



MANY TURNINGS

The Micah Project Fall 2019 News

Last week, just before his sixteenth birthday, one of our boys got a call from his mom. This was the third year that he was celebrating his birthday as a Micah boy, and he expected the usual festivities: the rest of the boys would sing *“Happy Birthday”* with off-key joy; then they would surround him with words of encouragement and love before smearing cake icing on his face—in time for the group picture. There’s something beautifully mundane in the chaos of a Micah birthday celebration, something that says, “You’re one of us. You belong here.”

But that phone call from Mom rocked his world. . .

A call from Mom is normal, right? Not to a boy who thought his mom had been murdered seven years ago by a rival gang. Not to a boy who believed since he was nine that his mom had been kidnapped, killed, her body never found. Shortly after her disappearance, this boy became one more “orphan” on the Honduran streets, a victim of the never-ending gang wars. Hearing his mother’s voice on the other end of that phone call was one of the happiest, most confusing, most devastating moments of his short tragic life.

The picture from this young man’s birthday celebration shows a beaming smile that lights up the room, but that smile is thin turf covering a sinkhole of pain. This broken teenager is ill-equipped to do the heart work he has ahead of him; he must re-interpret his life on the streets now knowing that his mom was alive the entire time in a small town three hours away. Moving forward, he must figure out what place his “resurrected” mother will have in his life. This is no small task for a kid whose pain is as exposed as the tattoo on his shirtless shoulder—a tattoo, by the way, of his mom’s name, which he got after she “died.” He has reached a turning point in his life, and he doesn’t know which way to turn.



Celebration and sorrow come in equal measures at the Micah Project, usually on the same day, often at the same moment. . .



THE LOVE OF OUR CAREGIVERS:

[Left] Caregiver and Micah graduate Brayan laughs with Axelito.

[Right] Caregiver and Micah graduate Hector hugs Pedro.



During this young man's birthday celebration, one of our Honduran caregivers spoke directly to him.

“My friend and brother, I remember that you left Micah ten or twelve times your first year, but today, all of us celebrate that you turned away from street life and toward the hope that Micah offers. Your two years at Micah have been ones of slow, but undeniable growth. I am so proud of you. . .” The staff member broke into tears, unable to continue. That's how much we love this teenager!

What comes next for this young man? Our team of caregivers will help him try to navigate this painful, but also hopeful, turning point in his life. Our first response will be to point him once more to Jesus, a man of sorrows, so acquainted with grief, says the prophet Isaiah, that He is the only one who can truly carry our brokenness. Will this young man accept the healing that only Jesus can offer? It is much too early to know. He has to learn to forgive, to release a childhood full of violence, of neglect, of abandonment. He will have to forgive his mom for “dying” and coming back to life seven years later, a confusing resurrection for a kid who never knew how to tell her good-bye. This kind of forgiveness does not come through a single prayer hastily spoken; it is a re-weaving of the heart, stitch-by-stitch, a lifetime undertaking, even with the Master Weaver at the loom.

One of our grads, Juan Carlos, knows how painful this healing process can be. In 2005, at age thirteen, he landed on Micah's doorstep with baggage that was a mix of rejection and compounded loss. He started off well at Micah, until one evening he heard that his mom, an alcoholic who lived on the streets, had been murdered. Unlike the other young man, however, Juan Carlos had a casket, a sad funeral, and a burial to prove that the most horrible thing that ever happened to him was a brutal, permanent reality.

After his mother died, Juan Carlos began a long, slow burn. He somehow managed to graduate from high school, but shortly thereafter he packed up and left the Micah Project. He began to work but spent the next couple of years feeling increasingly lost and empty, and like so many vulnerable youth in our poverty-stricken city, Juan Carlos fell under the control of drug gangs. But in 2016, we received a frantic late-night phone call. He was desperate—gang members were after him! A couple of our staff members drove to the dangerous part of the city where Juan Carlos rented a seedy room, picked him up, and took him back to Micah. His life was in shambles. Though Juan Carlos had given his life to Christ many years before, he desperately needed a new turning point.

Fast forward: Three days ago Juan Carlos phoned me from Chile, where he is in the middle of a missionary outreach, to tell me that he feels called to be a pastor and wants to begin seminary studies next year. For the past two years, he has served as a full-time missionary on a “Youth with a Mission” [YWAM] base in Chile. There, he trains young Christians, especially ones from broken backgrounds, to follow Christ wherever He leads.



[Left] Juan Carlos prays with friends from YWAM in Chile.

[Right] Juan Carlos smiles with his wife.



This future pastor is the same Juan Carlos who almost lost his life at the hands of criminals in 2016, the same Juan Carlos who turned away from the hope we offered him during his years at Micah. What major turning point happened in Juan Carlos's life that, three years later, he feels called to be a pastor?

I'll let him tell you in his own words:

“The Lord has changed my heart in many ways: He has healed many wounds I had from my past, and I have been able to transmit this healing to others. Here in Chile, I now work in YWAM's counseling school. People come to my school from all over the world, and we are able to minister to them. I am now married to an amazing Bolivian woman, Roxana, a woman who follows God, whose heart is in mission, and she too is teaching me to serve God with all of my heart. She is always reminding me of how faithful God is. God has given me back a sense of family, a sense of faithfulness, of love. If I had to put these past few years into one word, it would be grace.”



Theologian Scott Sunquist says that the Christian life is one of many turnings, and at each turning, we discover something new about ourselves and about the One who saved us. Although we turn away from sin and death when we first come to know the Lord, we need new turnings throughout life as we battle the dark world around us and slowly grow into His image. At the Micah Project, because of the depth of evil to which our boys have been exposed, we know that some of them will turn their backs on all we offer, away from the abundant love of their Father. But this is what I love about Micah: Whenever one of our lost ones turns to us again, he sees us standing there, arms wide open, ready to help him continue his journey. Micah never loses hope in a new turning.

Whether you have been a part of the Micah story for many years or are just learning about our ministry in Honduras, through our boys' stories you have witnessed a God who never leaves or forsakes us. Many of you have prayed for Juan Carlos for years (my own mom, Linda Miller, has prayed daily for him). Now, we see the fruits of those prayers. Could it be that God has used your prayers in many turning points to bring Juan Carlos to the place in which he now finds himself—called to be a pastor? Through you, God has revealed his faithfulness.

As we move into 2020, as the Micah Project prepares to celebrate its twentieth anniversary, we remain committed to be human reflections of God's unshakeable love toward our boys and to wait eagerly for them through their many turnings before they finally accept love into their lives. Your prayers, love and generosity are also physical signs of God's faithfulness to each one of them through their twists and turns.

As you come alongside our ministry at the Micah Project, we thank you for being a source of hope in Him along the way.

Su Hermano en Cristo,
Michael Miller

Micah Project Updates . . .

- First, we are so grateful to be able to say that we reached our "Double Your Donation" goal by September 30th. Thank you again to all who gave generously in order to make that happen!
- The Micah Project turns 20 in 2020 and we are looking forward to a year of remembering together all that God has done! We are planning an anniversary reunion and celebration mid-November 2020 in Tegucigalpa in conjunction with our annual graduation weekend. Even though it is a year away, we wanted to give you time to put it on your calendars so that you can come to Honduras to celebrate with us!
- Please be praying for the young men who have grown up at the Micah House; we rejoice as they have new opportunities to learn and to serve! Just recently, Miguel began studying at a culinary school in El Salvador, Axel started an urban ministries discipleship course in Spain, and Hector joined the full-time staff at the Micah House!
- Please send us an email at micahprojectbells@gmail.com if you'd ever like to host a dinner or "Party with a Purpose" in your home and involve the Micah Project. We'd love to support you as you invite new friends into the Micah Family!

Keep Up with us Online . . .

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