

Walk Humbly

the journey from street kid to Micah boy to Godly man



Chapter

I

The Streets: *Life Suspended*

We begin to listen to their stories, even if, in their mistrust, they reveal them slowly over the course of weeks or months. There are as many stories as there are kids: Pablo is fleeing from violence and addiction in his broken home, where he was definitely NOT wanted by his stepdad.



Incarnational ministry means weeping with the lost, holding dirty hands and wiping tears from grimy faces.

Jorge lost his parents when they were killed by gang members for not paying an extortion levied on his dad so that he could continue to drive his taxi through gang-controlled

neighborhoods. Carlos is a second-generation streets kid; his mom was living on the streets as a teenager and became pregnant while selling her body in exchange for food. She was later killed in a gang shootout in which she was an innocent bystander, leaving Carlos to be "raised" by his drug-dealing grandfather, until he was old enough to hit the streets himself at the age of eight.

It all begins on the streets.

We approach a group of eight boys huddled on a sidewalk that is partially protected from the elements by the building that overhangs it. We know most of this group because they banded together months ago for protection. We can't let the dirt or the smell of the noxious fumes of yellow shoe glue that they are inhaling out of an old soda bottle stop us from putting our arms around them and telling them that we see through all of the street grime to the child beneath. How do we show these boys that we truly love them? We have to first sit with them in the plazas and alleyways of Tegucigalpa; to share a meal with them as passers-by glance at us cautiously and wonder why we are wasting our time with these burnout kids.





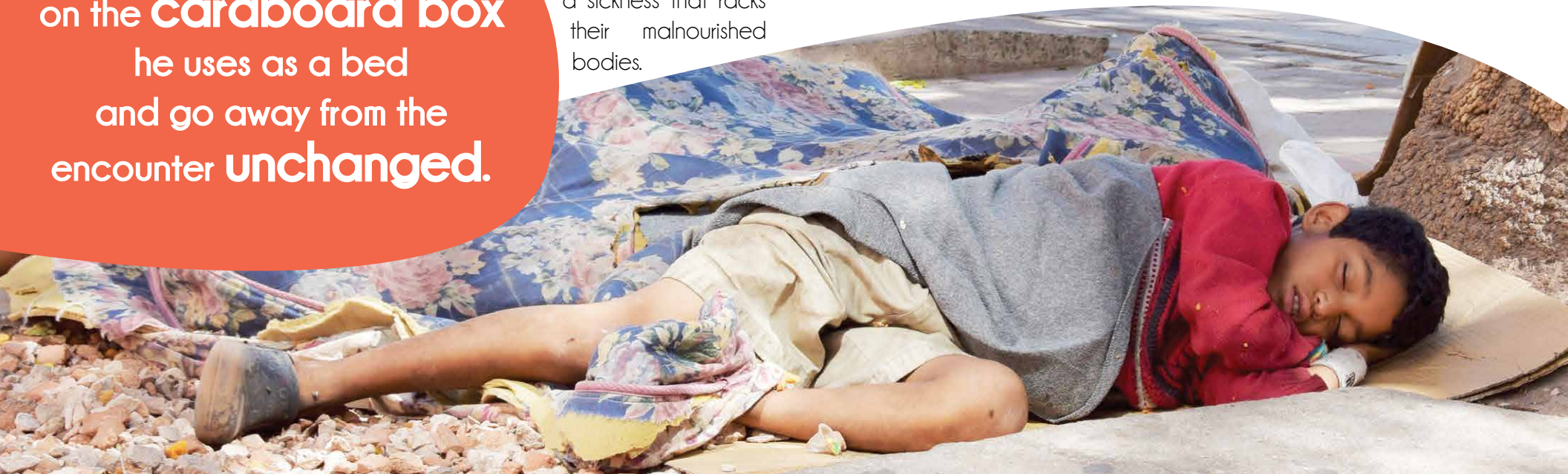
Because they live in fight-or-flight mode, we can't do a hard-sell on this group of boys to convince them to join the Micah Project. After they get used to seeing us, our street ministry team will invite them to play soccer for an hour or two on a rented court a few blocks from their corner. A couple of weeks later, we may invite a few of them to come out to the Micah House for lunch, followed by a swim in the local pool down the road from our property. A Micah grad named Hector Licona, who is a member of our street team, will sometimes take them to the clinic that we support next door to the property, to cure a wound received on the street or to get medicine for a sickness that racks their malnourished bodies.



In order to survive, street kids have to be a quick judge of character. When they come out to visit the Micah House, they are sizing us up, to see if we are as loving as we say we are. They spend some time with the other Micah boys and our staff greets them warmly. As the afternoon winds down, we notice that the boys often begin to get anxious—several hours away from the yellow glue, and their bodies begin to cry out for those toxic fumes that help them retreat from the reality of their lives

But over time, we will begin to push a little harder. We will ask them to consider leaving the street behind and joining the Micah family. More often than not, they say no—for weeks, months, and even years on end. But eventually, we break through those walls that they have built for themselves, and they will make the decision to stay for a night at Micah. Then, prayerfully, that night turns into two nights, then a week, then a month... until it finally becomes their home.

You can't sit with a homeless kid on the cardboard box he uses as a bed and go away from the encounter unchanged.



Chapter

2

The Micah House: *Finding Family*



Daily life at the Micah House is DYNAMIC!

Street kids are used to being on the move, which means their new life at Micah can't be too sedentary either. Stand in the middle of our property and do a 360 to take in all the sights:



- » a raucous soccer game on the field, which includes dozens of friends from the neighboring community
- » four guys in the gazebo working together on their algebra homework
- » two guys lifting weights in the makeshift gym just off to the left of the main house
- » a staff member having a heart-to-heart with one of the boys while walking the path on the perimeter of our seven-acre property,
- » a couple of guys picking cucumbers and squash from the garden for dinner,
- » the buzz of power tools emanating in a cloud of sawdust in our tech school,
- » another group of boys headed to the upper terrace for a Bible study and time of discipleship
- » our two vans zipping in and out of the front gate to take the boys to different activities off site, whether it be field trips, a service project or soccer practice and swim lessons at the public athletic facility downtown.



For the first thirteen years of the Micah Project, the Micah House was in downtown Tegucigalpa. When we moved to seven acres of lush, rolling fields about six miles outside Tegucigalpa in 2013, a property that we call Micah 2.0, we were able to offer a lot more opportunities to the boys that live in the Micah House! The swirl of life all around you here at Micah is different from the chaos of life on the streets in one major way: on the streets, the boys were stuck in dead-end neutral, never able to change their circumstances, and their activities were focused on survival. At Micah, each of these daily activities is designed with a specific purpose in mind—to train the boys to become leaders in their families, communities and in their own country. In fact, the vision of Micah 2.0 is:

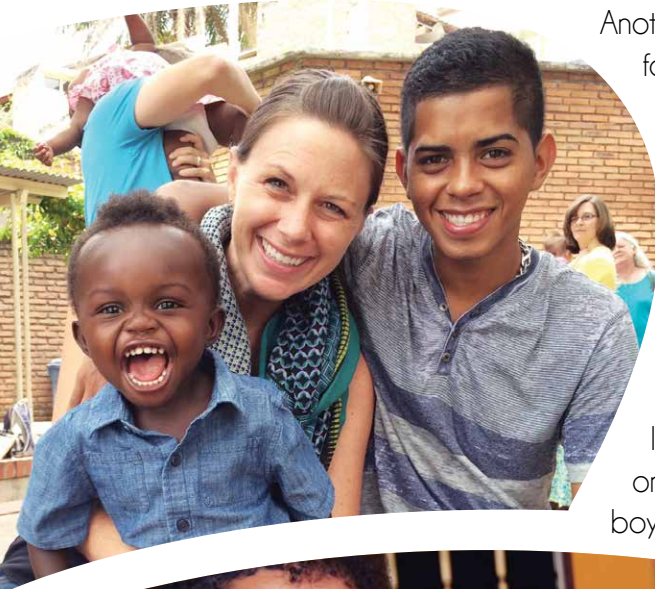
...to be a simple yet beautiful place, with both indoor and outdoor spaces that are intentionally designed to be a platform on which everyone that enters through its gates will experience God's love in a fresh and profound way, and will be transformed by that love to such an extent that they are motivated to "act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:8)."



The young men that live at Micah are at all stages, from 18-year-olds that have lived at Micah for many years, to a 13-year-old, who came off the streets in December and is just learning to read and write for the first time, and is very much dealing with anxiety as his body fights to get rid of the desire to use yellow glue.

A 13-year-old can't begin his schooling in a normal kindergarten, which is why we have a home-schooling program on site. Thankfully, the government-approved curriculum we use allows us to do two years in one at the elementary level so that the boys can begin to get caught up. Our missionary staff pitches in to teach Bible and English to create a well-rounded educational experience for our boys. The educational program also includes a fully functioning technical school, where the guys receive training in welding, carpentry and electricity.

Despite a rich array of activities that keep the boys moving from the time they get up to the time they fall into bed at the end of the day, the most basic goal of the Micah House begins and ends with the concept of family. Our care-giving staff is a mixture of Hondurans and international missionaries who care deeply about these boys, and understand that the Lord has called us to raise them in a way that reflects his character. The healing that takes place at Micah happens through these relationships, and the one-on-one time we have with the boys is the most important aspect of our daily lives.



Another important part of being family for the boys is helping to restore their relationships with their own families whenever it is possible. Not all of the boys have mom or dad in their lives, but our social worker Wendy Varela works hard to invite aunts, uncles, grandparents, or older siblings out to the house at least once a month in order to help the boys interact with their families in a healthy way.



The years that the boys spend at the Micah House are all about healing, transformation and preparation—to begin to form them into men of purpose and vision. But in reality, their time in the Micah House is only their first step toward achieving their dreams. There are more steps in the process, and the Micah Project is determined to keep walking with them until they can stand on their own two feet.

Chapter

3

The Timothy House: Men on a Mission



This past year, Hector was the oldest resident of the Micah House. His mom died in a car accident when he was a young boy, and his dad, who lost his leg in the accident, was forced to sell bottles of water out of a wheelbarrow on a street corner in order to survive. Hector followed his older brother to the streets, huffing yellow glue for three years until joining Micah in 2008 at age twelve. His brother was eventually killed by the gangs while still on the streets. Tragically, his dad passed away of a heart attack in 2012, and his step-mom died in 2014, leaving him with no family except for the Micah Project.

That is exactly the reason why we opened the Timothy House in 2004. It is a place where our young men like Hector can transition out of the Micah House to a home in which they have increasing independence as they take responsibility for their own lives, but do so in an environment of mentorship and mutual support. The young men currently living in the Timothy House, are either in college with majors such as pre-med, English, international business, and finance, or are learning trades such as welding and electrical work.



Since our founding in 2000, the Micah Project has had **twenty-eight** young men **graduate** from high school and **twelve** graduate from college. Others have received certificates in graphic design, furniture-making, international missions and culinary arts, to name a few.

In spite of the multiple tragedies of his childhood, Hector has a gentle heart and a desire to serve the Lord. After high school, he hopes to continue his education to become a soccer coach so that he can minister to impoverished kids. He has a clear calling on his life, but he will not graduate from high school until he turns twenty-one.



Hector on the streets in 2007

Jeremy Tolleson has been a mentor and faithful guide to the young men of the Timothy House since 2010, when he moved to Honduras to help us run it. When they reach the point of looking for full-time jobs, he helps them in the job search: no easy task in a country with huge numbers of unemployment and underemployment. Jeremy is fiercely loyal to the guys at the Timothy House and has a huge impact on their lives as they make the transition to independent life.



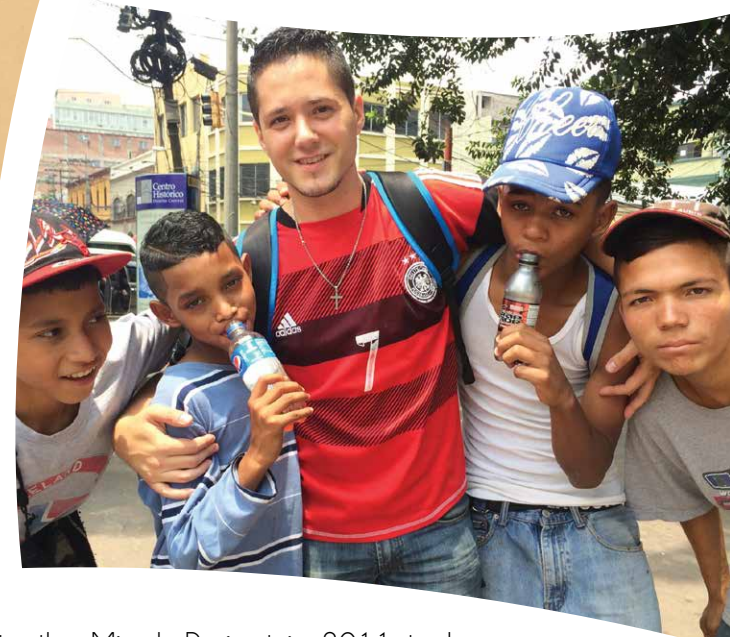
Hector will have lived at the Micah House for nine years by the time he transitions to the Timothy House. He will not have to make his way into adulthood alone; he will be surrounded by his Micah family who will continue to spur him on towards love and good deeds.

The theme verse for the Timothy House explains what we desire for these young men as they take the final steps toward adulthood: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but **set an example** for the believers in speech, in conduct, **in love, in faith and in purity.**” (1 Timothy 4:12)

Chapter 4

The Isaiah House: *Never too late*

The story of the Micah boys that we have told up to this point really works best if we can rescue the boys off the streets before the age of sixteen. That way, we have a few years to get them caught up in their education before they become adults. But the harsh reality in Honduras is that there are hundreds of young men over the age of eighteen who are living—and too often dying—on the streets.



Stephen Kusmer came to the Micah Project in 2011 to become our missionary to the streets, and he began to get to know the stories of this older street kid population. He realized that many of them have been on the streets since they were little boys but simply never had the opportunities to leave them permanently. Though you would think that a young man who has been on the streets for over ten years would be hardened to the point of giving up completely, Stephen still saw hope in many of these lives.

Out of those relationships, Stephen spearheaded our newest program: the Isaiah House. This house, which was inaugurated in August of 2015, accepts up to twelve of these older streets boys and provides a program of intense drug rehabilitation, discipleship, job training and transition to independent living.



Rather than writing ourselves about the impact of the Isaiah House on these lives, listen to the testimony of Selvin, who had lived on the streets for seven years before joining the Isaiah House in 2015:



“I give thanks to the Lord because now I can say to all of the people who believed when I was in the streets that I would never be able to change, that with God, all things are possible. I can tell them that they were wrong to judge me, because God has made me into a new creation. Now, I give thanks to Him every day when I open my eyes in the morning. I believe that He is alive, and I trust in Him with all my heart. Now, I have a family: this group of brothers to support me, a father [in Stephen], which I have never had before. When I was on the streets, I felt anger and hatred towards people, but now I have joy in my heart because God has given me this new family.”

Why Isaiah?

We believe that no human being is beyond the transformational reach of our Heavenly Father. We love how the prophet Isaiah describes salvation in these lives that had fallen to such depths:

**“See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.”
(Isaiah 43:19)**



Selvin has been in a trade school to become a barber. In order to give back, and to show his gratitude, he goes downtown a couple of times each month to cut the hair of the boys that still live on the streets. As with the boys in the Micah House and the young men in the Timothy House, Selvin is an example that it absolutely is possible for the Lord to transform these street kids into young men who “act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with their God” (Micah 6:8).

Chapter

5

The End: *Just the Beginning!*

Lately, there has been a new phenomenon at the Micah House: our grads and their wives bringing their babies to let us hold them!!! After sixteen years of ministry, we have the great honor of seeing the fruit of our labors and the never-ending faithfulness of the Lord writ large on so many different lives. We see it in the lives of Olvin, his wife Cesia and their baby boy Mateo, who was born while they were serving in Egypt for a year.



We see it in the lives of our grads who have chosen to make ministry to impoverished children their own life-calling, whether it be Jarvin, who is a caregiver for children's home outside the city, or David, Danilo and Hector Licon, who work for the Micah Project itself. We see it in Edwin, who is a math teacher at a Christian school, and Oscar, who is a guidance counselor for a different Christian school here in the city.



We see it in Pedro, Maricela and their son Dylan. Though he is a hard-working civil engineer who puts in long hours building roads and other infrastructure for the city of Tegucigalpa, he always has time to come back to Micah to encourage our younger boys. Listen to how Pedro describes the way Micah transformed his life:

"If I had not become a part of the Micah House, I would be dead. I didn't believe in God because I had so many bad things happen when I was a kid. My dad kicked me and hated me. My mom abandoned us. I didn't believe in God because I had so much hate in my heart. But when I started in the Micah House and Michael started to talk about life, talking about the Bible, about Jesus, and I made the decision to change my character. Before Micah, I only had drugs, and the streets."

Pedro's son Dylan has something that Pedro himself never had: a loving dad who will raise him in the way he should go and point him to his Heavenly Father. That is something we treasure every single day: it gives us the strength to continue to bring kids off the streets and fight for their lives and their future.



We know that not every boy that enters the project will stay the course, but we will pour as much love and hope into them as we can while they are under our care and will continue to believe with all of our hearts that God will transform them.

Chapter



What's Your Part in This Story?

When you invest your time, talents and resources in the Micah Project, you become a part of the success stories of each of these lives. You will see for yourself how a boy is rescued from the streets, begins the long journey of healing, and becomes a man of purpose and vision. You will be blessed to see how the Lord uses YOU as a part of this miraculous transformation!



Here are some ways that you can get involved:

Give

The large majority of our yearly budget is covered by individuals like you. Please consider investing in the Micah Project through a monthly donation or with a one-time gift.

We believe that change only comes in these boys' lives through the power of prayer. Let us know if there is a certain boy or boys that you want to pray for, and we will send you updates about their lives.

Pray

As the Micah Project grows, we need the Micah family to grow as well! Share our story with your friends (more copies of this booklet are available on request!)

Advocate

If you feel called to one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of your life, please contact us about serving in Honduras with the Micah Project! We need teachers, counselors, administrative personnel and strong Christian men and women who are willing to be mentors for our young men. At the same time, we need volunteers in the United States, whether it is helping to plan an event for the Micah Project or helping our U.S. office with administrative tasks. Please contact us at micahproject@hotmail.com if you are willing to lend a helping hand!

Serve

www.micahprojecthonduras.org

facebook.com/micahprojecthonduras

