



April, 2008

Dear Friends of Cuban Youth Leaders,

*God stirred our hearts in Cuba!*

Darwin's dad was a man of the street. Mostly he saw his dad in jail. So Darwin had no hope and few dreams for his life. In 1991 his mother married his stepfather. Struggling to find meaning in life, they searched in idol worship and superstition. Later, they found Jesus. Darwin described it like a house-swapping. Everything changed. They went from doom to dancing!



Soon after, God called him to become a pastor along with his new wife, Arianna. In his first leadership role he became a youth leader at a small church. Adventure! He loved it. He decided "to risk myself for youth ministry." He had six 12 and 13-year-olds. That group grew to twelve. Darwin invested in them as the future leaders. Now they lead the ministry. Each one has one disciple. When his twenty-four kids discovered he was not getting paid to lead them, he told them, "My salary is you!"

Darwin and Arianna typify our eleven Cuban Eagle Leaders and their wives.

Eric Ball, Dennis Gallifent and I met with them for four days at Reach Out's first Cuban Eagle Leader's Experience. Together we prayed David's prayer in Psalm 68:1 for the young people of Cuba: *May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him.* Also we claimed God's promise to give power and strength to his people (Psalm 68:35)

God stirred our hearts! Only a few minutes into our first session, we began heart-to-heart sharing that lasted for a day and a half. Catch a glimpse of how God stirred our hearts.



## Serious Adversity



Our Cuban friends face serious adversity.

- Maykel told about the present danger of losing his wife and new baby due to serious pregnancy issues.
- Pancho, the veteran youth leader in Cuba at 49, has experienced such serious physical, mental and spiritual burnout that he has to take a one year sabbatical from his church position.
- Miguel and Tatianna described how their six-year-old lost his arm a year ago.
- Elio told of his unwarranted arrest.

Each person tearfully communicated their adverse circumstances and confessed their need to trust God for those circumstances. Then we gathered around each one to pray over them.



## Sacrificial Calling



From these intense conversations there emerged a high sense of calling to the younger generation in Cuba.

- Lazaro experienced ridicule for leaving his position as a pastor to become a youth pastor. Ariadna, his wife, left her job as a medical doctor to assist him in his youth ministry to the Free Will Baptist churches across Cuba.
- Maykel left his job as a dentist to become a youth pastor.
- Elio left a successful pastorate in order to become a youth leader and equip other youth leaders across Cuba.

- David and Yaima had jobs as professors at the University of Havana, but left to serve as full-time youth leaders in their church.

Looking around our circle, each one had made significant professional and financial sacrifice, breaking through the view that youth ministry is not a serious and valid calling. They are deeply serious about reaching and discipling the younger generation in Cuba--not something churches in Cuba have experienced before.

## Solid Leadership

Five years ago, when we first went to Cuba, we could find no solid youth leaders. Then the Lord connected us with David and Elio, Maykel and Alexi, Pancho and Darwin - all Eagle Leaders now. Many others are in the process of becoming Eagle Leaders. These mature, visionary leaders serve as the national youth ministry leaders for the Baptists, Pentecostals, New Pines, Open Bible and Free Will Baptists. They work together as God's solid foundation for the emerging youth movement in Cuba.

## Stirring Hearts

During our four days together, we spent much time in prayer, not because we planned it that way, but because God broke in. We encountered Him. He stirred our hearts. Elio summarized our time together: *In 15 years I have never seen anything like this. God is tearing down walls. This diverse group loves each other. God is stirring our hearts with a clearer and different vision of His kingdom for Cuba.*



## Significant Giving

When we left we gave each one a personal financial gift and the entire team the funds to carry out Jesus-Focused Youth Ministry training during the next few months. [Your gifts provided those finances. Much thanks from Cuba!](#)

Jesus is Lord,

*Benny*



*A higher standard.  
A higher purpose.*