

## February 2004 Update

“I am ready to move into the Leadership house. I am not scared of the change because I have seen God’s hand manifest itself in this whole process and I know that He has a lot in store for me!” --Cristino Hernandez, 18.

February has been a frenzy of last minute details. The floor tiles are being placed, the sinks installed and the walls painted. Our albañiles, or construction workers, have been laboring until nine or ten at night to get their various jobs done in the next few days. We spent three afternoons last week furniture-shopping, looking for couches and tables that will stand up to Honduran dust and teenage energy. Every decision takes us one anxious step closer to February twenty, the date on which we will inaugurate the Leadership house.

Even as the construction winds down, the Leadership house boys are gearing up for their big transition. Though the house still lacks a few last details, the boys are more than ready for this big step in their lives! In January, Leadership house coordinator Matt Darr and his fiancée Amy took our five oldest boys on a weeklong retreat to Copan, a magical mountain town on the Honduras-Guatemala border. It was a wonderful time of preparation and growth!



(Above: The soon-to-be Leadership House folks in Copan!)

In Copan, the boys put into practice some of the lessons they will continue to learn this year at the Leadership house. Firstly, each boy had to manage his own budget for the week, including food and hotel costs. Also, they spent several evenings during the week working on unity and planning their new lives at the Leadership house. Matt did a few lessons on what it means to be a Christian man, and he used the time to define how they will grow together in life and faith this year. Finally, the boys got the chance to serve, which is the most important goal of any Christian leader. They joined a medical team from the First Presbyterian Church of Houston (insert hyperlink) every day to run a medical clinic and work with the children of a Chorti village, a group of indigenous people descended from the ancient Maya.

When the boys got back from the retreat, the transition they had made was palpable. The serious look in their eyes made me realize that each one of them was leaving boyhood behind as they became the “Micah men” of the Leadership house. In fact, instead of encouraging them, they are pushing us to provide the most serious environment possible. For instance, our new school year began the last week in January (the Honduran school year runs from February through November) and we had planned for classes from 7:30 to noon every day, which is the Honduran schedule. Additionally, we planned for two night classes for the Leadership House boys to provide an extra-intense curriculum. But they still weren’t satisfied! They asked for an additional class in the afternoon so that they could use their time to the maximum! Have you ever heard of high school students asking for more classes instead of begging for less? These guys are focused!

As their big move-in day draws closer, I am reminded of a lesson that I have learned since living in Honduras: big changes require much prayer. The first of these big changes will take place in a couple of weeks, when these boys move into the Leadership house and begin to live an increased level of independence. But that is only the first. They have other big questions to answer this year. What will they study in college? Where will they go to college? Will they study abroad or in Honduras? What does it mean to be a Christian man in Honduras? How is God calling them to serve Him in their lives? Each of these boys is the first in his family to make such decisions; thus, they are pioneers. Being the first to accomplish something is always scary! As they begin to answer these vital questions, we appreciate your prayers for discernment, wisdom and courage!

These next few weeks will be a physical reminder of God’s provision for these boys. As the last coat of paint goes on the Leadership house, the furniture gets put in place and the boys begin to move in their belongings, we will often stop to take a moment to thank our loving Father for providing this place for these boys.

When I was talking with the boys about all that God has done in their lives, they made some very interesting comments. Marvin said, “I am so grateful to God because I know that He has touched the hearts of so many people who support us. I think that he has given them a vision of what He wants to accomplish in our lives.” I

agree with Marvin wholeheartedly! It is my prayer as well that you will continue to be blessed by what the Lord is doing in these boys' lives.

We wish everyone of your could be here for inauguration day next week!

¡Muchas Gracias!

Your brother in Christ,

Michael Miller

## March 2004 Update

This update is adapted from the introduction to our recently published 2003 Annual Report. If you would like a copy of the full report and are not sure if you are on our mailing list, please send us your mailing address!

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One month ago, the big day finally came. Our four oldest boys packed up four years' worth of belongings that they had collected at the Micah House and moved into the shining new Leadership house. We celebrated this big event in the lives of Cristino, Marvin, David and Jarvin with a beautiful and touching inaugural service, in the company of friends from both Honduras and the United States. The inauguration was a day full of encouraging words, warm hugs and congratulations. It was a perfect day to send these courageous boys into the next stage of their lives!



How can I describe the transition that is happening in our boys' lives and in the Micah Project? I imagine us standing on a bridge overlooking two distant shores. Looking back to the shore that we have so recently left behind, I see our beginning point on the receding horizon, when God first laid before us a challenge to take His children off the streets and to disciple them towards leadership in His Kingdom. I see the anxious looks of the first eight boys as they moved into our new house, bought on faith, in January 2000. And I see indescribable change in those eyes in the last four years as they began lose the deadened look that belied their tragic pasts and came alive with confidence, compassion and hope.

We are not crossing this bridge because we feel that the Micah Project is ready for a change. Rather, it is our boys that have accepted the challenge of leadership and have begun this transformation. Their nascent ideas about how God can use them in the future are quickly forming into full-fledged visions and goals. Thus, we are crossing this bridge to keep up with the boys—to be able to guide them in their first steps into their future. In fact, in our strategic plan; we were not to step onto this bridge until 2005...our boys grew faster than we thought they would!

We officially began this transition in July 2003 when we purchased a dilapidated but lovely home for this next step, which we have named the Leadership house. This will be the place where they shake off the last vestiges of childhood and take on the responsibilities of Christian manhood. Here, our older boys will learn things as mundane as how to set a monthly budget, how to shop and cook for themselves, and how to make wise decisions with their time. But they will also learn profound things, such as what it takes to be a leader when the confidence of those around them begins to fail, how to keep trusting the Lord when the water get choppy, and how to make hard decisions in life while always keeping God's kingdom in their sight.

Yes, this is a time of great change for the Micah Project and the young men who are moving into the Leadership house. While this bridge may take us to new places in our ministry, however, it is under-girded by the same principles upon which we founded this project in 2000. And the most important of those underlying principles has increasingly become embodied by a single idea: that of the “incarnational family.”

In raising children that are not one's own, there is a dichotomy: at one end, there are “institutions”—the programs that treat children as numbers and house them in large and impersonal facilities. These children often get a warm bed, a hot meal, and a decent education, but they do not always receive the individual love from a caring and godly parental figure. And that love is the only way that these children will truly overcome the neglect of their past.

The other end of the dichotomy, then, is the family. God created the family as the ideal place to raise children. Of course, all of our families are broken by sin, but at the same time, the family is the best place for forgiveness and redemption to take place. It is our awesome and daunting duty to re-create a family situation at the Micah Project as closely as we possibly can. It must be “incarnational” because, in recreating it, we must try to live Jesus Christ in front of the boys. And, when we inevitably fail in our weak and human attempts to be “imitators of God” in front of the boys, we are still incarnational, in modeling the forgiveness and redemption that our Savior's own incarnation won for us. As we forgive the boys for their failures and we ask them to forgive us for ours, we always remember that it was He who first forgave us.

The ideal of “incarnational family” made planning the Leadership house an obvious goal. For, what family cuts off all support for their sons or daughters once they turn eighteen? That is, sadly, what most institutions do with their orphans. But, where would our boys go if they were suddenly alone in the world at eighteen? How would they achieve their goals of future leadership if they have to work instead of going to school? (In Honduras, it’s usually an either/or situation...there are not enough jobs to go around to have the luxury of part-time work.) Since we are the boys’ spiritual family, we must continue to support them until they can successfully stand on their own two feet.

That is why we are walking across this bridge with them. That is why we have built the Leadership House. Now that the house is purchased and almost remodeled, we must look to the horizon that is ahead. What is in the future for these boys? In the near future, in November 2004, to be exact, five of our oldest boys will graduate from high school. Our next goal then, is to help them find the best higher education possible according to each of their talents and interests. The boys are already beginning to research colleges and universities!

A few weeks ago, a group of college students came to the Micah house to learn about our ministry. When talking to them, Cristino, one of the Leadership house young men, said, “I used to think the future was some far away place, but now I know that it is very near.” In a country where most people work just to put food on the table, and where thinking about the future is a luxury, that statement is a profound one. And it is my prayer that Cristino and the other boys would know that, as long as God gives us the strength to continue, the Micah Project will walk beside them every step of the way as they cross the bridge into their ever-nearing future.

Thank you for holding these boys’ hands as well, through your prayers and support, as they take these first courageous steps of manhood!

Sincerely,

Michael Miller

## **April - May Update, 2004 Update**

A few weeks ago, I had a conversation with the director of a Honduran orphanage about the expectations we should have for our boys. She firmly believed that, since young Hondurans have so few opportunities to succeed, we should not foster big dreams. Instead, she felt that we should help them form small, practical goals so that they can survive in this impoverished country. As an example, she used one of their brightest boys, who, after leaving their program with a high school degree, was not able to support himself in college, and is currently living a hand-to-mouth existence. She believes that big hopes only set the boys up for big disappointments.

Many poor youth have a kind of inferiority complex. From birth, they hear that the best they can do is scratch out an existence; maybe scrounge up enough to buy a TV for their tiny homes. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; they learn to think that they are not capable of doing anything truly significant with their lives. Their own fathers confirm this to them by drowning their disappointment in daily rations of alcohol. By the time they are teens, these young people do not need any more proof regarding the seeming hopelessness of their existence.

Since the Micah Project has always been based upon hope, the conversation I had with my friend that day gave me pause. Could she be right? Should we help our boys become taxi drivers, construction workers, or salesmen, which are goals that are much more attainable to an impoverished Honduran young man? There is nothing wrong with these jobs, and earning a living with one's hands is just as honorable as other pursuits. However, the hope that we preach to our boys is not based on the way they make money; rather, it stems from the desire to live their entire life for Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we are all challenged to set big goals with our lives. There is an amazing passage in the biblical book of Hebrews that describes our goal. After telling us the stories of the faithful men and women who have gone before us, the twelfth chapter of Hebrews states, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

This beautifully described goal urges us to live our lives wholly for our Savior. It is not about material gain or earthly comforts; rather, it describes our true fulfillment as following in the footsteps of our Lord. And it is a goal for those who come from poverty just as clearly as for those who come from comfortable circumstances.

Hebrews goes on to encourage each of us to "strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees" (12:12). That is a perfect metaphor for what we are attempting to accomplish for our boys! For years, they were told that they were not qualified to

run this race. On the contrary, we are communicating to them that not only may they participate, but that they can literally “throw off” all those things from their past life on the streets that would still trip them up and keep them from running a winning race!

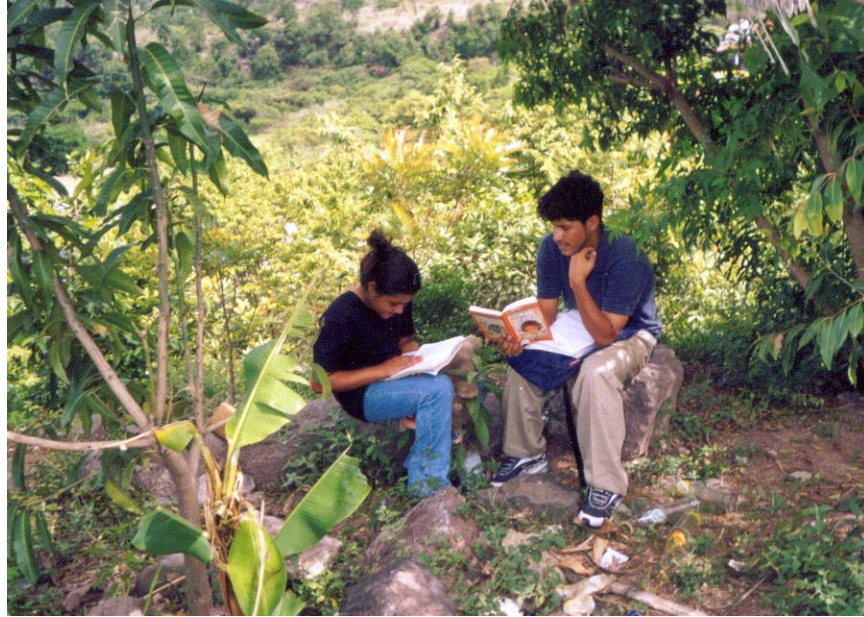
This year, we can see encouraging signs that our boys are serious about “throwing off” all of the things that would make them yet another statistic in the vicious cycle of poverty and addiction that has enslaved their families for generations. Our young men who have now lived in the Leadership house for almost three months have begun to take on the serious and focused look of Olympic runners! As they finish up their last year of high school, it also apparent that they are not going to use their new found skills to seek “worldly” happiness; rather, they are going to set their eyes on their true goal.

Nineteen year old Jarvin, for instance, continues to show great interest in helping his family. Last month, he traveled to San Pedro Sula for two reasons. First, he visited his mom, who has been in jail for about a year. He went to encourage her, to counsel her, and to show his love for her despite the ways she hurt him in his childhood. He was so excited to discover that his mom was attending a church service inside the prison! I know that he would love nothing better than for his mom to turn her life around. Jarvin also went to visit his younger brother in an orphanage, to make sure that he was being provided with everything he needs. Jarvin is sure that his brother will be a part of the Micah Project some day (and knowing Jarvin’s persistence, I’m pretty sure of that too!).

Next week, Jarvin and the other Leadership house men will be joining our ministry in the city dump in order to start a new initiative. Three afternoons a week, they will begin teaching a small group of twenty young people who scavenge through the dump for scraps. These youth, many of whom are the same age as the Leadership house boys, have never had a chance to study; several of them grew up on the streets just as our boys did. The classes will begin at the first grade level! Also, we have received permission from the city to build a small classroom on the dump site. Our guys will be raising the funds for that project and will build it themselves!

To me, THAT is what running the race is all about. It is the willingness to go to the smelliest, most depressing, and most hopeless place in our city to share the hope that spurs them onward! It is about calling others to come and run this good race with them! It is about knowing that no matter how hard the race gets, or how challenging the hurdles, our Savior is waiting for them at the finish line with open arms.





(Above: Jarvin tutors a girl at the city dump.)

When these boys go to college next year, I know that these opportunities to serve and to share their hope in our Lord will inform their studies. These opportunities will help the boys to study with a purpose; to prepare themselves to be even more effective hope-bearers! It is already evident that they have this in mind as they begin to seek discernment about their future colleges and majors. A couple of them have mentioned the desire to study psychology or counseling. While I don't know if this will be their final decision, I do know that they are interested in it because of their desire to help broken people find the same hope that they have!

The Leadership house is the place that you all helped create for these boys. It truly is a place of training for this amazing race. And now that the boys approach college, they continue to have hope because they know we are committed to supporting them throughout their college studies. This year, we must begin to strengthen our college scholarship fund to help these young men move into the best school for each of them next year. While we hope that they can also earn formal scholarships in each school, we must be prepared to support them in their studies until that happens. We are estimating that we must raise \$40,000 this year to support these boys and to continue to support Darwin Pavon, who is currently in his freshman year at Zamorano University. Not only are these boys graduating in November of this year, but our next group of four boys will be graduating at the end of 2005!

When I look at Jarvin, David, Cristino, Marvin and Olvin and see the hope in their hearts reflected in their actions and goals, the ominous words of warning that my friend gave me suddenly fade into nothingness. With a supporting community surrounding them, cheering them onward, there are no limits to how God can use our boys to win this country for him!

You all are a part of the “great cloud of witnesses” that spur our boys onward. Through your prayers and support, you are cheering them on towards their goal. Honestly, some of the hurdles that the boys have had to overcome in their lives seemed insurmountable at times. I know that it was your prayers that gave them the extra strength needed to leap over them and continue onward. At the same time, it is our prayer that the courage that these young men have shown in overcoming their obstacles would be a great encouragement to you as well as you run the good race!

Thank you for helping us to continue spur these boys on towards hope in all that they do!

Your fellow runner in Christ,

Michael Miller

## Summer 2004 Update

Dear friends,

Greetings from the Micah Project and our sixteen young men! Though I haven't written in a while, I don't feel too out of touch...since over a hundred of our U.S. friends and supporters came to Honduras this summer on various mission's trips!

The three groups that we hosted this summer had diverse goals, but they had one thing in common: they were a great blessing to the Micah boys and our ministries. The mixture of new friends and old faces (some of our visitors were on their fourth or fifth trip to Honduras!) made the Micah boys feel very loved and supported. When our last team left last Saturday, the Micah house seemed awfully empty!

Our first summer mission's team was the medical team from the First Presbyterian Church of Houston. Besides seeing hundreds of patients in a makeshift clinic in Villa Linda Miller, they also participated in our children's ministries in the city dump, at Villa Linda Miller and in our neighboring community, Villa Madrid. One of the things I most appreciate about this group is their gift for nurturing. They love on the Micah boys as if they were their own sons, and the boys respond in kind! The boys think of them as extended family that usually loves them from a distance, but gets to come once a year for a happy reunion!

The second team that came to visit us this summer was the youth group from the Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church of Houston. This group of almost sixty allowed us to expand our ministry to the Micah boys' families in a way that we never imagined possible. After identifying the extremely impoverished situation of Miguel and Jefferson's family, the group chose to build them a beautiful three-bedroom home!

Miguel, who has been with the Micah Project since the very beginning, and his half-brother Jefferson, who has been with us since January, come from an extremely poor barrio. Miguel was on the streets at an early age and never really lived at home. Jefferson was on and off the streets until joining the project this year. When you see where they used to live, it is not hard to imagine why they fled from the desperate poverty of their family life. The shack in which their family lives is eight feet by ten feet in area, housing their parents and four children. There is no running water, sewage or electricity. Every time it rains, a stream of water runs through the cracks in the wooden walls and inundates the house. The youngest kids are often victims of scabies because of the lack of water to create sanitary conditions. Every so often a large truck comes around to fill barrels and buckets with debatably drinkable water, but sometimes the family cannot even afford that.

What a blessing that the Memorial Drive team could build a house for this family! As we mixed cement and hauled concrete blocks, I felt that this team of

young people from Houston were providing hope for a family that has been so beaten down by poverty. I also felt that this home will create a place of stability for this family, so that Miguel and Jefferson's younger brothers will not need to make the same choice that they did. Instead of having to flee to the streets to survive, they now have a safe place to finish growing up, something that Miguel and Jefferson never had the luxury of doing.



Besides building the house, the team from Memorial Drive church also helped build a large retaining wall in Villa Linda Miller, where erosion had badly damaged the land. After so much building, I think the team left with more muscles that it came with!

Our last mission's team of the summer was the youth group from the Greentree Community Church of St. Louis. This was their fifth year to come to Honduras! They came at a great time, because they were able to donate the funds and the manpower to finish up some aspects of Miguel and Jefferson's house that we had not yet completed. By the time they left last Saturday, the house was pretty much completed! Please pray for the family next Wednesday, August 18th, when we will be inaugurating the house and they will be moving in!

One of the Greentree group's main purposes every year is to minister to the teens at Villa Linda Miller. Although Villa Linda Miller is a beautiful community, many of the families are very broken, and a portion of the youth is involved in drugs and other destructive behaviors. This year, the Greentree group ran a weekend sports' camp for about forty VLM teens. During the rest of the week, some of these teens worked with the group on the construction projects they undertook. At one evening meeting led by Greentree, several of the VLM teens accepted Christ! It is amazing to see the impact that this group has on these teens' lives on a yearly basis!

Please pray for the VLM youth as the Micah boys continue to minister to them through a weekly Bible study every Friday night.

As you can see, this summer was full of ministry opportunities! At the same time, the boys continued to study hard in our home schooling project. It is still hard for us to believe that five of our boys will graduate on November 13th! As their main teacher, I've been stretched in the last couple of months by having to teach philosophy, psychology and physics! That's a lot for a guy who has his degree in elementary education!!!

As we wind down the school year, we hope to take our older boys to Guatemala in a few weeks in order to take the GED high school equivalency test. Several of the boys have expressed an interest in studying in the U.S. because of some problems with the Honduran university. They will need to take the GED in order to be accepted in U.S. universities. Please pray for discernment and wisdom as we help the boys make these big decisions! Since this is a time of great change for them, they need as much support and prayer that we can offer them.

This summer has also been a time of change for the Micah Project. Our Leadership house coordinator Matt Darr moved back to the States this week to prepare for his upcoming wedding. Our missionary Becca Haver will take over the Leadership House coordination for the next few months on an interim basis. One of our other volunteers, Lauri Deniakos, who spent two years with us and came back for two months this summer, also left this week. Finally, Erin MacLean will be finishing three years with us in November and will be returning to the States. We wish all of these fellow missionaries many blessings as they begin new stages of their lives!

At the same time, we are beginning to look for new volunteers for 2005 and beyond. If you think that God may be calling you or someone you know to spend a year or more serving the Micah boys in Honduras, please let me know by writing me at [micahproject@hotmail.com](mailto:micahproject@hotmail.com) ! We need volunteers for the Micah House, the Leadership house, and our ministries in the city dump and Villa Linda Miller. I promise you that it will be one of the most challenging and transforming experiences you will ever have!

As I close this letter, I would also like to ask you to prayerfully consider making a financial commitment to the Micah Project if you have not already. Since opening the Leadership house in February, our operational budget has increased, and we are finding our operational funds to be somewhat low. In order to continue our ministries at the Micah and Leadership houses, at the city dump and Villa Linda Miller, we will need to boost our operational funding. Additionally, we are beginning to raise funds for our scholarship program, which will assist our five graduates as they move into college next year. We would be extremely grateful for your support in this exciting new stage in their lives!

After such an exciting and busy summer, it is always good to hear how the Micah Project is impacting people's lives. We know that teens have accepted Christ in Villa Linda Miller, that sick people have been healed, and that a home has been built. But it is also extremely encouraging to hear that our boys are impacting the lives of those who come here to visit as well! One of the mission's trip members wrote the following letter to the Micah boys after her visit this summer:

"I can truthfully say that my life will not be the same after doing ministry with you in Tegucigalpa. It was an experience that I will never forget and I pray I get to repeat many times. To see all the miracles of God living in the Micah house and the Leadership house was a tremendous blessing. Sometimes living in the States, at least for me, I might not look on my salvation as much of a miracle as someone with the testimony that you all have. But not only was I blessed by listening and seeing your testimony, but you were able to remind me that God has done a great big miracle in all of us: transforming us from our selfish flesh to children of God.

"You were all such a blessing! You welcomed us and served us with such vigor that it made me strive to be a better servant. It was so great how you all welcomed us with such love and friendship. You truly worked with us like the Body of Christ should. We all were able to incorporate our gifts with yours to show others the love of Christ. I know that the Lord was smiling on our work there that week!"

It is our prayer that the work that God is doing through the Micah boys will be a true blessing to you as well!

Thank you for keeping them in your prayers!

Your brother in Christ,

Michael Miller

## Fall 2004 Update

Fifteen year old Pedro, one of the Micah boys, describes his childhood in this way: "I stole to eat. I robbed strangers in the neighborhood. I used drugs. I ran with the gang. I fought. I had no contact with my mother because she left for somewhere else. God, life, and the future were nothing to me. I thought somebody was going to kill me. I got sad when I started to think, so I didn't."

We form so many of our ideas about life in our childhood. We learn what is good and what is bad, what is safe and what is dangerous. The lessons we learn in childhood are great influences in how our adult personality will take shape. Can you imagine, then, growing up in an environment such as the one Pedro describes? There were so many sinful and destructive forces in Pedro's young life that it almost seemed pre-ordained that his spirit would be crushed at a young age.

It seemed that the lies lived out in Pedro's life are given a clear explanation by Jesus in the Gospel of John. Jesus says of Satan: "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8: 44). Pedro, as with most of the Micah boys suffered the full fury of these lies from his very birth.

In fact, it seems that Satan had a full repertoire of lies with which to wreak destruction on this young boy. Pedro's mom has been homeless for most of his life. She makes her living as a prostitute, and for many years she sold her body to men on the streets to scrape up enough money to feed her two kids. Before she abandoned him, Pedro and his mom moved from place-to-place, sometimes renting a room in the red-light district and sometimes living on the streets. In that environment, he watched others treat his mom as a piece of meat. Thus, in his early years, "truth" to him meant that life was up for sale, that he and his mom were nothing more than goods to go the highest bidder.

More than that, Pedro's mom slipped into mental illness throughout his childhood. She would tie strange things around the doorframe of their house to ward off evil spirits; some neighbors began taunting her as a witch. Sometimes, after scavenging for food on the street, Pedro would come back to whatever hovel they were living in and his mom would not even recognize him. Sometimes, she would scream vulgarities at him and tell him to leave her and never come back. At the age of six years, Pedro learned another lesson in the Deceiver's "truth": the one person he loved sometimes wished he didn't exist. His wretched truth blended love and hate to the point which they became indistinguishable.

After hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras in 1998, Pedro and his mom moved into a tent village, a temporary shelter for thousands of people who lost their homes in the hurricane. It was there that his mom, in a fit of rage, tried to kill Pedro's baby

sister by setting fire to the tiny cubicle in which this tortured family lived. His sister survived with severe burns, but she was taken away from his mom and placed in an orphanage. Before the same thing could happen to him, Pedro escaped and began a life alone on the streets. Like most street kids, Pedro became addicted to yellow glue, among other drugs. After getting involved in a gang, Pedro was witness to murder and rape. Survival became his new “truth” and the sad fact was that no one cared about his survival but himself. He learned that it was better to escape reality by getting high on yellow glue...since truth was becoming much too painful to bear.

But Pedro’s story does not end with Satan’s destructive lies. Indeed, I tell it so that you’ll know that God’s truth is stronger than even the worst lies that Satan can tell! In fact, in the same chapter of the gospel of John that calls Satan the father of lies, Jesus also says this: “If you hold to my teaching, then you are my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32). Amazingly, God had plans for this sad, lonely boy—plans to make him His disciple!



Upon coming to the Micah Project in 2001, Pedro was an angry boy. Often, he sat on a street in front of the Micah house and just stared out at the passing cars. It’s not surprising that he didn’t trust us so much at the beginning. I’m sure he was asking himself: what do these people want from me? What’s the tradeoff? Surely this is too good to last!

But, praise be to God, Pedro began to open up to God’s truth! For the first time, Pedro began to feel what it was like to be loved without having to give something in return. The other boys in the Micah House took on Pedro as a younger brother and began to teach him that God is bigger than all the horrors of his past life. Truly, just as Jesus said, God’s truth began to set Pedro free.

In the three years that he has been in the Micah house, Pedro has grown from an undernourished little kid into a strapping young man. As he began to go to church and live his life in our Christian household, his heart began to change. He became a leader in the house, always willing to lend a helping hand to someone who needs it. In the various construction projects or home improvement projects that we’ve undertaken, he is always the first to get dirty and sweaty in order to help us finish. Pedro has also begun to visit his five- year-old sister in her orphanage,



passing on to her some of the love that he is learning at the Micah Project. The first few times he visited, his sister cried and tried to get away from him. Now, she runs to him when he shows up and she clings to him, as they share a newfound love that neither of them experienced as children.

Lately, he has begun writing Christian rap music in Spanish. He'll sit for many hours with a notebook, writing truth into it as he begins to learn it. He and another Micah boy, Jose, put his lyrics to music, and love performing their raps! In fact, often, I'll get a call from some church or group that wants them to go and perform! What an amazing transformation: a boy who knew no truth in his childhood now preaches truth to others. Pedro is already becoming a disciple of our Lord!

When I see how far Pedro and the Micah boys have come compared to the bondage of lies that once enslaved them, I continually give thanks to God. Each one of them comes to believe God's truth in his own time; it takes some longer than others to cast off the lies that entrapped them. On the part of those of us who work at the Micah Project, it takes a patient willingness to continually model God's love to them even when they are still thinking "it sounds too good to be true."

If there is one symbol in 2004 that these boys are in the process of turning their backs on Satan's lies, it is that five of our boys are graduating from high school. After so many years of being told that they were not worthy of an education, they are about to achieve an educational level that most Hondurans do not ever obtain. And through this process, the boys have begun to learn that God wants them to be His bearers of truth throughout Honduras.

Because of this desire, all five of our upcoming graduates will go on to college next year. What they study and where they will study is still unknown; we appreciate your prayers for discernment! Our fervent prayer is that, as these young men enter a university environment next year, that they would continue to "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" and that this amazing truth would be the foundation for the rest of their lives. For boys whose foundation was built on lies for so many years, this great hope is truly a miracle and a sign of God's awesome power.

As the Micah Project moves quickly toward our fifth anniversary in January, I want to take a moment to express our deep gratitude to you all. Your prayers and faithful support of our boys have been instrumental in this process in which our boys have moved from lies into God's truth! I'd also like to ask you to prayerfully consider continuing your support of these amazing young men. There are many ways to support them as they continue to grow in faith and maturity. Currently, we need funding for our operational budget and for the scholarship fund for the five boys who are going to college next year. We are also praying that God will raise up people to come serve with us here in Honduras for a period of one to three years. And, as always, we are looking for prayers warriors to commit to pray for these young men!

Pedro, the same boy who suffered in so many ways, now says this about his faith: "God is wonderful, beautiful, and deep for me. I never want to leave God. At times I feel alone and see suffering, but I know God will never leave me and that always he will be with me."

To me, there is no testimony more beautiful than that simple trust that Pedro and the other boys have placed in their Lord! Thank you for being bearers of God's truth to the young men of the Micah Project!

Your brother in Christ,

Michael Miller

## “MANY TASSELS” CHRISTMAS 2004

It was a rather simple gesture. Left to right: dangle and swing. Left to right: dangle and swing. Five times Sister Marta Soto, the founder and director of Maestro en Casa, moved a tassel from one side of a teetering graduation cap to the other on the evening of November 13, 2004. This simple gesture was profoundly moving to all who attended the graduation of five of the Micah young men: Cristino, David, Jarvin, Marvin, and Olvin. Five former street kids have become men of God with their own gifts, challenges, and callings. God in his grace has changed their lives from left to right, death to life, darkness to light just as clearly as Sister Marta had swung tassels across their caps.



The wonderful graduation celebration served as one of the most obvious testaments to God’s transforming power at work in the Micah boys in 2004. But, there were many other significant moments for the Micah Project in the past year as well! The oldest participant in the Micah House, Darwin Pavon, finished his first year at Zamorano, a prestigious university that focuses on Latin American development issues. In February, the Leadership House was inaugurated and the five young men mentioned above settled in. This House is the realization of the dream to provide “yesterday’s street children” with loving training at every step of their development into “tomorrow’s Kingdom builders.” And as some of the older boys moved into the Leadership House, God brought two younger boys, Eric and Jeferson, to be the newest members of the Micah House family.

God’s resurrection power was also obvious through the outreach that he enabled the Micah Project to do in 2004. The boys continued serving others in a variety of contexts- part-time jobs at orphanages, participating in adult education programs

and youth ministry at Villa Linda Miller, caring for children and adults who struggle to survive at the city dump, and much more. In 2004, God also provided a number of natural connections to the boys' families. The Micah Project, for example, had the privilege of helping several of the boys' families solve housing crises, including building a new home for Miguel and Jeferson's family. God is powerfully at work in the boys' hearts, often amidst the opening of old wounds, as they reach out to their families and experience God's healing for everyone.

The above summary of God's work in and through the Micah Project is certainly inadequate. Much of the profound change that God has brought is reflected in day to day life at both the Micah and Leadership Houses. The hugs given to staff members, the service offered to one another at meals, the joy found in learning to play the guitar, and the self-control exhibited amidst a competitive soccer game all testify to the power and goodness of God.

As you reflect on 2004 with the Micah Project, we invite you to worship the God who brings light and life right in the middle of deep darkness. We are very thankful to Him for providing the Micah Project with such a devoted, competent, and loving staff. Furthermore, we are grateful for you, our partners, who give so generously of your resources, prayers, and lives, in hope that many tassels will swing from left to right- and many children move from darkness into God's marvelous light.

(Thanks to Micah Board member Tim Baldwin for this beautiful reflection!)