



# INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS BÍBLICOS INTERNACIONALES

EN LINEA • ON LINE

## FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER 2023

Welcome to our February 2023 Newsletter, here are some of our latest developments.

### MY WINDOW INTO THE WORLD

Honestly, I really didn't know where to begin with this newsletter. So much **has happened**, so many things **are happening** and through God's will, many things will **continue to/are going to happen**. These will be the 3 main topics of this newsletter.

Every day, I receive personal messages, Facebook post, WhatsApp messages, etc. from our students across Latin America. I can not explain how encouraging it is to receive these messages from our students sharing their works and evangelism.

Daily I receive pictures and videos of our brothers riding their donkeys to the next town to preach the gospel. I receive videos of our students holding special events for both children and Valentine events for the Elderly in the congregations. I receive reports of our students going into their own neighborhoods and into neighboring towns preaching and teaching God's Word.

As I stated before, it is almost impossible for me to keep track of everyone across these countries, but I do know that in January we had 10 baptisms in Dos Palmas in January, 2 baptisms in Palmas Soriano and 2 baptisms in Hicotea. I know there are more, but that puts our students baptizing well over 50 souls into Christ since last September.

### WHAT HAS HAPPENED

I mentioned in our last newsletter that Luis Pedraza, one of our teachers, was on his mission through Cuba. Once again, his campaign was a true success. He took 2 more projectors with him, and he set up 2 more Christian Centers for local outreach. He set one up with the Palma Soriano congregation and one with the congregation at Santa Clara.

I have discussed the use of the Christian Center in past newsletters, but to review, the Christian Center has turned out to be "pure gold" as a community outreach. We take a \$150 projector for granted in the States, but in Cuba they are not available, and if they were, they wouldn't be affordable. They are using these projectors to hold bible studies, to show biblical stories for both the children and adults. Luis has done a great job in providing a video library and showing them how to download available videos from YouTube and other websites.

Also, while in Cuba, Luis got our **Cuba Predica** program up and running. Working with Yamirelis, he has put systems in place to get the seven preachers selected and out to start preaching, teaching and spreading God's word. Please pray for this program and pray for us to have guidance. This program has so much potential.

I will Share Luis' trip report at the end of this newsletter so that you can see what all he was able to accomplish.



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## WHAT IS HAPPENING

Last month we finished up our course on “HOW TO READ THE BIBLE” and started our course on “CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS” (presenting a reasonable/intellectual defense of the Christian Faith).

This marks an important milestone for our program because we are now in our third year of our three-year cycle. Through the first 2 years, EBI has continued to add to and maintain an incredible group of students that are not just “hearers” but actual “doers” of the Word. We have had many students join and later taper off, but the core group of faithful has slowly continued to grow, and this group IS making a difference in the Kingdom of the Lord.

Another thing that I am excited about is as we go through this course, “Christian Apologetics”, we are creating another excellent set of course materials to share with other churches and programs. Not only will we have the main textbook we are working from, but we are also creating a “repaso” or “Review” booklet that condenses and material and follows the classroom videos. As I said, our YouTube views and subscriptions continue to slowly increase.

## WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN

I want to add “if it is God’s Will” to that header, and say live for today, but prepare for tomorrow.

In **Luke 14:28-30** Jesus said, “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” Jesus wanted to prevent people from starting to follow him and then stopping later. Expectations shape experiences.

I want to apply this same concept to our students and to our program so that our expectations can help shape our expectations through prayer and supplication to the Lord.

Unfortunately, we do get students that excitedly join but with time drift away. But as I said before, the group we have, that have counted the cost, are some of the best people that I have ever had the opportunity to know and to study with.

Fortunately, with Juan Carlos being involved in other church related programs and missions, he was traveling though Costa Rica returning from visiting some of our students in Perú in conjunction with another church function. His trip to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador is where we picked up Chacon as a student/participant.

Returning from Perú, he passed through Costa Rica, so Carlos and I were able to meet with him and set out some goals for this new year.



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Here are some goals that we would like to accomplish this year. Please pray that first, our goals are God's will, and secondly that God will guard us and give our works success for his Kingdom.

1. Prepare a promotional video about EBI and what we are all about. Due to the fact that we are spread across so many countries, we feel that this will be a great tool to reach out to other congregations and our students can help us with promotion.
2. Actually utilize our students in promoting the program in their home country. They can use our video and materials to promote EBI in their area and surrounding congregations in each of their countries.
3. Put together a trip through Colombia and visit several cities and congregations to promote EBI within the brotherhood there, much like we did in Perú early last year.
4. Plan a trip out of Nicaragua to pass back through Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and up into Southern México. Northern México gets a lot of support from the United States, but Southern México often gets neglected because of its geographical location.

#### **Cuba Predica/Preach Cuba**

Don't forget this program!!! We have gotten it started and off the ground, but we still have more preachers wanting to devote their time to the Lord. I will attach the Cuba Predica flyer if you know of anyone that may want to help support this program.

#### **How You Can Help Estudios Bíblicos Internacionales**

**First:** Remember, we are a privately funded program. Here is how you can help:

The First Street Church of Christ has graciously agreed to handle our donations in the U.S.

**TO GIVE**, simply go to [www.givelify.com](http://www.givelify.com), search **First Street Church of Christ**, enter the amount and then choose either "**EBI - Estudios Bíblicos Internacionales**" or "**Cuban Preacher Program**" or you can mail a check to:

First Street Church of Christ, 204 W 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Lampasas, TX 76550 – be sure and put "EBI - Estudios Bíblicos Internacionales" or "Cuban Preacher Program" in the memo.

**Secondly:** You can help with Prayers, Prayers, Prayers!!!

Please keep this program in your prayers and pray that God can effectively use our students, teachers and everyone involved to carry the Good News throughout Latin America and the world.

May God bless each and every one of you for your support of this program,  
Rocky Castleberry

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## **Cuban Mission Report**

**Luis Pedraza**

January 14 to January 28, 2023

I arrived on January 14<sup>th</sup> and I have brought my mother's ashes to be buried in our home town of Santa Clara, she lived in America since 1981 but wanted to be buried together with her mom, so I had to do everything related to her last will.

I reached Santa Clara on Saturday night and spent my family time to do my mother's wish.

I then went on to Camaguey city, on my way to Santiago de Cuba.

From Camaguey I moved to Las Tunas and Bayamo. In Tunas we have a new student Misael. I visited with Felix and Francisco, these two are very good workers.

They are very much enthusiastic with our classes and our purpose to raise more assistance for our students and seeing our students growing in the leadership and the Lord and that the churches growing.

I continued to Bayamo where I have good friends from my university times and spending time with them is something fantastic.

Bayamo is the only city in Cuba where there are not frequent black outs so I lodge on Bayamo there.

Next day I visited Palma Soriano where Rolando and the crew of our students there were waiting for us.

I shared with all of them the 65 pounds of medication I brought for them, especially with 3 types of antibiotics and all kind of pain killers anti-allergy meds and all kind of creams antibiotics, anti-lice, anti-sarna lotion, anti everything known and unknown. Especially an electronic lice comb killer, that is going to be shared among these churches. Palma Soriano, Dos Palmas and Hlcotea.

I worked with Rolando the to set up the virtual classroom/Christian Center and set them up with some rechargeable lanterns to help them hold church services even during blackouts. Just as in Dos Palmas, they plan on using the projector and equipment to project Christian movies and Bible stories for both the adults and children and use the center to set up activities for the people that live in the neighborhood. As stated before, we have had tremendous success in Dos Plamas and we believe we should see similar results with the new Christina Centers.

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I decided to set up the other virtual classroom/Christina Center in Santa Clara, with Yenisey and Isaías. That will be the third Christian Center that we have established in Cuba.

The next day I had a meeting with all our students in Palma Soriano. Specifically we spoke about focusing on the work and how to apply it, and what we are doing to continue growing the Church.

After visiting Palma Soriano, I traveled to Dos Palmas.

I brought some additional equipment for the Christian Center there, I brought an inverter and charger and everything needed to keep the electrical power on all the time. Last time they were enjoying a movie with the kids, and a sudden black out occurred, these kids were waiting for 4 hours until the electrical power was reestablished and they could finally continue watching their movie, Joseph. Also I brought a set of black curtains so they can utilize the projector in the day time.

I met with our local team, Yamirelis, Niurka and Viviana who are doing a terrific work the with a revival in our local churches and they told me of 11 more baptisms. Meeting this team at Yamirelis house. These 3 women are pure fire and they create all kind of environment for our churches. I discussed with them the plan of working as a team. They were so happy and are proposing all kind of activities to get the church into the heart of that community.

Moving forward I had a especial meeting with our students and their families.  
Having the same meeting, talking about dreams and purposes and our goals of growing God's Church.

We spoke especially on the OLD WINES and the NEW WINES. The old habits and the new ones and about the responsibilities.

We are expecting them to have better ways of TEAM WORK, and as a result of their studies with us, it would make a change on their ways of thinking, so they are going to work

Finally, I met with the several men who are going to be sponsored in the Cuba Prédica program, and outlined our expectations of the program.

Also, it was made clear that Yamirelis is our local EBI church secretary and she will be "our boots on the ground". We are in daily contact with her and she keeps us up to date and things that are happening in Dos Palmas and the surrounding areas.

Every day after the meetings with our students we had a meal to share with our group. Everyday was a full agenda

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on expectations, old habits and EBI plans and purposes.

On Sunday I worshiped in Palma Soriano with more that 120 on the audience, including the whole team. It is amazing because a year ago, attendance was approximately 40 members.

They granted me the privilege to preach, which I used for 2 hours speech. I used it to encourage family ties and church as a family. It is awesome that not one person fall asleep.

Visited both places several times and visited the worship centers calculating their needs and how to be more effective assisting them.

Finally I headed back to Santa Clara. Reaching Santa Clara, I used my time here to check over again on the personal with my mother's ashes and everything related to cemetery position which was finally achieved.

I stayed with Yenisey and Isaias, and some of our old friends with HIV. Isaias is almost on his final days but his spirit is on his first love.

Giving them all the medication she asked me for. Same way for every church, a few antibiotics and everything specially for his stomach problems, in his current condition, he suffers so much with stomach disorders.

We went to visit Gladys, a girl who was in our church group long time ago and now is in bad condition. Using my time counseling her and finally getting her to come back to the Lord.

I did not have the time to visit Divier Hernandez, but spoke to him and told him about the process for our students who are being sponsored by our program.

I returned home on January 28<sup>th</sup>.

Luis Pedraza

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