

**“The most exciting moment
in my lifetime for the gospel in Cuba”**

A conversation with Proclaim Cuba

TRANSCRIPT

Published Oct. 2, 2023



NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Welcome back to the Denison Forum Podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, executive director of Denison Forum and host for today's conversation. I hope you remember that what we're about at Denison Forum is that we are seeking to ignite with God's direction, a new movement of culture-changing Christians, people who will follow hard and strong after Christ and then use their influence as an opportunity to represent Christ wherever they are and in whatever they're doing.

That's our goal is to equip believers to speak the truth of God in love in any and every context where God places them. And we hope that this conversation today will help you to do that. This

is our first bilingual podcast with our friends at Proclaim Cuba. Proclaim Cuba is led by Pastor Carlos Alomino and his son, Carly.

Their goal, their ambition, their calling is to share Christ with every person on the island of Cuba. We've had an opportunity at Denison Forum to be involved with them for a number of years. Dr. Denison, who will also be a part of this podcast, our founder and CEO, has been to Cuba at least 10 times. Very dear friends with Pastor Carlos, and you're going to enjoy this conversation as we learn about what God is doing today in the nation of Cuba and how that can both inspire and instruct us in our own faith and in our own ministry today. Thanks for being a part of this conversation. Dr. Jim, welcome back to the Denison Forum podcast. Glad to have you this morning.

[00:01:42] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Glad to be with you, Mark. Thank you for the privilege as always.

[00:01:45] **Dr. Mark Turman:** We are having our first bilingual podcast experience and we're going to just see how this goes. And we're honored to have our friends, Carlos Alomino and his son Carly that are joining us. Carly, would you and your dad like to say hello?

[00:02:05] **Proclaim Cuba:** Hello, God bless you all. Thank you, Mark and Jim for having us today.

[00:02:09] **Dr. Mark Turman:** We are excited to learn about what God is doing in Cuba. And as we prayed just a moment ago, there is so much for us to learn from what you guys are doing in ministry and the faithfulness that you have in the work. So we're excited to learn more.

I'm gonna, Carly, just as we get started. I know I've visited several different parts of the world doing ministry and mission work as well as vacation travel. But when I told my family that I was going to Cuba, they became enthusiastic beyond measure. When I think of Cuba, I think of Ricky Ricardo. I think of cigars. I think sometimes of coffee but tell us some of the best things about Cuba from your perspective and from your dad's perspective.

[00:03:02] **Proclaim Cuba:** That's amazing because Cuba is a wonderful island. This is the largest island of the Caribbean. Surrounded by beautiful waters. The ocean is amazing. The national parks, of course, cigars, sugarcane, coffee, music. The culture in Cuba is it is great. So people really enjoy the time in Cuba and as a country has so much to offer.

The people, the culture is very warm. So when you go to Cuba, you feel that you have been became best friends just in the first five minutes of the conversation. And, and that's one of the things that I love about my culture is very welcoming. And, we hug a lot. We kiss a lot. And I

believe that gives that human side of I need you, I need you in my life in order to go over this. I love my country and has so much to offer.

[00:03:55] **Dr. Mark Turman:** It is a great place. I was privileged to visit about five years ago. A country of about 11 million people, just 90 miles off of the coast of Florida. The stuff of legend and myth. With Ernest Hemingway and a lot of incredible things that you can learn. I found out that there are 7,000 different kinds of plants on the island of Cuba. And no animal that is of any danger to human beings. Would you agree with that, Carly, growing up there? Is it, is this a safe place?

[00:04:28] **Proclaim Cuba:** It is very safe, like I grew up barefooted walking and running and playing whatever we found on the streets and, it's a very safe place. We don't have like weird stuff over there.

[00:04:40] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Good deal. Jim, you have talked often about your experience with not only Pastor Carlos, but your travels to Cuba. Tell us some of your, Tell us a little bit about your experience in Cuba and how you came to have a relationship with Pastor Carlos.

[00:04:59] **Dr. Jim Denison:** So I've become pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in 1998 in Dallas. A member of our church had been going to Cuba on mission trips with East-West Ministries. He and I were sitting next to each other at a deacon's meeting and he said Pastor, we need to go to Cuba. And I said I don't know how we can do that. I didn't know we could do that. And he led out a process by which we could perhaps, as a church, be engaged with some of the churches in Cuba.

Before long, I found myself on the first of 10, I think 10 or 11 different times that I've had. The privilege of going to the island. One of the things we as a church wanted to do was partner with churches on the island to see what resources we could provide, how we could pray for each other, how we could be brothers and sisters in Christ.

There were two churches, specifically that we were working with, First Baptist Church in Camagüey, and this church in Céspedes, outside of Camagüey, pastored by this person named Carlos Alamino. I heard so much about him. I was told that he was the Apostle Paul of Cuba, that his heart for the Lord, his heart for the island.

People after just one or two trips were talking about what a life-changing experience it was to meet this man, this Pastor Carlos. And so when I was down my first time, We came to the church. At that point in time, Mark the building needed very much to be rebuilt. They've since rebuilt everything, but the roof was leaking. It was difficult with the facilities. His family was living in the office. They had a mattress they would put down to sleep on at night. His

technology was a typewriter. His personal office was a little closet. In that closet was a map of Cuba, with the words, Cuba for Christ. And when I met him, God marked my heart.

From then till now, I have prayed for him every day. I would tell you that he is my pastor. He is absolutely the Apostle Paul of Cuba. And what God is doing through Pastor Carlos, not only in Cuba, but literally around the world, is New Testament Christianity. It is Book of Acts Christianity. He had an opportunity to be the starting third baseman on the Cuban national baseball team. That's as much celebrity as there is in Cuba. He turned that down to be a Baptist pastor. In a village in the interior of Cuba, a small village that today has planned, they'll get into this, but has planted churches in every district of Cuba that does sports clinics and vacation Bible schools and worship services all over Cuba and every year.

See, 50, 60, 70, 80, 1,000 people hear the gospel specifically because of their ministry. A seminary, I got to be at a seminary graduation back some years ago. They had 700 students that had come through their seminary. You couldn't graduate unless you had shared the gospel and disciplined at least five people just to graduate from their seminary. It is a Book of Acts New Testament experience. Carlos is the man of God for all of that. He is my pastor and I love him.

[00:08:03] **Dr. Mark Turman:** We look forward to diving into several of those categories in a moment, but unpack that a little bit more. I've heard you say many times that being in Cuba is at least two things in your mind. It is like being on another planet in some ways. And it is also like walking around in the book of Acts, unpack both of those ideas.

[00:08:26] **Dr. Jim Denison:** You bet. So before the Cuban Revolution under Castro back in the 1950s, Cuba was an island paradise for the world. It was, in fact, people called it the playground of the Caribbean and what Carly said earlier, the beauty of the island, the industriousness of the people, the joy of the people, the culture of the people is just so captivating and beautiful.

So people from the world would come. And then when the revolution happened, so much changed economically. And so now when you go to Cuba, most of the cars are either 1950s-era American cars or 1980s Russian imports. And that's just what you see so much of the structure there so much of the architecture goes back to the fifties.

Some of it's been rebuilt and it's been redone, especially in the tourist areas. A lot has not. We won't get into politics here today. We don't want to get into difficulties with any of that. But I will say to you that what's happened the last 50 or 60 or even 70 years in Cuba from a political point of view from an economic point of view is what makes it feel like such a different place, even though it's only 90 miles from the United States.

But the church there. Christianity Today, a couple years ago, spoke of the Cuban Revival. It is an absolute spiritual awakening happening in Cuba. We're seeing healings, we're seeing salvations, we're seeing churches planted, we're seeing a gospel movement. Across Cuba that I think is the model for the rest of the world as well. And Pastor Carlos is at the very forefront of that movement.

[00:09:53] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, thank you for that perspective. We're going to turn to Carlos and Carly in just a second. One other question for you to just set the stage, which is you've talked recently about our ministry at Denison Ministries, Denison Forum being a ministry of ideas. Talk about how ideas have really shaped the trajectory of Cuba for good and for ill. You've referenced that just a moment ago, but just the power of ideas. We're going to talk a lot about pastor Carlos's ideas to share the gospel and to disciple people, but how is Cuba an example of the power of ideas?

[00:10:31] **Dr. Jim Denison:** On the negative side, you can think about Marx, Karl Marx and *Das Kapital*. Written at that point in time, he was an obscure, pretty well unknown economic philosopher when he published *Das Kapital*. And from that comes Marxism and Marxist Leninism and the communist ideology, the communist system that, of course, is the governing philosophy in Cuba, in China, North Korea, other places around the world. It's a part of an idea. And you see how different that idea is there compared to the ideas that birth the American Revolution and the differences that you see just in the two cultures.

On the positive side, there's an idea that Carlos has and that others that are Christian leaders in Cuba have. And that is that God wants the entire nation to belong to Jesus. There is a passion for the entire nation to come to Christ. And as a result, Mark, you'll see pastors conferences attended by Baptist and Methodist and Pentecostal and across Presbyterians across the divisions that separate us in the United States. They don't separate brothers and sisters in Cuba.

In Cuba, there's a belief that anybody that is called to ministry can do ministry. And so you see young people doing ministry and women and men, and there just aren't the divisions or aren't the racial divisions. There aren't the economic divisions. I've been able to teach in seminars there where people have come in expensive cars and they've come on the backs, hitchhiking on the backs of trucks. And when they get there, they're all the same. They're all one because they all share the same passion. They believe in the idea that God wants Cuba for Christ, the entire nation for Christ. And that's the passion of their hearts.

[00:12:05] **Dr. Mark Turman:** That's such a great way to set up the conversation we want to have with Carlos and Carly. Jim, share with us Carly weigh in on this as well. Every time I get into conversations with people about Cuba, they're surprised about a lot of things. One of them is there, they're just surprised that Americans can go there. Jim, what do you understand Carly?

What would you share with us about the relationship just between the nations of United, the United States and Cuba? And the ability to actually even go there today, what do you understand about that right now?

[00:12:36] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah we originally went on tourist visas. We go through Mexico, get a tourist visa in Cancun to fly into Havana and to come in on tourist visas. And there were restrictions with what you could do on a tourist visa, obviously couldn't preach things you weren't able to do.

Then we started being able to get religious visas and fly directly from Miami into several places in Cuba. So my last several times to Cuba, we've done it that way. It's changed by administration. Quite frankly, in terms of how much access has been available to Cuba, how much you can bring in, how much you can do there.

Carly knows far better than I because he goes so often, how it is these days, but that's really how it's been historically anyway. It was tourist visa or religious visas and now direct flights in on a level that didn't used to exist. But I'll let Carly speak much more to that.

[00:13:18] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Carly, what's it like in terms of just the relationship between nations and the ability to move back and forth?

[00:13:25] **Proclaim Cuba:** Yeah Jim is an expert, like he did a masterclass on the relationship between America and Cuba. But, it has been getting better with the time. And, right now there are 13 different categories that Americans can use to go to go to Cuba. One of them is religious activities in the island.

So that's one of the categories that we use to take mission trips. But also humanitarian support, people to people education those are the different categories. You are not allowed to go to Cuba to do tourism and you are not allowed to stay in the hotels in Cuba. So right now, the only option for you are the Airbnbs, and this is a U.S. law trying to accelerate the small businesses in Cuba so that the money will stay with the Cuban families and business owners. So that's why there is this they banned, the U.S. government banned all Americans to stay in Cuban-owned hotels. But there are ways to do it through the private enterprise, the small Airbnbs.

[00:14:32] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Fantastic. Interesting. Yeah, I would not have guessed for all the different kinds of rules, but it's just it is a marvelous place to go to. It is a place unlike any other that I've ever been to. But we want to talk a little bit obviously about the man of the hour, which is your dad. And Would love for him to just I've heard him say share pieces of this at different times but would you ask your dad to just share his story of how he came to faith and sensed a call into ministry?

[00:14:58] **Proclaim Cuba:** I was born in a Christian home and my parents always taught me a healthy faith. So I grew up in a village that only four families lived in this location. So that's all I knew when I was growing up. But faith was a thing in my house. So I grew up having, as the temple, it was my house and as my pastor, I had my dad. But my faith was tested when I was going from fourth grade to fifth grade, and I had to say Jesus first. I couldn't deny him.

[00:16:18] **Proclaim Cuba:** Growing up in Cuba, my, my parents continued teaching me about my about faith. And it got points in my life where I had to decide for, I go with Cuban worldview or I go with my faith values. So deciding for Jesus have been the greatest decisions I've ever made in my life.

[00:16:55] **Proclaim Cuba:** And then when I trained for the, become a baseball player in, in, in the greatest moment of my career as a baseball player I felt the calling from God to go full-time to ministry as. So in that very first day of the season, in the most important time in my life as a professional baseball player, I had to leave all of that behind and follow Jesus. I am not regretting making that choice chosen Christ because he has been with me despite any circumstances.

And then I went to the seminary, to the Baptist convention seminary in Santiago de Cuba. And they sent me to this small little village where there was not a lot of Christians in this place, but there was a lot of Santeria. Santeria is the Cuban religion, voodoo witchcraft, idol worship. So in that town people were not talking about a powerful God. They were talking about a powerful Satan.

And one morning, early in the morning, God is showing me this vision calling me to do a ministry to go outside of my church and share the gospel with my entire country and the nations. But it was impossible for me, I had no resources, I had nothing. And I wanted to take this that God had revealed to me.

[00:18:55] **Proclaim Cuba:** And it was, it was impossible for me to believe because I had no resources. I was very poor, and I took this idea to other leaders from different denominations. And then they were telling me, Carlos, you're crazy because you have nothing. How are you going to create this ministry that is going to impact the whole country, different denominations and the nations? But I knew that God was calling me to do something that would make a difference. And then our ministry started with 15 kids that believed in this vision, and we started in 1991 under a tree.

[00:19:55] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And what is the early? What is the ministry look like today? Some people will hear our podcast. They'll even be surprised that there's even any form of Christian church in Cuba. Some of them will have that impression. But what is the state of your

ministry across the island now? And more broadly, just What is the state of the church all across Cuba right now?

[00:20:20] **Proclaim Cuba:** This is the most exciting moment in my lifetime for the gospel in Cuba. Cuba, we're seeing a revival all across the island. Like many people coming together.

To gain Cuba for Christ and our ministry in particular have been impacting many peoples outside of the walls of the church. So one of the main focus that we have as ministry is to meet the people where they are. We don't want to attract them where we are, but to go outside and meet them in their needs.

So the gospel is relational, right? So if we are able to provide to a person, if we're able to meet. Their needs, their hearts are going to be ready to receive the gospel. And that's what we're doing. We have a network of several churches. We work with over 300 partners, churches in Cuba all over the nation. And, one example I use is if I close my eyes and I touch any part of the island, we have somebody there that we can call and do ministry with.

[00:21:19] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Fantastic. Can you ask your dad to tell us a little bit about the development of sports ministry? That's a very big part of what you're doing on the island, how his experience with baseball has inspired the ministry that comes through sports.

[00:21:33] **Proclaim Cuba:** Cubans, we love sports. So using baseball as a tool to reach out into the community and share the gospel have been amazing for the life of the ministry. So to be able to take baseball and other sport like soccer into every community that we can, is giving us the opportunity to impact men and bring mens to support the church.

So women was, the majority of people that assisted to the church was that attended to the church was women. They were the heart of the gospel in Cuba. But there was no men. Men were not, they were not. Cool. If they were going to the church, but through the ministry and sports, we have been able to reach out to many men and they are connected now.

[00:23:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Jim, that, that sounds a lot like what you and I experienced in our ministry going back to the 80s and 90s of how churches got very involved in reaching out to communities. Our churches that we pastored that we were a part of are very much a part of that. So it's been reflected there in Cuba as well.

I want to ask if you would comment and a little bit more and unpack that idea of the seminary when I was there in Cuba. I was in a room with about 35 leaders from the Proclaim Cuba

ministry. And some of them were leaders of the seminary. It's really just one of the most incredible things that Pastor Carlos has been able to develop.

Talk about your involvement there, what you have been able to witness and be a part of with regard to raising up leaders and training them well. It's not like it is in America where there are church buildings all over the place. Describe a little bit more about what daily church life and what seminary preparation for leaders is like in Cuba from your experience.

Mark, is that to me or to Carlos? That's to you, Jim. And we'll get them to, do we get Carlos to pass, to comment on that after you do. Of course.

[00:24:09] **Dr. Jim Denison:** And obviously Carlos has a vision for this that I want him to unpack on a level that is just so unique and just so incredibly powerful. When I first started going down to teach seminary students, it was in the context of those that were pastors themselves, vocational pastors, people that were on a track toward an accredited degree, a master's degree in theology.

Very quickly, it became clear to me Pastor Carlos was way ahead of us in this. That while that's an important, valuable thing to do, and there are organizations that do that and we're grateful that they do that, that really the greater need was going to be to equip believers all across Cuba to use their gifts and the ministry calling wherever they are. Whether that's as a pastor, that's as an educator, that's as a homemaker, that's in business, wherever they are, to equip them to use their gifts to be able to serve Jesus.

And so Pastor Carlos created a seminary in which anyone can come and learn how to use their gifts more fully to honor the Lord Jesus, not just that very small percentage we think of as clergy. But then along with that, they've also been training clergy in exactly the way we would think of as training professional ministers, professional leaders, but they've done it in a model that is entirely indigenous to Cuba.

Rather than bringing an American model over and simply translating the words into Spanish, they started by asking, what do we in Cuba need to know? How can we most effectively share the gospel and advance the kingdom in Cuba? And they started with a blank slate and created a whole strategy around equipping believers and leaders in Cuba for Cuba.

It's been a marvelous, remarkable thing to watch happen. It's not building centric like we think of. It's in church buildings. It's in homes. It's in garages. It's printing presses that Mark are cobbled together with parts that come from decades ago. It's amazing. It's thumb drives. It's digital. It's remarkable.

The way the ingenuity of the Cuban people anyway is just so remarkable to me how incredibly I remember one time Carlos showing me his car and if I'm remembering right, it was a Dodge with a Ford engine and a Chevy transmission or something like that, they're just incredibly creative and how they're able to do this, but that bigger piece of it is rather than bringing an American idea and just turning it into Spanish, they've created a way of equipping the church for the work of the ministry that's unique to Cuba within the Cuban context, and it's been a marvelous thing to be a part of.

I will add this when I got to speak to their one of the graduation ceremonies, the service included not only the typical traditional things we would do, but then all of the graduates came to the front. They were anointed with oil. They were prayed over. By the entire group that was there, their fellow graduates and their families as well, anointed with oil and prayed for. I'd never seen that in a seminary graduation. It was marvelous.

[00:27:13] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Fantastic. Carly, ask your dad, what would y'all like us to know beyond that about the seminary and just the raising up of believers, not just church leaders, but of all believers to be equipped to share the gospel and to disciple others. How are y'all adding to that in the work of the seminary and beyond that?

[00:27:46] **Proclaim Cuba:** Our vision for the seminary was not based on that main pastor or that main theology that was teaching the Bible. It is how we are going to educate and train the church. At a local level. So we worked hard to create programs that will train the school the Sunday school teachers, the children, teachers the youth teachers.

So we strongly believe that we needed to train these local church leaders because Christianity will come out of the local church to the community is from the inside out. so it's how we're going to bring that education, that training to the heart of the local church so that they can go out and do their job.

So our seminary over the years, we have graduated more than 10,000 students, and currently we have over 2000 students enrolled in the different programs. And these programs are for pastors, senior pastors, but also the leadership of the local church.

So the ultimate result of all of this is that every church will become in like a teaching church is like a seminary within your church. And that is putting across the island healthy teaching across the multiple churches we work with.

[00:29:45] **Dr. Jim Denison:** mark. Mark, I would add this quickly if I could. Their culture in Cuba is so highly literate. Literacy rates are in the high nineties. Cuba's always been known to be the educational breadbasket of the Caribbean. They've had some of the best medical training has

been in Cuba. Educational training has been the people are incredibly industrious, incredibly zealous to learn.

And so for Carlos to have a vision for equipping generations of Cubans matches so well with their culture. Because the people are so brilliant and they're so literate just by nature. They're so fascinated and want to learn so much and have so much initiative. Mark, a typical Cuban will have three jobs.

They'll be working in the day and at night, and they'll be going to school as well. And they'll be going to school on the weekends. And they're just incredibly industrious. And they're just this. It was very humbling to me to go there and meet with these pastors. And these, they were sacrificing to be in Carlos's seminary compared to my seminary experiences in the States, that you and I experienced where it just wasn't the same level, but we had exceptions. But the sacrifice is what I'm trying to say. The sacrifice they're making to be as equipped as possible to reach their entire island for Jesus is what God is blessing.

Carlos has this amazing combination of an evangelist and a theologian. He is an evangelist and a scholar, both. And he models that for the, and that's why the island is taking on that same persona of evangelism with scholarship and it's a marvelous balance

[00:31:24] **Dr. Mark Turman:** and just tagging onto that a little bit. The other thing that struck me when I was visiting the island was not only how industrious they are. And not given to trivial things. No, but how joyful they are. They don't mind working two or three jobs and also pursuing things like seminary training and education. They're just eager to do that. Yes.

Now currently help us put that into the context of what it, of just what we might call regular or daily church life. What was so beautiful about how many churches that you and your dad and your organization have been able to plant when we think of church planting in the United States, we think typically of gathering up some people and buying a piece of land and building a building. But that's not really how it happens in Cuba. What is church planting and church starting? What does that look like in, in most ways across the island of Cuba?

[00:32:21] **Proclaim Cuba:** Yeah. So church planting in Cuba have been mainly based on. How we're going to start a house church. As after 1959 no new churches were allowed to build, so just,

[00:32:34] **Dr. Mark Turman:** lemme just stop right there. Since 1959, not a single church building has been built. Is that the way we should hear that?

[00:32:41] **Proclaim Cuba:** Yes. So only the churches that were established before 1959 were recognized for the government as an institution. But these very important thing is that the church religion was the only thing that the government couldn't own. So the church was a threat to the government. That's why they didn't want the church to grow. And that's why they put several pastors in prison because they wanted to basically eliminate leadership from the church. Because that was the only institution that they couldn't own.

Across the years we have seen in the nineties, a great revival. And today the way to go is to go and every neighborhood and start as house church. So our church planting movement, you start in the living room with a couple of people. You max out your living room, you go to your back porch and then you go to your back yard and you install a temporary roof and you use that space.

But after you grow a little bit, you go out and plant another one. So basically we have churches right now in Cuba that we can take you next time you come to Cuba that they use Sundays as just a corporate worship once a month or once every other week, but the real work is happening in those house churches in those communities.

So they are doing all the work at that community level in those house churches, and then they come and do corporate worship as a celebration at the mother church, if we want to call it that way. So our vision is for the next 10 years, create equipping centers. Headquarters of the ministry across the entire island.

So 16 of those we want to create in every province, in every state of Cuba so that we can develop this model at a deeper level. And we are very excited because we are seeing a growth in churches. And believe me, within the next three to five years I won't be surprised because we have a plan to have at least 700 new churches how churches established in the island.

Wow.

[00:34:47] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Mark, if I could add this real quickly, this is an example of how God redeems all he allows. If the Castro revolution, if the government had allowed churches in Cuba as they are in the States to own buildings and to build buildings and all of that, then the church growth movement would be as we've seen it here, as you said, where you build buildings and you're limited.

By how much money you can afford to hire staff and to do because they couldn't do that. They were required to do a New Testament book of Acts, Acts 20, where Paul preached individually and from house to house. And then when the church got too big for the house, they had to start another church. They were required to, they couldn't just add another wing on the building.

They couldn't just make a bigger sanctuary. They couldn't do what we would do. And just to add more space on the existing church until they got so big that the people could be anonymous and could just show up on Sunday and didn't have to do the work of the ministry. They were required, forced to start another church that outgrew the house and forced to start another church.

And now the, what the government meant to do to keep the church from growing is the secret to the church's growth within the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And the courage of the Cuban people. This is not easy. Carly is saying this in a very humble way. It is not easy to do what they're doing the way they're doing it.

To face the oppression they face the challenges they must deal with the financial challenges and everything else. That's why it's so urgent that we pray for them every day support them every way we can but they are doing what Paul would recognize as church? Mark, I've often wondered if Paul showed up in one of the churches. I pastored would he recognize this right? If he showed up in Cuba, I promise you he would recognize what's happening and be thrilled with it.

[00:36:39] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And I, and it's just a marvelous thing to see and just to actually go and see this happening in somebody's small living room that might be 10 feet by 10 feet square and then it, it moves garage, it moves into their back porch or they build a garage and most of the time not to put a car in it, but rather to put a church in it.

And then it speaks to just the urgent need and importance of that seminary training up all kinds of people to be equipped to lead these house churches. Carly, tell us a little bit more about the vision of the ministry centers in every one of the provinces. What will happen to support the believers and support the churches in and through the ministry centers that you're seeking to establish?

[00:37:26] **Proclaim Cuba:** So those ministry centers are going to be a hub basically, and we are going to feed from there all the different programs that we have. So this ministry centers we're going to have rooms for pastors to come and stay. We're going to have classrooms. We're going to have conference rooms.

We're going to have gathering spaces. kitchen where we can prepare meals to to serve our people well. And then from that point, we're going to have also clinics. We're going to be serving the community from the humanitarian standpoint, and we're going to distribute and develop our multiple programs.

Starting in that equipment centers. This is very important for us because for many years we have had a headquarters in Camaway Céspedes and we have been serving the island from that

standpoint. So for the next 10 years, we're going to multiply that in the different provinces, states of Cuba, so that we can develop all those programs at a very local level.

So we want to go deep and deep. And one important thing that I love about the vision of our ministry is that we don't want to be a denomination. So we want to be a ministry that is serving the local church, no matter what, Pentecostal, Baptist, we don't need a name. We don't need a brand.

We just want to cooperate at a local level with the church and provide any resources, any training, any programs that we can offer to the local church so that the local church and the local pastor will take the credit for their community so that the people in the community will look at the church as the solution, not looking.

At the ministry Proclaim Cuba as the solution. So basically many times we go to Cuba, we work with the local churches and I don't even speak, my dad works with a local pastor and we empower that church, the local pastor so that the community can see them because that created tremendous opportunity for that local pastor to continue doing the work So that is coming out of this main Equipping centers headquarters that we are going to have in every state of Cuba God willing

[00:39:37] **Dr. Mark Turman:** so so helpful. Can you and your dad explain to us the surrounding context? Some people will find it surprising that you can be openly Christian in Cuba today. What is it like in terms of opposition that you and your ministry face either from the culture generally from the government specifically? What is the opposition that you confront when you're trying to serve and to walk with Christ in Cuba?

[00:40:10] **Proclaim Cuba:** First, I just wanna say that I'm very passionate for Cuba. So my greatest passion is to show God hears the Cubans hears, God, you guys talk and let's find a purpose, your purpose in their lives. So sometimes we feel that we can lead God's work. But, our main purpose is to connect people with God and let them work together. So it's, I'm always happy and I have joy when I'm able to find a person and say, Hey. Here is your God. God, here is my friend. You talk, you work together and you can find a purpose.

And let me tell you that in this 32 years of ministry, when I am able to do this, People, they find the God purpose for their lives. And I confident because we can get any type of persecution. Any type of oppression, but none of that is going to a slow down that process between a person and God.

So I make disciples of Christ, not disciples of Carlos. This has been the experience of creating disciples that will make disciples of Christ.

Basically between the 60, the 59 and the eighties, we have very limited amount of churches in Cuba and they were really small, a mega church in Cuba. A 200 people church in Cuba was a mega church. From the from the eighties to nineties, we saw a little bit of growth, but there was no ministry serving the community. And we saw from the nineties to the 2000, a time where we grew with the Lord at the personal level. And then the church grew. We experienced our first revival.

[00:43:43] **Proclaim Cuba:** And despite, we couldn't build new churches. They were a few refurbished churches, but we saw a growth of people coming to the church. So today in Cuba, we have churches with over 2000 members, even 3000 members. And my question is if what type of damage persecution have done to Christianity? None.

So I'm happy that we had God put that in our hearts because this is a faith that trust is not the same when you just have faith that something will happen, or when you have faith and trust in God. So today I'm passionate for Cubans to know the word of God, and we have everything we need in the Bible to continue planting churches. We need the lordship of the Lord. Every Cuban understand. The Lord is our Lord, and we are seeing success when we are teaching about the Bible and the Lordship of the Lord.

So I believe that the early church. Is still walking and running around the streets of my Cuba and if I can tell something to this audience, to the world, I can see persecution all over the places. But they are different in every place.

The evil, the enemy is fighting against the growth of Christianity. There are so many strategies from Satan to divide you and separate you from God because he wants to destroy the church. And can you have a relationship with God? We are going to be successful. But if we as pastors and leaders, we put our attention of learning more from the Lord and have this relationship with God and in his word, we are going to be successful.

So if we're able to build that relationship between a man and God, we're going to get all the type of success that we're dreaming for as it can go.

So in Cuba, I have seen miracles. I, I have seen any type of miracles like cripples. They stand up and walk. I have seen resurrections. I have seen how God have been healing the people. So I have seen when there is a lack of food God have been providing in, in, in the country right now with a lot of lack of medicine and medical supplies. God is providing.

So I know a God of miracles and he won't stop for anything. And that's why I want for my Cubans to understand how great is our God. They need to feel it. They need to understand that I

have a homeland in heavens and that we are willing to die for, but also for that homeland, we're going to leave eternally.

[00:48:17] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, what a great word. Thank you. Thank you Pastor Carlos. And just as we wrap up today, How would you how would you ask us to pray for Cuba and for your ministry?

We know that we've seen reports in the news that the season of COVID has been very difficult for Cuba in a particular way. How would you invite us and allow us to pray with and for the island and for the ministry that you're doing, two or three things that you would want us to pray specifically for?

[00:48:54] **Proclaim Cuba:** I will ask you to pray for this vision that we're having based on the main four pillars. So it's evangelism, discipleship, training, and community support.

Our goal is to have 700 new house churches within three years. So please be praying for the local church to be multiplying in house churches and use the buildings as just a gathering and celebration. So pray because we want to take this model to the 16 different states of Cuba.

So please pray for the the over 200 employees that we currently have in Cuba and we are developing this leadership that man to man leadership.

And we'll ask you to pray for a divine intervention of God in our country. Because in a place where people are helpless, hopeless, the gospel is the hope. So your prayers and your support is going to help us to continue extending, expanding the kingdom of God in Cuba.

And God have put an idea in my head, it's how to prepare the path for his return. And we need to share the gospel to the end of the world. It doesn't matter how much it costs.

[00:51:11] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Amen. Thank you so much for that good word. And we would love to join in that effort, both peripherally and tangibly as well as we wrap up our conversation today. Pastor Jim was wondering, could you offer a prayer for Cuba, for Carlos and Carly and for what God continues to do there and that it would inspire what he wants to do here as well. Would you lead us in prayer?

[00:51:35] **Dr. Jim Denison:** happy to. Lord God, we thank you that you are our lord and our god. I thank you that you are a big god I thank you that you are the god that carlos proclaims you to be Thank you for teaching Carlos the big God that you are.

Thank you for building in his heart and in his mind a passion for his entire nation to know how big you are. So I pray for my brother again today, as I have already today, that you would bless him, protect him, empower him, and use him even today. Make him know how loved, respected, and admired he is literally around the world. Bless him in the work of his hands, the work of his mind, the work of his heart and continue to use him as a catalyst for a movement that will bring Cuba to Christ. Lord, we pray specifically that you would tear down any barrier between equipping centers and every one of the 16 regions of Cuba.

We pray right now that you'd be raising up leaders That you would be empowering leaders, that you would be encouraging in such a way that churches across the island could be equipped and empowered as a result of this strategy. Lord God, we pray that you would be putting on the hearts and minds of those listening to this podcast, how they could be specifically praying for our Cuban sisters and brothers.

How they could support financially, how they could support with their own time, how their churches could partner with Carlos and his churches. How they could participate in a Book of Acts, New Testament, gospel movement that is literally transforming a nation. God thank you for what you're doing in Cuba and for what you're doing in the hearts of every person that intersects with your ministry in Cuba.

To God be the glory, great things you are doing. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

[00:53:39] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Amen. Amen. Thank you so much. And also want to thank our listeners for being a part of our conversation today. If this has been helpful to you, please rate, review us on your podcast platform and share this with friends, share it with your church leaders. We would love for them to be involved with the ministry of Proclaim Cuba. You'll also find in the show notes ways to connect with Proclaim Cuba as well as with us here at Denison Forum. Thank you for being a part of the conversation.