



## News from Curacao

September 1, 2021

Dear Brethren,

We are thankful to God for his amazing grace in these trying times; our family is doing fine, even though the covid-19 continues to weigh on the mission and life in general on the island. Unfortunately, the number of positive cases has sky-rocked again over the past months as the Delta variant kept spreading like wildfire. To contain it, the local government has instated several emergence measures to protect the public from the rapid increase of the virus, except for a total shutdown.



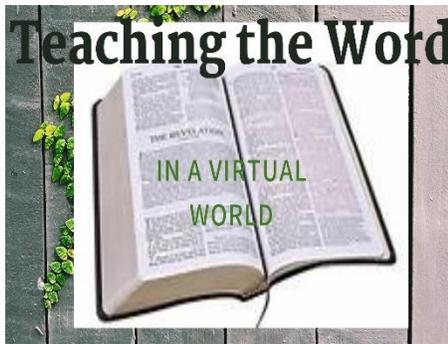
the pandemic has claimed over a hundred lives on Curacao.

Amid that challenge, the Rio Canario congregation does everything to maintain a safe environment in our auditorium for worship services. Among other things, we provide face masks to everyone who appears unmasked in the building. Those serving at the Lord's table must wear them, including hand gloves at all times in the meeting. As uncomfortable as it is, I sometimes keep mine close up and wear it even when preaching. Nevertheless, the covid-19's threat is genuine as more of the people we know become infected with the illness. Now the total number of deaths stands at 144; this year alone,

Despite all of that, the congregation meets virtually and in person. We assemble for worship or Bible class activities on Sunday morning and Thursday evenings at the venue. Some people choose to stay out of sight due to fear of contracting the virus, but others meet in person for the study of God's word.

Hence, we have covered extensive study material over the past weeks. First, we taught/preached the second letter to Timothy, almost word for word, during our Sunday morning services. It served as a great source of encouragement to the locals because we addressed several topics of interest in the letter. To name a few: Paul's call to Timothy to stir his gift, to persist in the gospel; He urged the evangelist to be strong in God's grace; warned him about false teachers, chapter 2, and the dangers of the last days' Chapter 3:1-9, including the charge to proclaim the word in unfavorable times, in season and out of season chapter 4:1-18. The study offered incredible insights to the congregation.





Second, it trained the brethren to read the scripture in its context. Notably, they knew some verses from Timothy but had not viewed the whole picture of the text, how each verse contributes to the complete message. Those we use often are chapter 2:15; 3:1,16-17; 4:1-8, etc. Nearly all Christians have heard those text quoted or read at some point, but not everyone applies them in their original setting. For instance, we cite “study to show thyself approved unto God” to encourage believers and non-believers to research the Bible (2Tim 2:15). It is a beautiful quotation. However, that verse (2Tim 2:15) becomes more meaningful if one

sees it from the author's viewpoint.

In chapter 2 of second Timothy, Paul warned Timothy against false teachers who flooded the church at Ephesus. Previously, the apostle had left Timothy in Ephesus for that reason, to instruct men not to teach any other doctrine (1Tim 1:3). Hence, he urged the young evangelist to study in 2Timothy 2:15-- exert all diligence-- to accurately divide the word, meaning cut it straight like someone who "carves a straight path in a jungle to reach his destination safely," as one person puts it. Doing so, Timothy would learn to defend the faith and serve the Lord competently at Ephesus. The same is true today, and our people needed to know that for their spiritual enhancement in Christ. Proper growth entails understanding and expounding God's truth correctly.

In other verses like 2Tim 3:16, some brethren paid little or no attention to the overall text because they have heard the scripture so many times that it appears to them that the verse stands on its own. However, as noted in our study, 2Tim 3:16 sits in a broader context like every other portion of the Bible. So, we advocated the need for all Christians to read or study the text entirely, not one isolated verse of the scripture, to understand and appreciate the message of God's word. In chapter 3, Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in the things he had learned in the scriptures. He explains why Timothy had to do so seriously; namely, God inspired the scripture; He revealed it, God-breathed.

Hence, the apostle summoned Timothy to preach the word in challenging times to combat the looming threat of apostasy upon the church. Now the local people understand the need to declare the gospel today for that exact purpose. We live in the final days of Christianity, an era that began at Pentecost and will last until Christ returns. Paul did not address his letter directly to modern Christians, yet its principles are for our learning and caution in these last times.

Still, other studies we led in the past months include a series on prayer on Tuesday evenings- the lessons are ongoing- the letter to the Hebrews, Special themes from Matthew's gospel, Thursday evening classes, and Bible characters on Sunday evening. That's an online program with the local church. All of those meetings have proven helpful to the spiritual growth of the local people. Nevertheless, the engagement and reaction to the Bible characters' class are superb. Currently, we are exploring the story of Joseph, from the "pit to the palace." Everyone seems fascinated by the way God uses human History to accomplish his purpose. The events in Joseph's life illustrate that perfectly. One of the thoughts the narrator stresses in that account repeatedly is this: "God was with Joseph." I think the story has encouraged the faith of the brethren immensely. For the most part, they understand that God is promise-keeping God. He did not take his eyes off Joseph even though he struggled before reaching the position God intended for him. Indeed, we are thankful to the Lord for the entire canon of scripture, which offers multiple angles, whether through a letter to an individual, Matthew's gospel, a sermon to the Hebrew Christians, or a Historical text like Genesis, to capture God's awesomeness and learn his will for our lives. Please, join us in prayer for the continued growth of the local church in the

word of God.

Finally, our family is staying strong. Patricia and Precious are doing well. As a rule, we try to stay off large crowds as much as possible, except for worship activities and other essentials. Nevertheless, we are grateful to the Lord for watching over us and, of course, the different families of the congregation; they mean a lot to us. Please continue to pray for us as we deal with the challenges of our time. Greet all the saints for us until our following newsletter. Thank you for your moral and financial support in the mission of the Lord. We couldn't do it without your input. May God bless and keep you all in Christ. Stay safe, brethren. From Alford, Patricia, and Precious Lazar

Contact info: 599-95668262/ email: [laz15ford@yahoo.com](mailto:laz15ford@yahoo.com)