

Southwest District Mission Program, Inc.

CUBA

SO

CLOSE.....

BUT, A

WORLD

AWAY!

SIMPLE and COMPLEX

In most cases a situation is either one or the other it cannot be both. It's that simple and it's not really that complex. Cuba is the exception to the rule; in fact Cuba is the exception to many rules.

Simple

Where can you see a horse pulling a tire down the road with a young boy riding in the tire?

If you want to go somewhere.... walk or get a ride with someone lucky enough to have a car. It's that simple. It will cost you a few pesos, but they are worth nothing either.

No internet connection or computer problems; there are very few computers.

If you want something you must go to the small store. The problem is they do not have the item you want and have no idea when they will, simple as that.

Complex

What other country in the world has two sources of money pesos and CUC's? It's so complex Cubans do not understand it or can explain it. All they know is they get paid in pesos but cannot really buy anything with them until they switch them to CUC's. Then they lose more money. But somehow they make it work!

Try to build a church... that is not going to happen. The government will never let that happen and they have 1,500 reasons why you can't build a new church. So they build a garage. They have no car, horse, or bicycle to put in the garage but yes they can build a garage. So they have church services in a garage? What? Far beyond me... it's way too complex.

Now I am going to throw something really complex at you; Try bringing into Cuba twenty-six water purification systems. Months of preparation completed ahead of time. Approval of flight, approval of cargo, approval to land, all paper work in order. But this has never been done before.

Meeting with Bishop Pereira of the Cuban Methodist Church the day before the arrival of the systems he said to me, "I have been Bishop for seventeen years and no one has try something like this before." I was not sure exactly how to take that and then he added, " I guarantee you we will get them in but I do not know when." Little did I know what was ahead of us?

The big day was here August 23, 2016!! Arrival was to be at terminal one. The Bishop was with us he had about one hour until his next appointment, in my mind that should be just about right. I am not naive, I have traveled to Cuba enough times I knew it was not going to be "simple." We get to terminal one and no one knows anything about an Agape Flight plane landing in Cuba. So we get sent to terminal two because there are two private planes coming into that terminal sometime today. They do not know time or any other information, another dead end. Try terminal five, terminal five? I have been in Havana airport many times never even knew there was a terminal five. Where is terminal four so we can find terminal five? There is no terminal four; this is getting very "complex" to say the least.

Through God's directions we met Agape Flights CEO Allen Speer in the terminal, this is the first sign that we are getting somewhere. Allen tells us, "the plane has landed and cargo is unloaded into a warehouse." But are contact person, President of the Cuba Council of Churches, will not be in Havana until tomorrow. So a meeting was arranged with him for tomorrow at 2:00 p.m.

We went to Cuban Cargo Customs with all the paperwork thinking we could take delivery. That was not going to happen. The only person these systems would be released to would be the President of Cuba Council of Churches. That would be only after complete review of all documents. How long would that take? I did not know.

The next day we approached with much enthusiasm, this is a day we have been waiting for! Meeting with Joel Dopico, President of Cuba Council of Churches, Oscar Carpio Licea Business Administrator for Bishop Pereira of the Methodist Church of Cuba, CEO Allen Speer of Agape Flights, Kenn Visser of Water One Water Systems,(myself)Dan Christopherson Southwest District Coordinator and translator Mary Ortiz. The meeting was very cordial and informational and I felt very comfortable with what I was hearing, even though it was not what I wanted to hear.

Explanations of all documents were reviewed, discussed and all were in order. Except Cuban Customs will need to review all documents before these systems will be released. How long will that take? Fifteen days to one month, plus there will be a tax. How much is that? Oh, not that much fifty to three hundred dollars (total). I was happy with this number even though I had some funds for taxes I did not want to spend any of it.

So after two hours of talks we walked away feeling the systems were safe knowing the time frame involved. I knew it would not be "simple" but we have an idea what our time frame is. We have broken through a barrier that is fifty plus years old. I will not rest until I receive the notice that the systems are released. The Bishop's office and District Superintendent Isel Acanda will be in constant contact with the President of the Cuban Council of Churches.

Just as Moses said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go." I say to Cuban customs officials, "Let my water systems go."

We told the customs officials, "it's simple" the systems are a gift (no cost) from churches and individuals in the United States to Cuban churches. Yet the pure water is for the villages and all Cubans." We were told by Cuban customs, "it is a little more 'complex' than that."

I ask for your prayers until I receive word the systems are released.

Stay tuned.

In Christ,

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