

Friends,

The middle-aged pastor stood up and shared, “...after meeting with Dustin on Saturday about the conference, I went home and told my wife, ‘I will attend, but if God does not do something this week, I will go back to the elders and tell them they need to find another leader for the church...’”

Whoa, wait...that is near the end of the story. Let me start at the beginning...three months prior...

It is time again for another edition of the **MCCARTY MINISTRY MINUTE** prayer letter. We pray that 2006 has already been blessed for you and your family. It has already been an incredible year for Strategic Impact! I have spent 30 of the past 90 days in Venezuela...and **God has brought forth abundant results**. Praise God! Please celebrate the fruit with us as we gratefully share with you!!!

As always, I will unsuccessfully try to be brief! ☺

JANUARY brought Mike and I to Carabobo, Venezuela to a Baptist Camp for a meeting of several pastors from across Venezuela. We were asked to speak about Strategic Impact, our vision and purposes, how we come alongside pastors and ministry leaders and help. Mike spoke on “vision”, and I addressed the “importance of discipleship”. The greatest impact of this gathering, though, was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There were extended times of prayer pleading with God to move in Venezuela...times of repentance for not sharing the gospel with the lost...for not mobilizing churches to be laborers unto the harvest. *Many tears were shed...many hearts were broken before the Lord. It was an amazing time which would bear more fruit over the next few months.*



January - Omar & I witnessing on the streets of Valencia.

Through this gathering, we were also blessed to expand our relationships with some key leaders in various regions of Venezuela, which would prove to be essential just a few months down the road!

In **FEBRUARY**, I returned to Venezuela with plans to assist with a Church Planting Campaign in Bocono (a small city high in the mountains). **God had other plans...**



February - Hiking in to do follow-up in the jungle-mountains near Bocono.

I arrived EARLY on Friday morning in Valencia. That afternoon, I had the opportunity of sitting down with my good friend, Omar Pina and two of his Regional Directors (overseeing 3 states each for Venezuela Para Jesus). Always curious as to how I can be of service, **I asked 3 simple questions** to Ernesto and Frank. 1) What is your vision for your ministry?, 2) What is your greatest challenge in ministry?, and 3) What is your greatest personal challenge? Omar was surprised (as was I) at the complete openness of their answers.

That evening Omar Pina and I took an overnight bus (12+ hours) to a city on the coast, called Cumana, where a HUGE Church Planting Campaign was to be held in early March. When we arrived, we immediately entered a breakfast meeting with a few pastors, and some more of Omar’s staff. Omar prodded me into asking the same three questions to this group. I gathered the answers.

We returned that night on another overnight bus (another 12+ hours) that evening to Valencia, then got into a van and drove 6 more hours to the mountain village of Bocono. In Bocono, I had the opportunity to speak with several groups of leaders.

Pastors, Lay Leaders, Leaders from Church Planting organizations, Musical Ministries, and Medical Ministries. I asked the same three basic questions of these groups...they also responded very candidly. This information was added to the others...and a pattern of common challenges became clear.

I began to pray about what to do to address the common difficulties. It quickly became clear that we needed to change our May conference into a conference focusing on these specific issues. I contacted Mike and we immediately began to make the necessary arrangements.

————— But wait...there’s more —————➔

STRATEGIC IMPACT MCCARTY MINISTRY MINUTE

I made one more journey in February to a 4th city, Barquisimeto, to meet with a pastor regarding the upcoming (and now updated) conference. We decided to call this new conference the “**Deepening Leaders for Discipleship**”. There was much excitement among all the leaders we spoke to about this event...the need was recognized, and there was hunger for learning and help.

Early **MARCH** was frantic with the changes and arrangements needed to get the conference together with invitations to be spread out, finances to be raised, materials to be developed, and all the logistics of putting together a conference on another continent. **Praise God for Pastor Freddy in Barquisimeto.** Without his faithful work locally, we would not have been successful.

The conference was beautiful. It was apparent from the first day that God was moving in the hearts of the people and that their needs were being addressed. Three North Americans and two Venezuelans combined to address the primary topics of: Discipleship, Calling, Leadership Confidence, Prayer, Church Planting, Marriage & Family, Unity in the Body of Christ, Finance, and Perseverance. *(All of these will soon be available in mp3 format on our website: www.touchingevernation.com)*

Additionally, in the afternoons, we mobilized the 80+ attendees (comprised of pastors and missionaries from Venezuela) alongside 4 local churches to do outreach and evangelism. Through these efforts, **256 people made professions of faith.** Their contact information was given to the local pastors for follow-up and discipleship. After many of the sessions, the group erupted in spontaneous testimonies followed by singing praises to God.



March - Mike teaching at the Deepening Leaders for Discipleship Conference



A time of worship at the March conference

hundreds come to Christ... was very exciting and inspiring!”

We will post more responses and quotations on our website as we finish translation. Truly, this was an amazing time of encouragement and teaching. **The body of Christ in Venezuela has been blessed, and that occurred because you have joined with us in this ministry. THANK YOU for your thoughts, your prayers, and your giving which enables us to pursue the ministry God has called us to. We are extremely grateful and fruit is being produced.**

In His mighty grip,

Dustin L. McCarty

OH! ...The testimony from the beginning...

The pastor had told his wife, “I will attend, but if God does not do something this week, I will go back to the elders and tell them they need to find another leader for the church...” **He continued, “This week, God has changed my heart. I am ready to go forward. The outreach in the afternoons and evenings... seeing**

PRaises

1. The Conference in Barquisimeto was an amazing success! Funding was provided for, pastors and leaders were encouraged, and many came to Christ!
2. Future conference in Columbia is coming about in August.
3. SI has added a 3rd staff member, Gersan Valcin! (see website for more)
4. Our website is up and running: www.touchingevernation.com

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Safe travel and preparation to Columbia for our August Conference.
2. New believers will be discipled by the local churches in Barquisimeto.
3. Hearts to be prepared to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Latin America and Africa as we serve there.
4. Personal financial support will continue to increase so we can reach 100%. (Now at 30%)
5. My (Dustin) health will improve. (see attached Personal Note)

A PERSONAL NOTE...

My Dear Friends,

In addition to the exciting things God has done in and through Strategic Impact over the past few months as shared in the **MCCARTY MINISTRY MINUTE**, there is another matter which I need to share with you. I will share the whole (yet boring) story, just so everyone is clear about my condition and the outlook of this.

Upon my return from this last trip to Venezuela, I had developed an upper respiratory infection, and, thus, went to my doctor. I also was having some pain in my abdomen. He prescribed some very potent antibiotics. At the end of the cycle of the medication, everything was better except my gut, so on Easter Sunday, Tracy and I went to the emergency room at Denton Regional to get checked out. While there, they conducted a CAT scan and discovered fluid in my abdominal and chest cavities. They admitted me to run tests and by Monday afternoon, had completed an Echocardiogram. This test revealed that I was suffering from congestive heart failure caused by Cardiomyopathy...which in my case is genetic. My cardiologist said there was nothing I could have done to prevent this from occurring. My heart is enlarged and does not squeeze well enough to push my blood effectively.

At that time, my heart was performing at about 10-15% (normal is 55%). They began medications, which strengthen the heart and pull excess retained water from the body. Over the next few days, over 20 pounds of excess fluid was removed from my body. This brought my heart's performance up to about 20-25%. It was decided that I would need a defibrillator installed in my chest, and that was scheduled for Friday, April 21. Praise God, my cardiologist shared my condition, age and occupation with the company that makes the defibrillator. They agreed to donate the machinery and a doctor agreed to install it for free as well. This was/is a HUGE blessing as we currently have no insurance. Praise God for His provision and protection through this entire event. The defibrillator was installed without incident and I was released from the hospital on Saturday, April 22.

The future is bright. I am on medication, which will be helpful. I feel fine, and am back at work today (Wednesday, April 26). There may be the need for a heart transplant sometime in the future, but there is no way to predict when this would occur...just that it is likely to be needed at some point.

There are actually more praises than prayer requests at present. **Praise God** that He allowed me to have this problem...It opened up opportunities to share the gospel with and encourage the hospital staff. **Praise God** that my condition was discovered when it was. **Praise God** that there should be minimal changes in my ability to work as I currently do in ministry. **Praise God** that the body of Christ surrounded my family so lovingly as I was hospitalized...Denton Community Church, friends from Denton Bible Church, Denton Calvary Academy and various ministry contacts throughout the Caribbean and South America have served, brought meals, and consistently prayed for us through this ordeal. **Praise God** that He will use this to glorify Himself and to increase the influence of the ministry He has assigned us.

We are moving forward with great joy and confidence in Jesus, whom we are ALL fully dependent for every breath and heartbeat.

*And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."
Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with
difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10



Now that my present condition has been explained, I am going to address what could possibly be a difficult subject for some. If you wish to stop reading right here, that is fine. May God bless you.

If you desire to be lovingly challenged a bit, please read on...

I have often heard about evaluating a life and what is truly important, and heard difficult and seemingly morbid questions such as, *"If you were on your death bed, what would you want your life to have been like?"*, or *"If you had to put only one word on your tombstone, what would you want it to be?"* or, *"If you had to write your own obituary, what would you like it to say?"*

God is amazing, and has been putting considerations like this on my heart for some time. In fact, over the past 3-4 months, I have been doing my best to lead my family in the direction of evaluating what is really important and **living life to the hilt each day**. If there is someone who needs to hear the gospel, then share it. If you need to clear up a relationship with a friend...don't let it slide...take care of it. If you need to tell someone you love them, or something other important message...don't hesitate. Praise God, they have been getting it. The fact is, no matter what our current condition is, we are not guaranteed tomorrow.

This heart condition and prognosis has shone a much more intense light on the idea of and desire to live life to the fullest! Christ came to seek and save that which was lost...and so that we may have a life abundant. I take this to mean He came to save the lost and to show us that which is truly important. Tracy even said last week that she has a greater understanding and comfort about death now that we have been through this.

I am not attempting to be melancholy or death-focused. Please hear my heart...**I am trying to point you to LIFE...and LIFE ABUNDANT**. A life that has **eternal ramifications**. An **intentional life** that points to the (one and only) **Savior**.

My challenge is this: Sit down alone or with your spouse and review two common items. These two items will expose what your true priorities are because they reveal **actions**...not words or intent. Bring out these items: 1) your calendar, and 2) your checkbook. Look through these windows into your heart and see what you truly value. Pray about what you find. See if they match up to the radical life Jesus calls us to. The life that takes up its cross daily and follows Him. You are not alone...I am doing the same and, frankly, some changes are going to have to be made in my life.

Every day, we make a trade. We exchange this day...today (24 hours which we will never get back) for the results of the day. I pray we ALL make good deals and produce good fruit that remains.

May God continue to bless you and bless others through you!

In His mighty hands,

Dustin L. McCarty
Director
STRATEGIC IMPACT