



Dear Friends — In our previous letter I wrote about my upcoming second mission trip to Cuba with “Filter of Hope”. I went March 3-9 and now am back. It was an excellent trip; we saw the Lord work wonderfully in people’s lives—including our own. **This second trip our team of 19 was able to install 92 water filters in homes, share the gospel message with 157 adults, and see 56 respond, praying aloud with us as they opened their hearts to Jesus Christ!**

This time our team was 14 U-M graduate and undergraduate students, 3 Cru staff (including me), a University of Michigan Hospital medical doctor, and a professional business woman from our church. (Top left photo, including some of our translators and guides.) We partnered with a church plant of about 30 members. (Great pastor!) People from the church served as guides for us. Around the houses there usually was a lot of rubble and trash—and even worse! Outside the front door (photo to the left) was a severed goat’s head (sorry, I know it’s gross), as animal sacrifices can be common. We also saw sacrificed chickens thrown in the streets. Some of the people we met practice a Cuban religion called “Santeria”—which has a lot of idol worship, witchcraft, magic, and animal and money sacrifices.

There are many stories from our trip that I could tell, some wonderful and others very saddening. **Both the physical poverty and the spiritual bondage can be overwhelming.** I’ll tell you one story from our last day of meeting people. My team that day (lower photo at left), rather than going to homes, stayed at the church. Our guide invited people to come to us so we could set up their clean water filter/bucket system. One by one they came. It takes about 20 minutes to set up the filter and explain how it works. (The woman in yellow came to us with her bucket.) At the end of the filter explanation we would say, “Not only do we care about your physical health to have clean water, we also care about your spiritual health. May we tell you how you can be spiritually healthy with God?” She said, “Yes” (actually, “Si”).

The guy in the middle of the photo (black shirt) is an 18-year-old U-M freshman. **Before this trip he had never shared the gospel with anyone.** Earlier in the week, the first two times it was his turn to communicate the gospel, he struggled both times and others stepped in to finish for him. When it was his turn again, it was apparent that the people in the home were involved with the Santeria religion, so he asked to skip his turn. **Now, sitting in the church, it was his turn again to share the gospel. He started by asking the women in yellow if she had any religious beliefs. She replied, “I believe in idols and witchcraft.”** She was sitting almost shoulder to shoulder next to me with the two of us directly across from this freshman guy. She looked at him, and I looked at him, and his eyes widened big. I thought to myself, “Here we go” and started praying silently for both of them!

He kept going, asking her a few more questions, and then transitioned to the gospel. He did great! He used words and ideas he had heard others say all week. He talked with her about the God of the Bible being the only true God. He had her read Scripture (e.g., Psalm 115:3-8) and after 30 minutes of talking through the gospel with her he asked if she wanted to receive Christ as her Savior and Lord—to which she said, “Yes”.

He prayed aloud phrase by phrase, our translator prayed aloud phrase by phrase, and then the woman in yellow prayed aloud phrase by phrase. He led her in prayer to renounce idols and accept Jesus as her Lord and Savior. **I sat there thinking she seemed to have the most genuine, heart-felt response to the gospel all week!**

This freshman guy and I talked later. He told me that this was the very first time he had the privilege of seeing someone come to faith in Jesus with him. He was so pleased and encouraged. I think the Lord gave him confidence and the words to say. I saw prayers answered—for her and for him!

After we returned home to Michigan, one of our neighborhood guides sent a Facebook message, saying: **“We are continuing to work in the same location where we went when you were here. You gave us great help. Many people are now coming to our church. This next weekend we will have a party for children who live in that neighborhood.”** That’s so encouraging and shows me that people are genuinely coming to faith. I had the opportunity to talk with the church pastor and a translator for about 20-30 minutes one afternoon. They both said that people who came to faith with previous Filter of Hope teams are now getting involved with the church: Remaining fruit, for sure!

Third Trip to Cuba: I’m going again (!!) in three weeks for my third mission trip with Filter of Hope to Cuba: May 4-10. This time I’m leading a team of 23 people from two churches: my church here in Ann Arbor and my home church where I grew up in west-Michigan. On the team will be a couple college-age students, a U-M graduate student, some working singles, 5 married couples in their 40’s-60’s—and even my brother and sister! This trip will be very different from a team of U-M students. I’m praying we’ll see the Lord work again in truly amazing ways. If we do more Filter of Hope mission trips next year in 2020, maybe you’d like to come with us (and others from your church)? Let’s talk.

We so appreciate your interest, prayer, financial partnership, and encouragement!!

Serving our Lord,

Chuck & Dianne