

Church Planters Target Cuba With Baseball Ministry

You may not have heard about this ministry before, but it's having a profound impact on the church and government leadership in Cuba.

Global Baseball is a ministry that's dedicated to using baseball as a way to spread the gospel and plant churches around the world. Cuba is one country in which Global Baseball is having an eternal impact.

Jeff Siegel, president of Global Baseball, says baseball is growing in popularity around the world. "Actually, in some countries it's like the king in their country," he says. "For example, in Cuba, baseball is the king."

Siegel thinks he knows why. "The people don't really have much hope outside of the gospel message. And one of the things that gives them a little enjoyment is sports," he says. "For whatever reason, baseball is just something that really brings people together and brings a little happiness to them."

Siegel says Global Baseball is designed to do a couple of things: "One of the things we really focus on is being able to do free baseball schools or clinics for children in countries where they would never get this kind of instruction."

While baseball is the tool, Siegel says, his ministry works through the local churches to make sure that when people get saved, there's going to be follow-up.

Global Baseball brings more than sports. Siegel says the ministry also offers humanitarian aid, and leaves baseball equipment in the churches so local congregations can begin baseball programs.

Global Baseball has been going into Cuba for several years. Siegel says, "A famous national team player named Raul Valdez got saved. Now we were going from four house churches to eight, eight to 16, and 16 to 20, and he introduced me to the second-youngest son of Fidel Castro."

This son eventually came to Christ, which opened doors to meet people across the Cuban government. As relationships have blossomed, Siegel says, "We earned the government's respect in Cuba where I can bring in Christian colleges, Christian baseball teams, Christian singing groups, and humanitarian aid. They give me religious visas now in Cuba."

The only thing Global Baseball needs now is a partner who can provide aid silently. Siegel says he already has permission from the Cuban leadership. They told him, "When you're ready, give me the trail numbers of the planes, and we'll make sure they get in and go where they need to go."

This program has been hugely successful, not just in terms of baseball but in terms of lives changed. "Castro's son came to the Lord. Chinese Cubans are getting saved. People right around Castro's inner circle are getting saved."

Siegel is praying that God will encourage more baseball teams to go to Cuba for outreach. Cornerstone University is planning to send their baseball team to Cuba in the next couple of years. Siegel is praying that God will allow him eventually to share Christ with Fidel Castro himself.