

# iCuba!

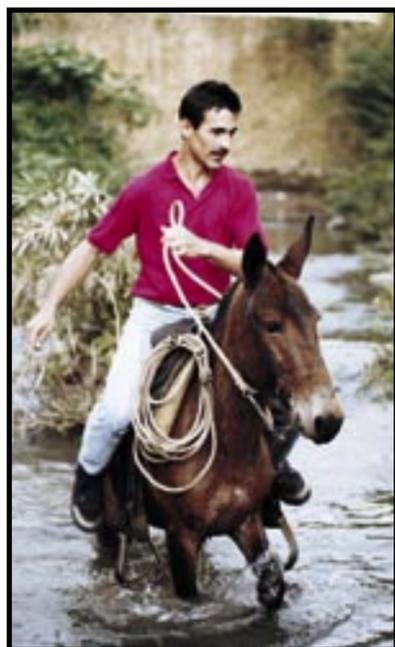


*Pastor William Padilla uses a mule to cross a stream as he journeys to remote eastern regions of Cuba to share the Gospel. The mule, a recent addition to the ministry, allows William to access mountainous areas. A trip that used to take a day traveling by foot is now made in a matter of hours.*

Land of Hope,  
Island of Dreams

Story and Photos by Tom Price

The Gospel would be taught today in the lush, eastern region of Cuba. William guided a mule across a fast-moving stream, making his way toward the mountains as he protected his Bible from the rising water. The animal stepped gingerly as the current got stronger. An assortment of fruit trees lined the stream bank, which was nearly obscured by the thick brush.



Pastor William negotiates a stream enroute to preaching in isolated areas.

William had been a pastor for three years. The greatest addition to the ministry had been this occasionally stubborn mule. It allowed him access to share about Jesus Christ to those scattered throughout remote areas of Cuba. Christians experience a variety of difficulties in teaching and sharing the Gospel in Cuba. Uncertainties of day-to-day freedoms hamper many ministries.

Drew Macintyre, CC Alpine, and Gary Johnson, CC Hemet, journey from America every few months to encourage William and Cuban pastors like him. They have offered support and assistance to them for the past decade. The two senior pastors gauge the progress of the Inductive Bible Study (IBS) taught by the Cubans.

ern region of Guisa. Coming upon a home church, they found a dozen believers on their knees in the dirt, praying fervently to God. Neon bulbs spelled out the name of Jesus on the wall. Excited that American pastors had come to visit, the group quickly jumped up to welcome them. They borrowed a liter of soda from a neighbor in order to honor the guests. The Americans departed a f t e r encouraging the believers in their faith and praying with them.



Pastor Roberto greets his grandson.

Returning to Pastor Joel's home that served as the main church, a mammoth outdoor feast began at 10 p.m. This meal was a tribute to the Calvary Chapel pastors from America. Small electric lights flickered over the festivity. Humbled

Last February, Drew and Gary followed Pastor Joel down a darkened path. Carlos Pimentel, a pastor from CC Grants Pass, Oregon, joined them on this trip to observe. Joel heads the Christian churches in the east-

by the Cuban's gratitude for their visit and knowing their economic condition, the men wondered how many people would have to conserve their food supply to offset this extravagant celebration.

**Love not the world nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

1 John 2: 15

Cubans only make the equivalent of 8 dollars a month, are allotted one-half of a bar of soap every 3 months, and deal with enormous economic hardships. Doctors make 25 dollars a month and still make house visits, usually by bicycle or foot. Though Cuba has no shortage of doctors, they have few resources to actually treat patients in a humane manner.

Old American cars, vintage 40s and 50s, compete for road space with horse-drawn carriages and ox carts. Necessity is the mother of invention, as car parts wear out, calling for ingenious Cubans to fashion their own replacements that would confound most mechanics.

Pastor Drew had a vision to start the Inductive Bible Study to Latin America (IBSLA) in 1986. Eight Cuban IBS instructors conduct two seminars each month in various locations



Drew prays with a man whose life has been transformed from a life of alcoholism to one of hope after dedicating his life to the Lord.

*"Scripture instructs us to teach the Word of God and prepare the nationals to carry on with the work,"*

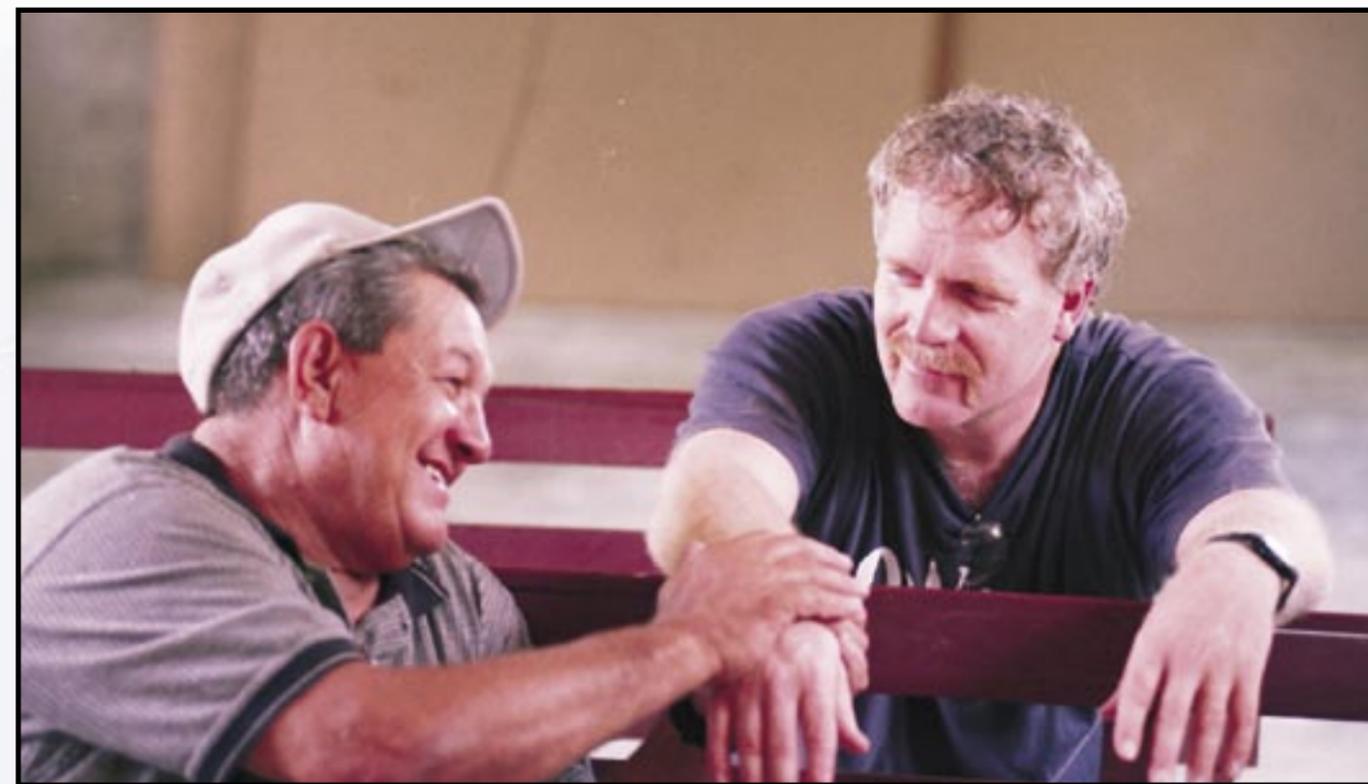
*Pastor Gary Johnson,*

around the island, which is 800 miles long. Travel by auto or bus is arduous due to road conditions and the distance between locations.

The vision of IBSLA is to train nationals to teach the Bible inductively. "We felt guided to equip young men to conduct the IBS seminars," said Pastor Drew.



Evangelical Christians welcome Pastor Drew Macintyre, CC Alpine, to a home fellowship. The group had been on their knees in the dirt in prayer before his arrival.



Pastor Roberto Gomez, director of IBSLA in Cuba, (left) shares a light moment with Drew Macintyre. Roberto dedicated his life to the Lord while learning English from missionaries in the 1950s. Despite trials and challenges, he has faithfully shared the Gospel, teaching the Inductive Bible Study with Drew.

*Worshippers make a joyful noise unto the Lord in a home Bible study in the mountain region of Cuba.*



“Scriptures instruct us to teach the Word of God and prepare the nationals to carry on with the work,” added Pastor Gary.

“Jesus made a promise that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church,” stated Pastor Roberto Gomez, director of IBSLA in Cuba. “When we have endured persecution, Christ has stood alongside us through the whole ordeal.”

Drew met Roberto on his first trip to Cuba in 1991. Their hearts were united with vision for the Cuban ministry. They have been working together ever since.

Learning English from missionaries in the 50s, Roberto dedicated his life to the Lord. He experienced numerous challenges and difficulties throughout the years, none of which failed to dampen his excitement and commitment as he continues to preach the Gospel fearlessly.

“I’m so blessed by my friendship with Roberto,” said Drew. “God has given him an eternal perspective. He has an opportunity to immigrate to America and have a much easier life. But he feels that God has called him to minister to the Cuban people. The church continues to grow and new people dedicate their lives to the Lord each week. So he remains here, sharing the love of Christ, despite the adversity.”

Both of Roberto’s sons-in-law, William and Fernando, are pastors and lead vibrant congregations. A number of home fellowships have grown out of their churches.

“We attribute this in part to these pastors learning how to study the Bible inductively and teaching expositively,” said Drew.

“Often times this church growth comes with a price, but they have counted the cost and chosen to follow the Words of Christ instead of an easier path,” said Gary.

“God has promised to provide for all of our needs,” stated Drew. “We really learn from our brothers here in Cuba how misguided we can be, thinking so much is required. So few North American Christians are content with what they possess.”

***Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all those things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33***

A former S.W.A.T. team member, Drew left an exciting career in law enforcement with the San Diego police department to pastor CC Alpine in 1983. He soon began short-term mission trips to the Philippines with Dan Frinfrock of Intensive Care Ministries. During this time, Drew became interested in teaching the Inductive Bible Study. In 1986 he felt the Lord leading him to teach this method in Latin America, which began IBSLA. Though this ministry encompasses Mexico and Central and South America, a major focus has been put on Cuba. Drew began traveling to Cuba in 1991. Several years later, Gary Johnson joined him in the ministry.

Both men were blessed by the eagerness of the students to learn the Word of God. During the first few years of conducting IBS seminars in Cuba,



*A For Sale sign adorns the remnants of a dilapidated bicycle.*



*Members of a youth group perform a skit before the teaching in Camajuani.*



*Despite economic hardships, believers in Cuba display joy in the Lord as they come together in fellowship.*



Horse-drawn carriages, motorcycles, and antique cars are a common sight on the tree-lined streets of small towns, as friends greet each other as they pass by.



Gary Johnson, senior pastor of CC Hemet, California, chats with a young Cuban boy.



Roberto Gomez's daughter, Yanessi, cooks over an open fire behind their home while sharing a laugh with Pastor Gary Johnson.

they were also touched by the gratitude of the graduates. In addition to their certificates of course completion, they received a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, and soap. Some of the students tearfully accepted these items, thankful to the Lord.

In 1997, a change in the law prohibited foreigners from sharing the Gospel without a religious visa, which is difficult to obtain. However, the Cuban pastors had become proficient teaching the Bible inductively and were free to conduct classes themselves.

*"Despite their circumstance, the faithfulness of these believers in Cuba is humbling"* Pastor Drew

"Despite their circumstances, the faithfulness of these believers in Cuba is humbling," said Drew.

Jose Machado is a former Cuban soldier who fought in Angola. Looking for excitement and fulfillment, he signed on to fight in the African country, leaving his wife and children. His life was spared when he stepped on a landmine that didn't explode. Hearing about Jesus from another soldier, Jose soon gave his life to the Lord and came back from the war as a soldier of the Cross. He leads a growing fellowship outside of Santic Espiritus in central Cuba. He has been a pastor for nearly 30 years.

In the early 90s, strangers began showing up at Roberto's church in Cifuentes, 20 miles outside of Santa Clara. Rumors had circulated that a man was performing miracles and healing people at the church. This puzzled Roberto and the church members since there had been no such man there. They



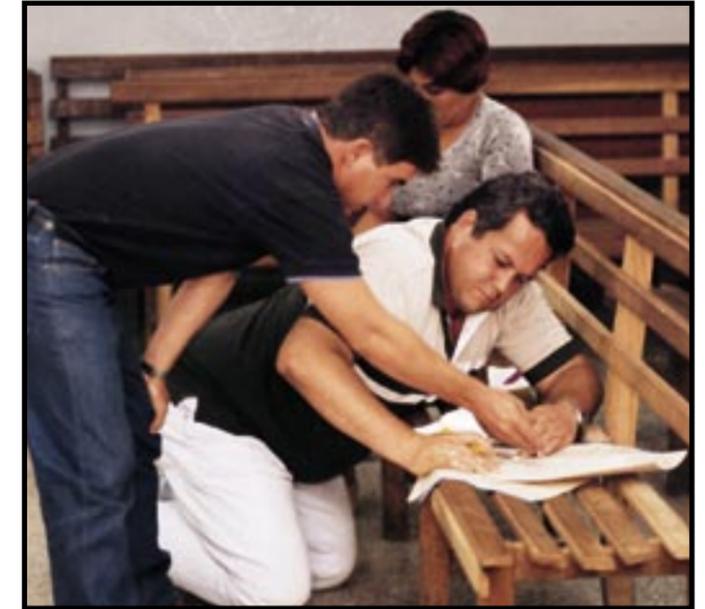
The family of Eliseo Leon, head of the Good News churches in Santic Espiritus, sings a Cuban hymn for Gary.



School children, dressed in their standard uniform, walk home from school.



Many farmers still use oxen, yoked together, to plow their fields. Tractors are a common site in Cuba as well.



An IBS instructor shares with class members in Santic Espiritus. The Inductive Bible Study for Latin America (IBSLA) was begun by Drew Macintyre, CC Alpine. Drew took Dan Frinrock's Bible training method from the Philippines and introduced it to Central and South America in 1986. A law enacted in 1997 prohibited foreigners from teaching the Gospel in Cuba. By then, Drew had trained eight graduates of the IBS seminars who were proficient in the Word and capable of teaching the IBS classes throughout the country.

continued their church services as usual. Many were healed as they sat in the congregation. People started coming to this church in record numbers. Some government officials came to watch and became believers themselves. No one could deny that many miracles were taking place.

Most churches are small home fellowships and are tolerated in the villages, but are closely monitored.

"There is unfairness as there is everywhere, but God will deal with that as He desires,"

said Drew. "He has called us to love mercy and justice. The Lord instructs us to preach the Gospel, tell people about Christ, and encourage the church."

In Rancho Valos, believers waited expectantly for the American pastors to arrive. Upon their arrival, each Cuban stood and told of their work in the church and of how Christ had impacted their lives.

At each fellowship, believers shared how God had delivered them from despairing situations to incredible faith and hope. Jesus had been the answer for restoration of families and marriages.

"One of the most exciting things I've seen here in Cuba over the last decade is the boldness of these young pastors," said Gary. "When we first started coming here, it would only be the Americans that would pass out tracts. The church members were quite reluctant. Now the Cubans, many of whom we worked with while they were in seminary, not only pass out the materials, but are writing and printing the tracts."

At another location, everyone crowded into a small living room that doubled as a church. Damaged by years of prolonged humidity, an out-of-tune guitar was the only instrument accompanying a wonderful chorus of praise to honor their Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Puerto de Esperanza (Door of Hope)**



Luis Enrique (left), an IBS instructor, encourages class members in Santic Espiritus.

raises support for IBSLA and the Cuban pastors as well as bicycles and mules for their transportation. Those interested in Cuba have accompanied the pastors to witness the work going on there. The group also hopes to raise finances needed to build or rebuild some of their churches, support radio ministries, and meet other ministry needs in the country.

Sadly, the people became afraid because of the publicity and the miracles ceased. The government became less oppressive toward Christians, easing their insistence on a godless world.

In June of 1999, there was a further reduction of restrictions. The government gave permission for the church to have crusades in different locations around the country. 50,000 people came to Che Guevara Stadium in Santa Clara for an evangelical outreach. Similar televised events were held in Havana and other major cities. Thousands came forward to dedicate their lives to the Lord.

The revival created a necessity to meet the spiritual needs of the new believers. New works needed to come under the umbrella of the legal churches.



An out-of-tune guitar, warped by years of high humidity, leads worshippers as they celebrate life.