

SPANISH BIBLE INSTITUTE AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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It's a matter of priorities

For the great majority of you reading this letter, the worldwide financial crisis has affected you and the church you attend, forcing you to cut back in some way. Like every other ministry (especially those on the mission field) the Spanish Bible Institute and Theological Seminary (IBSTE) has also suffered the consequences of this financial crisis. Even though our team of administrators is a skeletal crew at best, we had to let some of them go last month. In addition, we no longer give honorariums to the pastors and Christian workers who serve as invited professors.

The good news is that in the process of cutting back on expenses, all of us, both we who serve as missionaries as well as you who underwrite us and the ministry of the Seminary, are forced to identify our priorities. We are forced to ask: Do I really need to buy everything that captures my fancy? What can I live without? What are the things that really matter? For the Christian the answer is clear: our priority should be God's kingdom and all that He wants to accomplish in the world through His Church. Matthew 6:33 says it best: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

In 46 years of ministry (44 of them in Spain) I have seen a lot of ministries. Some are significant, strategic, and effective; others are not. Even though Carolyn and I founded IBSTE and have given 38 years of our lives to this ministry, we have asked ourselves whether it would make any difference to God's work in Spain if IBSTE were to disappear, as many ministries already have. We are convinced that it would make a huge difference and would represent a tremendous set-back for the Church in Spain. A conversation I had two weeks ago illustrates the truth of my conviction.

I had just finished teaching two hours of Eschatology (doctrine of future things) and headed for the Seminary's dining room for a cup of coffee. There I found a delightful surprise. Gitty Schuster (photo) is a German who came to know Christ as her Savior while working in Spain. She began her studies in IBSTE in 1986, graduated in 1990, and married a wonderful German missionary. After spending a few years in a church planting ministry, they moved to the southern city of Murcia where they founded a Christian bookstore, a ministry that reaches far beyond the boundaries of that city.



During our conversation I asked Gitty if she knew anything about Miguel Bautista since he lived close to Murcia. Of the approximately 600 students who have taken courses at IBSTE since the Seminary opened its doors in 1974, only 2 were gypsies. Miguel was one of them. He was tall, 30 years old, very intelligent, and yet very humble.

In the past, Spanish gypsies moved from place to place, selling their wares in the flea markets. They are easy to identify by their clothes, complexion, and general demeanor. Gypsies do not mix with the general population. Because of their violent nature, no one wants them as neighbors or as spouses for their children. However, in recent years they have settled down, rented apartments, and sent their children to public schools. Also, during the last two decades there has been a tremendous movement of God among the gypsies all across Europe. As a result, they are the largest evangelical denomination in Spain and make up nearly 30% of all Christians.

Miguel began his studies in 1989. We encouraged him to fulfill his practical work assignment in the local gypsy church. But after 4 weeks the leaders asked him to leave, explaining to him that “every time you preach, you use too much Bible.” Gypsy churches are very legalistic and create a lot of extra-Biblical rules for their members.

In response to my question about Miguel’s whereabouts and activities, Gabbi said: “Miguel is having a tremendous ministry of teaching. He is in charge of preparing all of the gypsy men in our area who want to become pastors.”

Gitty and Miguel are just two of our many graduates who are making a difference in the numerical growth and spiritual health of the churches in Spain. Missions is not an option for the Christian, it is a mandate. And, when it comes to missions, I cannot think of any ministry that is more effective and strategic than that of training nationals to reach their own country for Christ and to lead their own churches.



Special instructions when sending a gift

In order to adjust to the present situation, IBSTE has been (1) reducing its expenses, (2) working to increase its financial base, and (3) looking for ways to stretch the donations it receives. I would like to encourage you to make use of two ways to help us accomplish the third goal.

First, Greater Europe Mission takes 12% of donations sent to IBSTE’s General account, but only 6% of those sent to the Faculty account. Because the salaries of our full-time professors represents such an urgent need at this time, when sending a gift through GEM I would like to encourage you to designate it for the “Spanish Bible Institute *Faculty account*”.

Second, since Dr. Sanjaime (IBSTE’s Director) is a member of CAM International, that mission board is willing to charge us only 3% for all donations sent to IBSTE. If you choose to send your gift through CAM (address at bottom of page), please make certain to designate your gift for the “Spanish Bible Institute, *account #060800*”.

Jim Fasold
Director of Development

Tax-deductible gifts for the Spanish Bible Institute and Theological Seminary may be sent to:

CAM International, 8625 La Prada Dr., Dallas Texas 75228 (tel. 800-366-2264), or
Greater Europe Mission, P.O. Box 1669, Monument, CO 80132-1669 (tel. 719-488-8008), or
Greater Europe Mission, 100 Ontario St., Oshawa, ON L1G 4Z1, CANADA (tel. 905-728-8222)