world.



The doctor used to see prospective patients from Monday through Wednesday; then on Thursdays, he would do surgeries from 5 a.m. or 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. He was in such demand, that he began doing surgeries on Fridays as well. By the time I met him, he was doing surgeries on Saturdays too. A year or so later, he added Sundays!

Was it boring? Maybe. But was eyesight important to people? YES. Is it important now? YES. *It didn't have to be new and enchanting to be worth it.*

In John 9, Jesus gave sight to a man born blind. But the impact of the miracle extends beyond chapter 9. The point of the miracle was that **Jesus is the Light of the world**.

He could heal physical blindness, something that had not been done since the beginning of the world. But He also could heal *spiritual* blindness—the blindness of people *blinded by Satan* . . . the people Paul talked about in 2 Corinthians 4:4:

“The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

It's only Jesus who can “open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18).

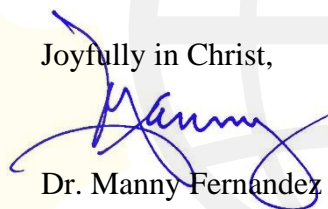
This is your work: sharing Jesus with those in darkness so they might see the light. Not just on Christmas Day. Every day!

What's next? I've been asked to go in the final days of 2023 to India to celebrate Christmas with those who are coming to the light! I've been invited to preach the last message of the year in the last hour of the year. Then I'll still be with the congregation praying, as we receive the New Year—and then at 3 a.m., I'll preach the first message of the New Year!

I hope you'll be there. Not in person, but in spirit. Not necessarily awake in the wee hours of the morning, but in your standing with the Lord and with us in your commitment to the Great Commission. Let's see what God will do through us together in the new year. *Let's keep proclaiming the Gospel.*

I ask you to give generously today—a New Year's gift of Christ-like compassion for the lost multitudes . . . knowing that God will use your gift in a mighty way. We have seen it! We know it! Please let me hear from you soon. God bless you for giving, for praying, and for standing fast in the work of the Harvest!

Joyfully in Christ,



Dr. Manny Fernandez

P.S. As I wish you a merry Christmas and a “Happy New Year,” it's the happiness of knowing we are doing all we can to share the Christ of Christmas with lost multitudes around the world. Thank you!

