



Victor and Morella Paez – Preaching Christ in Caracas, Venezuela

Ministry Update

June – August 2023



WE SERVE AN AWESOME GOD! – We could not be more in love with the Lord and our ministry in Venezuela. Opportunities to preach the gospel keep opening up in the most unusual of circumstances and places like empty lots, abandoned houses and commercial buildings, public schools and centers of detention. Families from our church are enthusiastically opening their homes to start children churches and adult Bible cells. And souls keep getting saved and baptized.

We are getting calls and messages from people in other states asking us to start new churches in their towns. Our radio program is being broadcasted through the



powerful local BBN AM radio station to a population of more than 7 million. I do not have statistics, but I know tenths of thousands of people tune into our program every day from Monday to Friday. On the other hand, our Bible college keeps training young men and women for the ministry, and we hope to hit record number of students registering for the fall semester.

Now, according to Steve H. Hanke's annual Misery Index, (professor of applied economics at the Johns Hopkins University), Venezuela is ranked as the second most miserable country in the world, between Zimbabwe and Syria (see picture), reason why more than 25% of our population has fled the country in desperation. Definitely, an objective indicator of the tragedy being endured by the ones remaining.



WORLD'S TWENTY MOST MISERABLE COUNTRIES			
Rank	Country	Misery Index	Major contributing factor
1.	ZIMBABWE	414.7	Inflation
2.	VENEZUELA	330.8	Inflation
3.	SYRIA	225.4	Unemployment
4.	LEBANON	190.337	Inflation
5.	SUDAN	176.1	Inflation
6.	ARGENTINA	156.192	Inflation
7.	YEMEN	116.2	Inflation
8.	UKRAINE	110.003	Unemployment
9.	CUBA	102	Inflation

But in spite of the pressing circumstances, nothing seems to stop what the Lord has been doing now for 23 years in our midst. Thank you very much for being part of it. We appreciate your prayers very much. Please, never cease to pray for our ministry. I hope this update to be of encouragement to you. As usual, it is a long one. Enjoy it!

VENEZUELA BIBLE COLLEGE

After seeing a number of students finish their studies and graduate last spring, the Lord has touched the hearts of a good number of young men and women to enroll as freshmen for the fall semester. The picture below shows the last yearly gathering of students



from both our campuses. It was a day of preaching and fellowship for students and faculty. Please pray that more pastors and missionaries come out of this precious group. Venezuelans need to hear the message of the gospel.

DEPARTING SODOM – I shared in a past issue the testimony of pastor Jackson Guzman. He and his wife Patricia came to know the Lord in our church more than 15 years ago. They were living together at the time. But soon after they got married and have since then raised three kids.

Pastor Jackson is the kind of man that seems to be born to encourage others. I have never seen him discouraged, though many might argue that he has plenty of reasons. He graduated from our Bible college and decided he would establish a church in the same community where he has lived all his life, a barrio in the city of Caracas called “The 70.” That is weird name, I know. No one really knows where it comes from. But it is well known in Caracas for being a crime plagued area. But not only that, it is a morally ill and decadent community, where prostitution, sodomy, alcoholism and drug trafficking is present no matter where you look. I have no way to describe how sin runs openly through the streets of that place. And if I could use one word to describe it is Sodom.



A couple of years ago pastor Guzman received a special offering to purchase a small house for his church (see picture). It was extremely cheap because homes in the area are difficult to sell. Pastor Guzman has been doing his best for years to preach the gospel to that community. He preaches from the roof top of his home every week to thousands. But pastor Guzman has asked me to allow him to leave “The 70.” His presence in that place has become unsustainable. Shootouts are constant, and machine gun bullets have gone through the walls of his home several times. It is a miracle no one in his family has been hurt. On the other hand, his children are now teenagers, and the boys are being constantly bullied by local gang members. Not the kind of bullying kids sometimes get at school. These are heartless criminals armed to their

teeth. And to top it all, a local gang leader has become infatuated with pastor Guzman’s teen daughter, and he fears she might be kidnaped and/or raped. Pastor Guzman used to be a gang member himself before he got saved. So he knows well their mindset. He fears a tragedy could happen if they do not leave. And being him the fearless man I know him to be, I am afraid he would not remain of arms crossed if any of his children were harmed in any way. I remind you that “The 70” is a lawless place. No police force dares to enter that community.

I had no option but to tell him to get out of there as soon as possible. He and his family will be leaving the place they have known as their home since they were born. Doing ministry in areas like this is a very complicated matter. This gives you an idea of the dangers some of our preachers face every day. What we all regret, though, is that “The 70” will be left without a witness of the savior. Would you pray for pastor Guzman, his family and the lost souls of “The 70”?



But not all is bad news. The Lord has opened an opportunity for pastor Guzman to head a mission church in the town of Naguanagua, Carabobo state. A group of no less than 40 people are meeting in a rundown house its owner has allowed them to use at no cost. But it is not a structure fit for a church, much less house a family. Cement plaster falls off the roof and walls because of years water filtrations. And it is evident to the naked eye that the structure has been compromised because of it. So we are praying the Lord to provide a house or building for this new church, but also be a home for the Guzman family. We will sell the little house in “The 70” and put the money towards the new purchase. It will not be much, because real state in Naguanagua is definitely more expensive. But it will be a start. We already have a place in sight in Naguanagua we invite you to pray about. If you want to know more about it, drop me a note.

SHIPPING FOOD BY MAIL TO OUR PREACHERS IN REMOTE AREAS OF VENEZUELA

For those of you involved in shipping food to us from abroad, this news will be a blessing. Keeping our preachers in the field has become a difficult task. They, as most Venezuelans, are deeply affected



by the economic crisis. And one of our concerns has been providing aid to those serving the Lord in remote areas of our country. We do not have the means to increase our level of financial support, but we can provide them with food given to us. Till recently, some of them used to travel to Caracas every three months just to get food supplies from us. But it was cumbersome to travel by bus taking with them a large amount of food. Praise the Lord, the postal service now offers to deliver 30Kg anywhere in the country for less than \$10. So we are making use of this service to deliver food to our preachers and their families (picture above left). Praise the Lord for that.

THE LAST MAN STANDING

I call pastor Jose Hernandez “the last man standing,” one of the few missionaries still working for the Lord in the Venezuelan Amazon. He was saved when he decided one day to accompany his children to church, whom we were bringing to Sunday School through our bus ministry. He is one of my favorite Venezuelan preachers. I have great respect for him and his wife, true heroes of the faith, preaching the gospel to five different indigenous ethnic groups in the harshest of conditions, having to face harassing communist guerillas, tropical diseases, extreme weather, shortage of fuel, frequent blackouts, lack of resources to purchase food and other basic necessities, and emotional exhaustion. His is not an easy post. But pastor José is a real soldier of the savior.



Pastor José Hernández and Family

A mechanic by trade, he does miracles keeping in good condition the pickup he uses to bring people to church. He once in a while does a mechanic jobs here and there to make ends meet. But he feels guilty when he does that. He would rather be busy visiting indigenous communities and preaching the gospel. Sometimes he gets paid for his job with fish or game. Things are very different in the Venezuelan Amazon.



Lately, pastor José noticed that a good number of kids in his community were not going to school and did not know how to read. So he decided to gather them and start teaching them how. You see, pastor Jose learned to read and write after getting saved in his early 40s. The need to read his Bible motivated him. His polished preaching and fine manners make everyone believe he was well educated. His story is so incredible, that even his mother and siblings cannot believe to this day that he is able to read.

So pastor José does not want those kids to grow up illiterate. He wants them to be able to read their Bible, help the girls scape prostitution, and see the boys surrender their lives to the Lord and preach the gospel to their own people when they grow up. Pastor Jose needs school material to teach those kids. Please pray for pastor Jose and his wife Aurora.



STRATEGY TO BECOME FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT

As I mentioned in previous updates, the material demands of our ministry are overwhelming. And to better understand the circumstances we are going through, I invite you click [here](#) to watch a video describing the total collapse of the Venezuelan economy.



Food supplied by Canadian churches.

I have been in ministry for 23 years now, and the Lord has graciously supplied during all that period of time. For years now, a number of Canadian churches have united efforts to provide food and medicine for the needy, our children churches, our preachers in the field and our Bible college. It would have been literally impossible for us to make it without their support. Added to that, unexpected offerings from churches and individuals have been coming month after month for I do not know how long, coming in just in time to keep us out of the red one more month. It is impossible not to see the Lord's hand behind these circumstances and events.

Now, constantly facing this type of circumstances could drain anyone emotionally. And though I have had my episodes, they have been few and short lived. A “Peter-walk-on-water” kind of experience, in which one cannot afford to take the eyes off the Lord for long to avoid “drowning.”

So considering the remote possibility of our country recovering economically in the near future (our economy decreased 7%

further in the first half of 2023), I have decided to take preventive actions. We need to make sure that in the worst of scenarios, our Bible college keeps running and all our preachers and their families remain in their posts. And for that we have thought of three avenues to compensate for the impact of our country's broken economy and the recession in the US and Canada.



Bakery – We have finally managed to set our church bakery in production mode, and it is selling baked products to local vendors and generating some revenue. This is providing employment to five of our men, which means providing income to five of our families. That is a blessing in itself, and we praise the Lord for it. Nonetheless, profit has so far been marginal. We have been slowly and painfully learning what to produce and how to improve its quality. And in order to guarantee product quality and higher production, we have been advised by experienced bakers to get a dough rolling machine. Well, anything tagged as “machine” is definitely out of our reach to get. So this is a good prayer request.

Call Center – It has been a long dream of mine to create a call center that would work in conjunction with social media platforms and our radio ministry, to share the gospel of Jesus Christ through live operators. This would at first be intended to reach people within our country. But since the internet makes distance seamless, we could reach out to Spanish speaking people located anywhere in the world. A webpage and a mobile app would be the means to disciple new converts living in places where there is no church, being supervised by trained disciplers. A data base of independent Baptist churches would allow us to direct new converts to a church close to their residence.



“We need to make sure that in the worst of scenarios, our Bible college keeps running and all our preachers/missionaries remain in their posts.”

Could this be a fruitful ministry bringing souls to Christ?

We believe it would. Now, in order to cover initial operating costs, we believe best to start as a **Call Center Service Provider**, and once we become self-supporting, gradually migrate resources towards our original intent. I am sure you

have at any given time received a random phone call from a guy with a very strong accent trying to sell you something. They usually call from call centers located in India or surrounding countries. American and Canadian companies have outsourced this type of service from foreign providers for years.

If we started this way, we would provide work for up to 20 people, and open operator positions to Bible college students. This way they would generate income for themselves and pay for their tuition, room and board; thus, easing a bit our financial burdens. At present moment, most of them are under a work-scholarship, working 20 hours a week for our church and Bible college. I have already contacted a Mexican company we could provide this type of service to, and they are expectantly waiting for us to start training personnel and launch the service.



For this project we have 10 desktop computers, all the networking equipment (routers, switches, etc.) and cabling required, a couple of IT engineers volunteering in hardware installation and software development, two would-be call center managers with previous experience in the field, and we have cleared the office space needed for the first phase of the project. But we still need office furniture, air conditioning split units, carpeting, 10 desktop computers (for 2nd phase of the project), cable management material, a computer server and miscellaneous.



And yes, I know all this sounds completely out of the ordinary, but we need to do something to keep our preachers and their families in the field, and our Bible college running. If by any chance this project failed, no money would be lost, for we would turn the facility into a computer room for our Bible college. We invite you to pray for this project.

Day Care Center – As a third avenue to generate income we want to use our nursery facilities to provide day care service. The problem is that these are ill equipped. We are praying the Lord to supply

everything needed to solve the situation. Again, this would provide jobs for no less than eight members of our church, and generate funds to support our preachers in the field and our Bible college.

ABOUT OUR CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

For the time being the Lord seems to have closed the possibility for us to have a Christian school. And that is ok. We have so much in our hands, that He probably knew we would not be able to handle it all. I thank all of you who made a pledge toward the purchase of the house we needed. But we did not reach our goal. And again, that is ok. We praise the Lord for that. We know His hand is behind every aspect of our ministry and lives. Nonetheless, we will try again next year and see if the time is right for us to finally have the Christian school we need.

There are Catholic and Adventist schools in Caracas. But could you believe there is no real Christian school in this city of six million souls? We need to win the souls of our children to Christ while they are little, and train them for life with the word of God while they are growing up. The most important thing to accomplish this after church and a good Christian home is a Christian school. It is becoming harder to win kids to the Lord after they spend nine years in the public-school system. So please keep this prayer in mind when you pray for our ministry.



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GOING ON FURLOUGH IN 2024

For the first time since we got involved in fulltime ministry, we are planning to take a long furlough to visit churches in the US and Canada. Added to that, we have not taken a vacation and seen our daughters and their families in four years. So the first month will be a time to rest and enjoy our family. As soon as we get the visas stamped in our passports, we will let you know, so we can start marking dates in our calendar of visits to family, friends and churches.

Final Words

Thank you very much for caring for the Venezuelan people. Thank you very much for your prayers and financial support.

Ephesians 3:20-21 *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."*

Victor and Morella Pérez

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