

SOONER

OR

LATER

The Micah Project | Spring 2023

“Michael, can we play this again tomorrow?”

“This” is a squirt-gun battle, which our street team has just finished with the kids who live under one of the bridges that crosses Tegucigalpa’s polluted river. Jose Daniel tucks his plastic Coke bottle full of yellow glue into his shorts in order to play, but as we share a snack and dry off, he takes it out and sneaks a long huff of fumes when he thinks no one is watching. He catches my eye, stashes the bottle, and surprises me with another request. **“Hey Michael, wanna meet my kid brother?”**

While Becca Bell and her faithful dog Mocha load our team into the van to head back to Micah, Jose Daniel and I trudge up the trash-strewn alley toward the outdoor market. A group of men sits among that trash. One of them one shouts, “Hey *Perro de Agua*, give me some of your glue.” Though young, Jose Daniel already has a street nickname: “Water Dog.” Why “Water Dog”? Because Jose Daniel is famous for jumping off that bridge into the brackish water and then dog-paddling downstream.

As we enter the outdoor market, I lose my bearings in the claustrophobic alleyways. So many people are buying and selling that we must squeeze through rickety stalls to reach a tiny courtyard surrounded by dilapidated buildings. A dark hallway leads to a room with a dirty sheet hanging where the door should be.

Sitting on a filthy mattress, a woman holds a baby on her lap; on the ground next to her, a small boy plays with a toy car that has no wheels. “Michael, this is my mom, my baby sister, and my little brother Eddy.” When I shake his mom’s hand, I smell alcohol on her breath. Unsure of what this tall gringo is doing in the room that his mom rents by the day, Eddy gives me a little wave. Before I leave, I chat with his mother about the Micah Project.

When Jose Daniel and I return to the bridge, I make him promise that he will spend Saturday with us at Micah. “*Claro que si*, Michael—of course I will!” He gives me a quick hug and then descends to the river where he and his friends will resume huffing yellow glue.

THE YEAR IS 2008: Jose Daniel is 11. Eddy is five.

That Saturday, Jose Daniel shows up at Micah and spends the day at a pool with the rest of our boys. Several weeks later, I email one of our supporters: “Thanks for praying for this precious kid. Jose Daniel has decided not to move in to the Micah House, but he’s going to spend next weekend with us, too. Keep praying for him! I know that God will bring Jose Daniel to us in His time!”



FAST FORWARD – 2013:

Jose Daniel is 16. Eddy is 10.



The year before, Eddy followed his older brother onto the streets, one of the youngest glue addicts we'd ever seen.

We invite Eddy to spend a Saturday with the boys, just as Jose Daniel had done five years earlier. Eddy has a great day swimming and riding horses, and when he returns to the Micah House, he is so wiped out that he falls asleep in an armchair and sleeps through the night. His first night as a Micah boy!

Later that year, I write the following reflection about Jose Daniel and Eddy:

"Having been on the streets most of his life, it's amazing the things Eddy doesn't know. He doesn't know how old he is or what day he was born. He doesn't know not to kick the soccer ball until you buy it and take it out of the store. (Becca, thanks for paying for that broken vase!) He's never seen an ATM machine until the day that I make a withdrawal, and 2,000 *lempiras* (about \$100 dollars) pop out. Wide-eyed, he walks around the machine to look at its backside. Is there a generous leprechaun in there? Pondering this magical machine, he turns to one of the other guys, points to the ATM, and explains: 'This is where Michael keeps his money!'

"As I watch Eddy joyfully take in everything the Micah Project has to offer, I think about his brother. Street life has given Jose Daniel a hard edge. At some point, we moved on and invested our time in other kids. But now that Eddy is a Micah boy, Jose Daniel starts visiting us again. Sometimes, he asks for food or a new pair of shoes. From his slurry, drug-hazed dialogue, though, we can tell that he has given up on himself.

"The Micah family loves Jose Daniel fiercely, and we have worked for years to coax him off the streets and into the Micah house. We have asked people to pray for him and pleaded with him to leave the streets behind. But that day never comes."



A GLIMMER OF HOPE – 2014:

Jose Daniel shows up three days a week to our new Isaiah House program where he receives love and wise counsel. For the first time in his life, he is learning how to read and write. He even stays overnight several weekends. Our dedicated Isaiah House team continues to fight for his future. But after a few months, the only life he truly knows, the one that lets him erase reality with a few huffs of yellow glue, lures him back to the streets.

In June, I receive an email from a Christian living in France. Earlier, she had met my friend Randy Mayfield and felt led to pray for Micah. She has had two vivid dreams about Micah, which she shares with me.

In her first dream, she sees the Lord Jesus, dressed as a gardener, watering and pruning plants, each one a different size with different flowers. She asks the gardener, “Lord, what are these plants?”

He replies, “Every child who enters the Micah House is like a plant. Each plant grows differently, and I am here to take care of them individually because they are precious to me. It pleases me to care for them, and I take the time to make sure they grow well.”

In her second dream, she sees a sheet of paper with the face of a young man drawn with pencil. The drawing comes alive and a real young man runs joyfully through a grassy field. As he runs, faces of the Micah boys pass before him. Suddenly, the faces blend into the young man running through the field—they become one. At that moment, the Lord appears, and gestures for the young man to draw near. As they hug, the woman who is dreaming has a deep understanding that the child will grow under the protection, provision, and education of our Loving Teacher.

The next day, she looks through Micah’s website. Suddenly she shouts, “I found him! I know the name of the child from my dream! His name is Jose Daniel.”

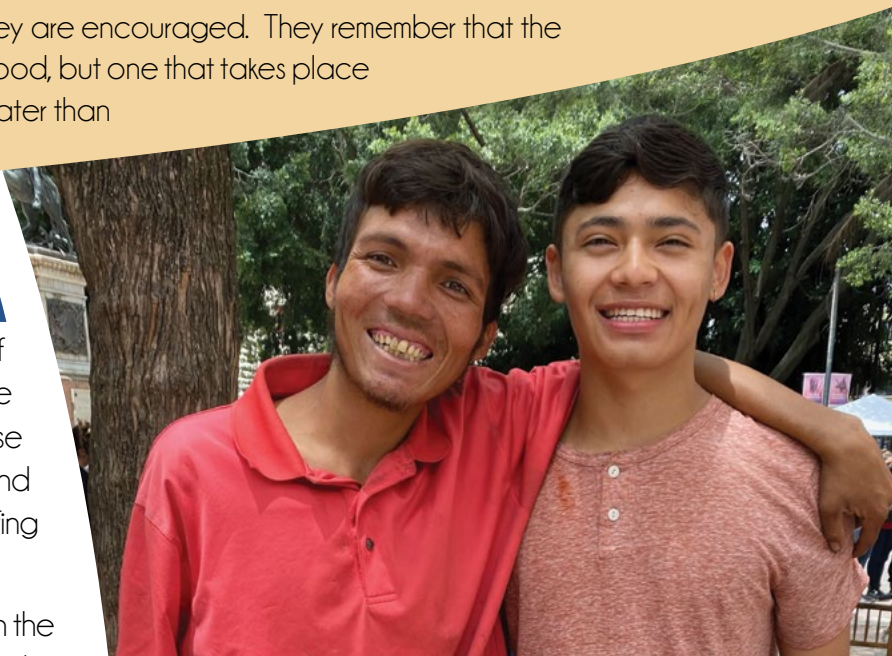
I share these dreams with Micah team members, and they are encouraged. They remember that the fight for Jose Daniel’s soul is not a fight over flesh-and-blood, but one that takes place in the heavenly realms. . . and that He who is in us is greater than he that is in the world!

SEVEN YEARS FLY BY – 2022:

Jose Daniel is 25 and still living on the streets.

One afternoon, I run into him in the central plaza of Tegucigalpa and ask if he wants to speak to his little brother Eddy, who is an ocean away in London. Jose Daniel’s speech is slurred; he has difficulty walking, and his hands shake from constant tremors. The years of huffing glue have taken their toll.

By contrast, Eddy graduated from high school at Micah the year before. In January, he began a six-month Discipleship Training School through Youth with a Mission (YWAM), which will take him to England, Cyprus, Turkey, and Jordan. At nineteen, he is a faith-filled, forward-thinking young man.



After the brothers catch up, Eddy encourages Jose Daniel to enter a drug rehabilitation program and turn his life around. As they end their call, he tells his older brother, “You know that I love you, and that God loves you even more. He has never given up on you. If you go into rehab, Micah will be there for you when you get out.”

After his phone conversation with Eddy, something clicks. Jose Daniel tells Wendy, our social worker, that he’s ready to go into drug rehab. She arranges it, and he stays for seven months. Upon finishing the painful work of detox and rehab, he moves into Micah and joins our Micah Works program. Now, his eyes are clearer than they have been in years, and the tremor in his hands is gone. He grows stronger every day.

PALM SUNDAY – 2023:

I'm on my cabin's front porch drinking coffee. Jose Daniel exits the cabin where he lives on Micah's property and heads to the main house for breakfast. He gives me a chipper greeting and tells me that he is going to church with the Micah boys. As he rounds the corner of the Micah House, I have a profound awareness that I am witnessing a miracle.



2023 – EASTER!

The fact that God never stops pursuing His lost children continues to amaze me. His Son even went to the cross to fight for our resurrection and everlasting life. On a human level, though, keeping hope alive can be hard when a kid's primary response to our love is a downward spiral. But as Eddy reminded Jose Daniel during that call from London, God never, ever gave up on him. And God Himself reminds us in His perfect Word that "the Lord is not slow in keeping His promise" (2 Peter: 9).

Jose Daniel is a living, breathing reminder of that promise.

Maybe the fulfillment of that promise will take 15 years—maybe it will take lifetime—maybe it will only happen the other side of eternity. But one thing is certain: sooner or later, we will understand that God is always faithful.

Joining us in this work with the street kids of Honduras takes a lot of faith on your part as well. The kids in whom you invest may not show fruit for a decade or more. But each time you give to Micah or pray for one of these young men, you say: "I trust that the Lord, our Protector, is perfect in faithfulness."

And even when we must wait years to see a transformation, your loving support encourages us to "be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, [and] faithful in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

Humbled by the One who never quits on us,

Michael S. Hill

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