

God Meant it for Good

Summer 2009

When you grow up in a dilapidated wooden shack clinging to a hillside in one of Tegucigalpa's worst barrios, your life's plan tends to be reduced to the most elemental of choices. Whose turn is it to climb down the mountain with a bucket to bring water up to the shack? Who gets to sleep on the one bed the family owns and who gets to huddle together on the dirt floor? How do you divide five tortillas and two eggs among six family members?

Telma spent her life making these daily choices. After having an alcoholic first husband abandon her with two kids and a second husband leave her with two more after passing away from a long illness, this diminutive woman knows what it means to suffer.

Telma's two oldest boys did what so many do when confronted by the hopelessness of abuse, hunger and poverty: they fled their home to the streets. Finding succor in the soul-dulling fumes of yellow glue, the two boys, Carlos and David, slowly left the world of their family behind them as they were absorbed into the underworld of the streets.

Can you see the little boy in the picture on the right clinging to a bag of yellow glue? That's David at the age of nine, shortly after he left his home for the streets. If you look deeply into his eyes, you'll see the trauma of a life lived on the very brink of destruction. His eyes seem to be saying: can't you see that I'm still just a little boy? I'm not old enough to survive by myself on the streets of Tegucigalpa! Am I really doomed to this misfortune?

But wait: is the miserable little boy in the picture on the right really the same person as the young man surrounded by his Sunday school students in the 2009 photo below? It seems too impossible to be true: no longer is he a

street kid...

urchin...

glue user...

slumdog...

No, the words to describe him now are college student, Sunday school teacher, servant-leader, child of God.



David's transformation is a miracle: not a "get up off your mat and walk" kind of instantaneous change, but rather a "put one foot in front of the other and begin to walk towards healing and grace" kind of miracle. In the beginning, when David joined the Micah Project in 2000, that process seemed to be moving a little too slowly. The

first couple of years, he was painfully shy, unwilling to trust the people around him with too much of himself. It was as if the trauma of street life created a cocoon around his heart that was just too thick to break.

But slowly, almost imperceptibly, he did begin to break through the thick walls. The shyness was transformed into a gentle and empathetic spirit, the quietness into a listening heart. In his high school

years, he began to reach out to others, and he hasn't stopped since. It was no surprise when he graduated that he announced that he wanted to study psychology in Costa Rica. When I asked him last week why he chose psychology as his major, he replied: *"First of all, I love people. I worry about them and feel something special for them. I want to help people with their behavior and conduct... after college I also want to study counseling so that I can help in that way. More than anything, I want to use psychology with my beliefs, with what I have learned in my own Christian walk. I pray that God would bless these goals!"*

When I think of David's life, I remember the biblical character Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery out of jealousy. When he became a leader in Egypt and his brothers came to him in search of food, he said to them, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50). In David's case, the evil in this sinful world meant to destroy him, but God used those circumstances to give him a desire to help others who also walk on the brink. When David says that he wants to help people, it is because he has an intimate knowledge of helplessness.

The awesome thing about the Micah Project is that, just as it was in Joseph's story, God is using David's circumstances to bless his family as well. In 2005, our mission's teams were able to build a house for his mom in our Villa Linda Miller community, a huge improvement over her shack in the slums. In 2008, David's 13 year-old half brother Pedro Luis joined the Micah Project and now begins the same journey that David started ten years ago. In 2009, David's mother Telma (pictured at right) and his little sister Cindy began coming to the Micah House twice a week to participate in our new ministry to our boys' moms. We have hired a sewing instructor so that one day, they and the other moms can start a tailoring microenterprise out of their homes.



And, thanks to your faithful support and prayers, we are confident that this family and so many others will continue to be blessed as the Micah Project begins our second decade of ministry next year. When our new missionaries Brian and Natasha Wiggs come at the end of this year to help us open a technical school to teach auto mechanics and carpentry, we hope that David's older brother Carlos will be one of the first students!

In a year of great economic uncertainty, we know that it is a sacrifice for many of you to keep supporting our ministry to families such as David's. We pray that the recent victories that we have been able to celebrate, such as Marvin and Tino's April graduation from Missouri Baptist University, will convince you that your support is not in vain. Our dedicated and faithful missionary staff is committed to using every dime that comes in for God's glory and for the transformation of His people here in Honduras.

We pray that each of these transformed lives would be a blessing and an encouragement to you as, indeed, God continues to transform these once-broken lives for His good purposes.

Muchas gracias,
Michael Miller