

Jeff & Barbi David

Serving with Latin America Mission

Dear Friends,

I returned last Monday night from my fourth trip to Cuba, where I taught a course on hermeneutics (biblical study methods) at *Seminario Las Palmas*, located an hour west of Havana on beautiful *Bahía Honda*. Since this was my third visit to *Las Palmas*, all the students who took the course had also taken the courses that I taught in 2009 and 2010. It was wonderful to see familiar faces and to catch up on their lives and ministries.



Students, *Seminario Las Palmas*, Cuba
Hermeneutics, September, 2011

Having a history and an established rapport with the students provided for excellent class dynamics and a genuine sense of camaraderie. We worked hard during the week, but there was a lot of light-hearted laughter. The course began on Sunday night, and when it ended at noon the following

Saturday, we had packed in a full forty hours of class time plus a few study times. The students were motivated to learn and eager to talk over concepts and class-work. The whole thing was exhausting, but at the same time, it was a lot of fun.

The funding for this visit to Cuba came from individuals and churches who generously gave to make this trip and course a reality. In the past, *Seminario ESEPA*, here in Costa Rica, covered the costs of whatever course was being offered, and the professors picked up the tab for their travel expenses. But the economic downturn in U. S. economy has negatively impacted the seminary's ability to fund this partnership with *Seminario Las Palmas* in Cuba. Consequently, in order for there to be a course this year I needed to raise the funds to cover all costs for the students, which included their transportation, food, and all materials needed for the course. By God's grace all that was needed was supplied. One evening during dinner, a student told me that the food he

eats at the seminary is better and more abundant than what he normally eats at home. Now, understand the dining hall menu at *Las Palmas* is fairly simple: beans, rice, which is usually laced with pork, plantain, yucca, and maybe a slice of avocado. We're not talking about lunch or dinner at the *Olive Garden* or the *Cheese Cake Factory*. Nevertheless, it is more than what is made available to most of the students. Many of the students express to me their heartfelt gratitude that their U.S. brothers and sisters in Christ who gave them an opportunity to enjoy an excellent biblical education. I, too, thank all who gave generously so that I could become a conduit of blessing to our brothers and sisters in Cuba. Along with my students in *Las Palmas* I say, ¡*Gracias, muchas gracias!*



Preaching to the *Casa Culto*,
San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba

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After the course was finished, I went with the directors of the seminary to their home in *San Antonio de los Baños* and the next day, Sunday, I spoke to their congregation. As with the seminary, this was my third visit to this congregation and my third time to preach the Word of God to them. Without any fanfare or introduction, the youth group surprised me by singing a worship song in English. Some of them told me later that they had worked all week on getting down the lyrics and they wanted to know if I had understood what that was sung. Of course, I did understand them, but not at first. Given that no one had introduced the song, I thought that the youth were going to lead the congregation in another worship song in Spanish. It took me a second or two to catch on to the fact that they were singing in English. What a great gift! What a great gesture of Christian love!



The Youth Group Leading Worship

The following day, Monday, I went to Havana and there I met with Dr. Norberto Quesada, or Pachy, as he is called. Pachy and I picked up where we had left off this last March, when I went to Cuba to teach the Gospel of Mark at *Seminario Los Pinos Nuevos*. The skinny on our meeting is this: *Seminario Los Pinos Nuevos* has sought to decentralize and has a number of extension centers throughout the island of Cuba where students who are studying for the ministry are taught. The professors who teach at these extension centers are pastors who do not receive any financial remuneration for their work and who have very few resources to help them in their work. We propose to bring these professors to Havana (a big deal for Cuban pastors) and have a week-long seminar for the purpose of professional development, offering classes and workshops on topics pertinent to teaching, and to provide them with some resources that will help them in their work. There are many details that have

to be worked out, but we are looking to have the first of what Pachy wants to call, “*Encuentro*” in March of 2012. I will let you know more about this in the near future.

Barbi and Carissa “held down the fort” in Costa Rica while I was gone. Barbi is enjoying teaching only 2nd Grade this year. (Last year her day was divided between 2nd Grade and Kindergarten.) Carissa is thriving in her new status as High Schooler. (In Costa Rica Secondary School starts in 7th Grade.) She is loving being part of the International Youth Group and meeting new friends from several schools in the area.

Your Co-Servants in Christ,
Jeff, Barbi, and Carissa

Jeff and Barbi David

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