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CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
MESOAMERICA

THE PARADOX
of being slaved for love

**GLOBAL
EVANGELISM**
*in the Mesoamerica
Region*

THE CALL
*to freedom
in grace*

FREEDOM
*A childhood
with hope*

FREE YOUTH
to be like Jesus

PROFILES
Dr. Luis Ramon Flores

No. 10 Edition
Year 02
July 2023

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AM I FREE?

NEWS
*Bousiko Station
Shearing with people
in hospitals*

EDI- TORIAL



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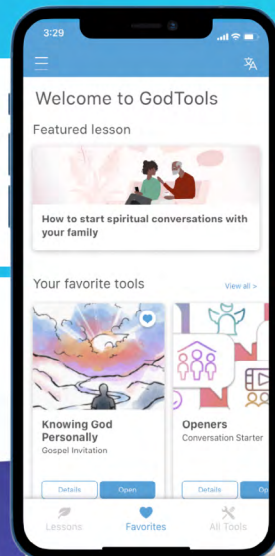


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DR. LUIS RAMÓN FLORES

Churches Multiplication Network Coordinator

Date of birth: September 22, 1965

Family: Married to Beraliz de Flores, two children, Jonathan Flores and Benjamín Flores.

Our brother is a pastor, conference speaker, theology professor, workshop facilitator, and currently serves as the Coordinator of the Multiplication Network and MIES (Philippi) programs.

His experience in church resource management, planning, missions, theological education, youth ministry, evangelism, and discipleship makes him a valuable voice to support the regional Evangelism office in those areas.

He has been serving the Church of the Nazarene for 36 years, and in his own

words, "The fact that I have been chosen by God since he was part of the youth group (NYI) to serve Him until today, accompanied by the academic training provided by the church, has allowed me to joyfully contribute to the formation and mentoring of leadership for the new generations."

As part of our team, Dr. Luis Flores does not keep to himself what God has given him, and he encourages brothers and sisters to participate in a spiritual change that transforms our church culture. You can contact him on Social Media or email him to luis_naza@hotmail.com.

"I invite our brothers and sisters from all over the Mesoamerica Region to awaken the giants of evangelism and mentoring by being intentional, more aware, and committed to activate the DNA of evangelism to reach new people. Let's guide and accompany the new generations through mentoring, so that we all can become part of this militant church and enjoy a beautiful future for the church."



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CHRIST SET US FREE



BY DR. MILTON GAY VALENCIA



It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

The strength and intensity with which Paul speaks to the Galatians in the header reminds me of the movie *Braveheart* (1997), where the Scottish William Wallace, in the Thirteenth century, asks his soldiers to fight for freedom and defend it with their own lives. They respond to the request by shouting and fighting against the Englishmen, doing it for their lives, families, and their nation.

Pablo shouts at them like their captain to the Galatians, "Don't give up on your freedom in Christ! Don't let the law subject you again!" The emphatic way in which the apostle writes to them was to highlight those phrases like a huge banner that would draw attention with the legend of **FREEDOM IN CHRIST**, which the Galatians had to defend because they were about to lose it.

Paul wanted to warn the church in Galatia about two dangers: legalism - those who sought to earn God's favor through their

behavior and observance of the law, and the tendency to abuse the freedom that Jesus has given us, falling into licentiousness. Both dangers are opposed to freedom because they keep those who practice either one or the other in bondage. However, Paul appeals to them to stand firm in the freedom in Christ Jesus.

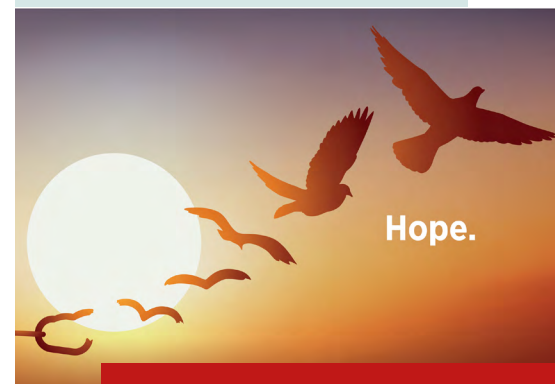
FREEDOM!

What does Paul mean by freedom? It is not political, economic, or social freedom, nor it is about living however one pleases or as is being attempted today. Rather, it is a freedom that is grounded in our relationship with Jesus Christ. It refers to freedom from the bondage and condemnation of a law-centered Christianity. However, this freedom also includes being free from sin, eternal death, and Satan.

Only through Jesus we can be free from the bondage of sin, the flesh, wickedness, and the law.

Do you know what Christ has delivered you from?

- From legalism and the law, according to Romans 6:14
- We are set free from sin, according to Romans 6:18-8:1
- From the elements of this world, according to Galatians 4:3
- From eternal death, according to Hebrews 2:14-15



Hope.

John 8:32 tells us that we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free. In the New Testament, we find the word "doulos" used 184 times, which means slave. However, it refers to a type of person who willingly decides to submit or live for another. While the word "slave" in ancient times signified misery, degradation, and inequality, in Christ, the slave does not experience those things but rather experiences joy and peace, which are the result of being a slave of Christ, that is, a "doulos."

Paradoxically, when we choose to be slaves of Jesus, we experience that freedom we long for.

The Christian who lives in freedom is the one who has peace, who does not live in fear or shame, and is not enslaved to anything or anyone. They do not live burdened with trying to do things to prove they are children of God; rather, they do what they do because they are a child of God.

To be free is to let Christ reign in our hearts and no longer live for ourselves, for Christ lives within us. Sin no longer reigns in us since we have crucified the old self with Jesus, as Paul explains in Romans 6:6.

**FREEDOM IS TO
LIVE IN TRUTH,
IN LIGHT, AND IN THE
HOLINESS OF GOD**



I invite you to take some time, reflect and respond to these questions honestly.

Are you truly free? Or are you enslaved to something or someone? Would you like to be free and live for Christ?

What is preventing you from living in the freedom that Christ gives?

When we rebel against the Lord, we experience slavery again. The price of our freedom was so high that we couldn't pay it; we were incapable of saving ourselves. But Jesus came and did for us what we couldn't do, and now we are free to serve Him.

Be a "doulos" and live in freedom. Protect it with your life, as the apostle Paul encourages us to do!

Praise be to God for the life of His Son, Jesus Christ, who sets us free!

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RECOMMENDED MATERIALS FOR YOU

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Technological equipment that shares wi-fi signal with exclusive evangelism resources and more. Today, mobile phone use is indispensable, which allows anyone who wants

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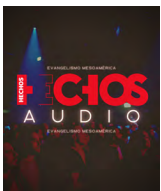
→ THE FOUR



It is a practical and straightforward evangelism resource used in many countries to share the message of salvation found in

the Bible. It displays four symbols, each representing a message that, once understood, leads to a decision about one's future and relationship with God. You can find this resource through the GodTool app or purchase booklets with the message at the Regional Evangelism offices.

→ Hechos Audio



We believe that spreading the message of salvation through short, clear, and easily shareable audio files via cell phone messages is a great

opportunity today. If you want to take advantage of it, Hechos Audio is the perfect resource. You can download it from our website or ask your friends who are already using it.



AM I FREE?



BY VANESSA MALDONADO

A few years ago, I was talking with a friend about the new upcoming year. We would laugh about how people feel like starting a new year is like starting from zero, as if all problems, debts, angers, and everything else disappear on January first. And although many see it as a new way to set a new goal, the truth is that it is essential for us to do things on our own to truly feel like we are starting from zero.

When we come before Christ and repent for our sins, we are always told that everything will be left in the past. In fact, 2nd Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) mentions this when it says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" And that is the truth! Once we are forgiven, we become new creatures and we begin that walk with God but without the worrisome of falling into controversies. In many instances, there are actions we must take, in the case of the one being forgiven, to leave things behind. I will give you an example.

In the story of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of Jericho, who, out of curiosity and a desire to meet Jesus, climbed a sycamore tree to see him, since he was too short to see over the crowd. But to his surprise, when Jesus passed by, He looked up and addressed this curious man by his own name, and even told him that He would go to his house. I can't imagine the excitement Zacchaeus felt seeing all of this unfold. He had the Rabbi in his home, in the home of someone who, although it's not explicitly mentioned that he stole from people, it was known that tax collectors had that reputation. Zacchaeus confirmed this with the following statement, which gives us the perfect example of what it means to leave the past behind: "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8 NIV).

The most interesting part of this story is that Jesus didn't ask him to do it, but there is a great truth in it: when we draw near to the light, everything within us that is darkness, that is evil, it is exposed and must be eliminated. This is precisely what happened to Zacchaeus. By spending time with Jesus, listening to Him speak, and surely receiving some teachings while he was in his house, Zacchaeus had an experience that compelled his heart to not hold onto wickedness and sin. This transformation occurred in the presence of the Son of God, and he confessed not only with words but also with actions to make amends for the harm his wrongdoing had caused in the past.

That is precisely the point of this theme. Once we are forgiven by God, our hearts are pure, as clean as snow. However, there are consequences that result from the sins we have committed, consequences that may have affected us or others. If we truly want to leave the past behind, it is necessary to make amends.

On many occasions, this can mean that we need to seek forgiveness or forgive others. Sin often breaks relationships. There is no way to live in sin and have good, genuine, and close relationships with people because the enemy comes to destroy, and he does so by targeting what is important to us, such as our family and friends. Therefore, once we come to Christ, it is likely that many of those relationships will need genuine restoration. We need to repair them in order to leave the past behind and truly be free.

There is a text that says: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in

front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24 NIV.

It caught my attention because it doesn't say "if you have done something to your brother or sister" but rather "if they have something against you." When we offend someone, we often feel a sense of remorse that leads us to eventually seek forgiveness. However, when we are the ones who have been offended, the thought arises that it should be the other person who comes to us, not the other way around. But this text changes completely our perspective by saying, "First, go and be reconciled." It is a challenging act because we expect an apology, but the Lord is asking us to take a step further, to be different from others and say, "If they don't come, I will go because I want to bring peace on my part."

Undoubtedly, Jesus sets a high standard for us to measure ourselves by, but that's how life with the Lord is. He always wants us to become better every day, to acquire values that others may not have, and for our lives to be clean and free from causing gossip or strife among others.

So, when we think about leaving the past behind completely and being free, let's consider this: let's reflect that in our relationships with others. Do we need to apologize to someone? Or perhaps we have a feud with another person, and we don't even know why they stopped talking to us or how the problem started. We feel offended. Well, God encourages us to be different and to take the first step in everything. He wants us to forgive others as He has forgiven us, so that we can truly be free.



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TRULY BE FREE.**

Leaving the past behind means relieving ourselves of the burdens that weigh us down and make our journey more difficult. Personal relationships are undoubtedly baggage we carry with us everywhere. The best way to carry that baggage is with a light load that helps us move forward, as opposed to dragging heavily that which prevents us from taking a peaceful step forward.

Let's be different, let's be truly free!

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THE WORLD OF SPORT AND PLAY**



ReadySetGO

THE PARADOX OF BEING SLAVED FOR LOVE



BY MAGDIEL MARTINEZ



► The society in which we live overvalues freedom, that freedom that is placed even above life itself. A sector of society seeks the freedom to decide about their bodies, without considering the distinct life that resides within that body. Others strive for the freedom from incapacitating pain, advocating for voluntary termination of their own lives under the supervision of medical personnel. Some appeal to the freedom to love whoever they want and as many as they want. But to what extent is this freedom really freedom? And to what extent is this so-called freedom actually bondage? The apostle Paul, in his letters, speaks about this paradox: the paradox of being entrapped while thinking we are free, or of choosing to surrender ourselves in order to truly be liberated.

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, a paradox is, first, a fact or expression that is seemingly contrary to logic; and second, expressions or phrases that contain an apparent contradiction within

themselves. We speak of those who are free to be entrapped, and conversely, those who are entrapped in order to experience true freedom. But what is freedom and what is bondage?

Let us turn to the RAE (Royal Spanish Academy). It defines freedom, firstly, as the natural faculty that humans have to act in one way or another, and not to act, thus being responsible for their actions. Secondly, it defines freedom as the state or condition of not being a slave. And thirdly, as the state of not being imprisoned. On the other hand, it defines slavery as, firstly, the state of being a slave. Secondly, it defines slavery as the rigorous and strong subjection to the passions and affections of the soul. And thirdly, it defines slavery as the excessive subjection by which a person is subjected to another person, or to work or obligation.

Allow me to give an example of a paradox. Some years ago, I met a man who told me, "I can stop

drinking whenever I want because I am free to drink or not drink alcohol if I wish." The overwhelming reality, however, was that like many people around us, he was truly enslaved to addiction. It seemed that any reason was a good reason to end the day intoxicated. As an Oaxacan expression goes, "For every problem, there's a mezcal (oaxacan liquor), and for every celebration, too." One night, he came to the pastor's house to talk, and his breath revealed that he had been dominated by his master, alcohol. He staggered as he walked, and his speech became tangled, twisting his words. Clearly, the truth of God's Word was manifested through the apostle Paul, "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death..." (Romans 6:16a, NIV).

This was the condition of this man; his master, his owner, was that to which he had willingly surrendered himself. His love was

the god Bacchus. Being controlled by this god, in that state, I could speak to him about Jesus' call to freedom. Just as he had willingly surrendered himself to Bacchus' dominion, he could surrender his life under the rule of the true God, Jesus the Christ. Paul continued to write, "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness" (Romans 6:16b-18, NIV).

The apostle is making it clear that total and absolute freedom is actually just an illusion. We are, in reality, slaves to something or someone. We are slaves to sin or to righteousness; we are slaves to a spouse or to the loneliness that comes from lacking one. Freedom is the opportunity to choose between one option or another, and then we become slaves to our choice, enjoying or suffering the consequences.

The Apostle Paul wrote more about this matter, "When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:20-23, NIV).

In both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament, there are different words that are translated as "slave" or "slavery." The Apostle Paul is playing with words to discuss slavery and service. In verse 20, the Greek word he uses, according to Strong's Concordance, is "doulos (δούλος)," which in its most basic sense means "slave; originally the lowest term in the scale of servitude. It also came to mean one who surrenders their will to another." This is why it has been said in evangelical circles that *doulos* is a "slave by love," because it is someone who willingly submits their will to another. In this case, human beings voluntarily surrendered their will to sin. This word is used in verses 16 to 18; therefore, we could not live in righteousness. Later, in the phrase "have become slaves of God" in verse

22, the apostle uses the word "doulouo (δουλώω)," which means "to enslave, subject to servitude." It is also used in verse 18 when Paul wrote, "now you are slaves of righteousness."

The Apostle Paul is telling us that we are free to choose our master. If I submit myself to sin, I will receive from my master, sin, the only thing it can offer me, which is death. But if I allow myself to be subjected by God to righteousness, I will receive from Him holiness and eternal life in Christ Jesus. The tension presented here relates to self-submission. Who will govern your life? Who will be your master? Who will take dominion over your will?

Let's go back to our story. That same man, one night, came to visit me at the pastor's house, once again governed by alcohol and other spirits. His gaze, speech,

and walk betrayed him. He hugged me and said he no longer wanted to live like that, that he was tired of so much conflict in his home due to his addiction. But he couldn't quit; his body demanded it, and his will couldn't remain steadfast in the decision to stop drinking. That same night, even in that state of consciousness and unconsciousness, I spoke to him about the gospel. I presented him with the ancient bad news of condemnation due to the sin that ruled over him, and then the promise of freedom for those who willingly submit their will to the lordship of Christ and His righteousness. He made the decision to allow Jesus to work in his life. He returned home knowing

that he had been forgiven. He made the decision to make Jesus the master of his life, whom he would love and willingly obey. What a terrible paradox, to believe in living in freedom while being a slave to sin. And yet, what a wonderful paradox, to be free by being a slave to the Lord Jesus.

What would be another reason why someone would give up their "freedom"? The Apostle has already answered this question. He wrote, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NIV). We renounce our freedom for love. We become slaves of righteousness out of love, because of God's love for us, but also because we have come to love God.

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FREEDOM

A CHILDHOOD WITH HOPE



By Milton Gerardo Gay Novoa

On May 20th of this year, we had the opportunity to carry out a sports evangelistic activity with the sports ministry (Ready Set Go) and with NYI of the Central District (Nazarene Youth International) in Guatemala. Specifically, we shared with adolescents aged 10 to 17. As I observed them, I noticed that time has passed, and I am no longer as young as I once was. Seeing them, I felt like I was surrounded by children, but they are no longer children. They are in a transitional stage with problems and complexities that will lead them to become young adults. This was my first approach to the new generations on this beautiful day.

In that activity, we collected groceries, sports equipment, toys, and gently used clothing, all with the purpose of donating them to an orphanage. After finishing the sports activity, we embarked on a journey to the place where we would make the donation. After an hour and a half on the road, we arrived. I found myself in a very picturesque place, very friendly and pleasing to a child's eye. As we got out of the car, we greeted the children, and we began to see how they started to approach us with toys, balls, and a great desire to play with us. After playing with them, a worker from the orphanage offered to give us a tour of the place. We could see where the children eat, play, entertain themselves, and sleep (the bedrooms were filled with colors, stuffed animals, and toys). A 10-year-old boy who was accompanying us, upon seeing all this, said, "It's everything a child dreams of." Upon hearing this, we were all surprised, but we understood that it was an innocent comment. His older brother simply said, "Material things are not everything."



The feeling is somewhat difficult to describe, as in this place there are children who have been mistreated and abandoned by their parents. It was there that I reflected, and I want to share it with you: **"We cannot forget about the children."** Often, we are too busy with our own problems and concerns, and we don't think about the thousands of children who need someone to share time, love, and teachings with them, especially the freedom in Christ. This can be a bit challenging because as Christians, we talk a lot about freedom in Christ, but many children are not truly free. Many times, they are prisoners of pain and confusion, wondering, "Why is this happening to me?"

That is why in this article, I want to remind you of the importance of sharing with children and, especially, evangelizing them from an early age. There are many testimonies of great leaders and people of peace who accepted Christ at a young age, and from that moment, God led them to become good people and help others. Here, we see the fulfillment of what Isaiah 55:11 says: "so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." So, do not underestimate the seed of God's word that you can plant in children. Do not consider it as wasted time, but rather as a significant investment of love in their lives and in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another important point is to protect children. It doesn't matter if you don't have children of your own; always find a way to keep children safe from all evil, just as Christ taught in Matthew 19:14 when he said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Let us lead children to the ways of Christ. Let us not hesitate for another second to do so. Let us bring the hope that many children desperately need - children who lack love, attention, a father figure, and who are victims of abuse, malnutrition, and many other evils that exist in this world where these innocent beings live.

The natural trust of childhood is one of the greatest treasures of humanity. Let us not continue to ignore or neglect it. Let us pay more attention to what Jesus said: "for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14b). Just as children depend on their parents or guardians, we should be completely dependent on God, our Father.



”
LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME, AND DO NOT HINDER THEM, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BELONGS TO SUCH AS THESE.

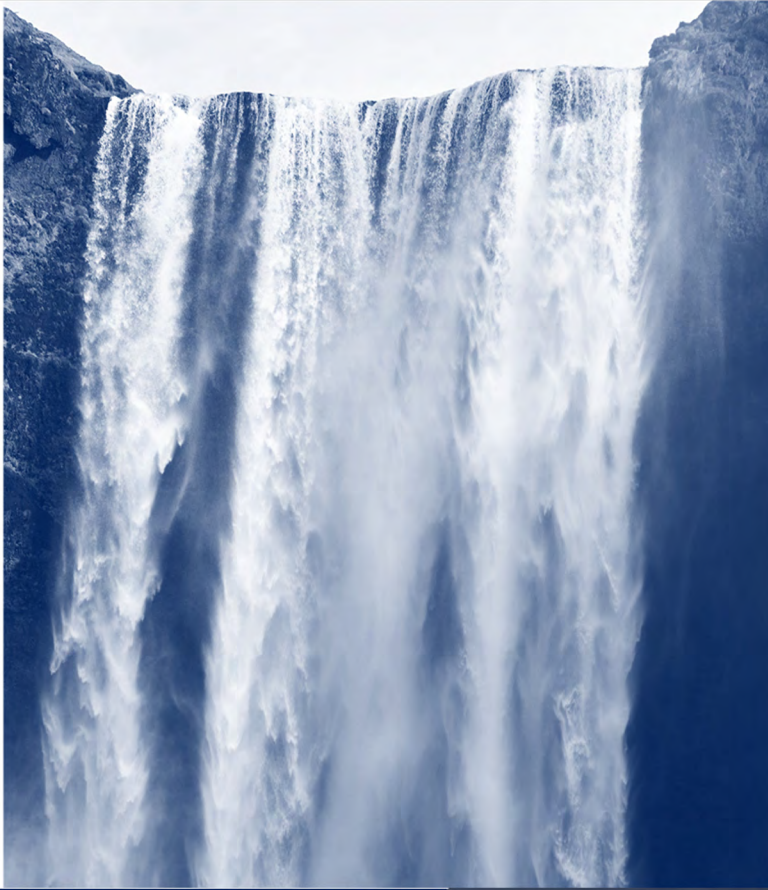
To conclude, I want to share with you three ways to obey the commandment of being like children before God:

We should strive to have the honesty of a child, who, after being scolded and corrected, does not hold grudges or resentment in their heart but rather accepts their mistake and learns from what happened.

Recognize vulnerability, because by having that character, we will not fall into the trap of thinking that we are self-sufficient, but rather we will depend entirely on what our Heavenly Father says. We must be clear that in this world, at any moment, we can be harmed physically, spiritually, and psychologically. However, our Father will be there to protect us.

Children have faith and trust in their Father, it is a complete trust, knowing that no matter what may happen, their father will protect them against anything.

Let us not neglect the children and teenagers who are victims of the attacks that this world, full of evil, is unleashing. Look for ways to help them, to be a mentor, a friend, a pastor, an older sibling, or a good parent if you are already in that position. But also, do not forget to become like a child in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. Only in this way can we enter His Kingdom.



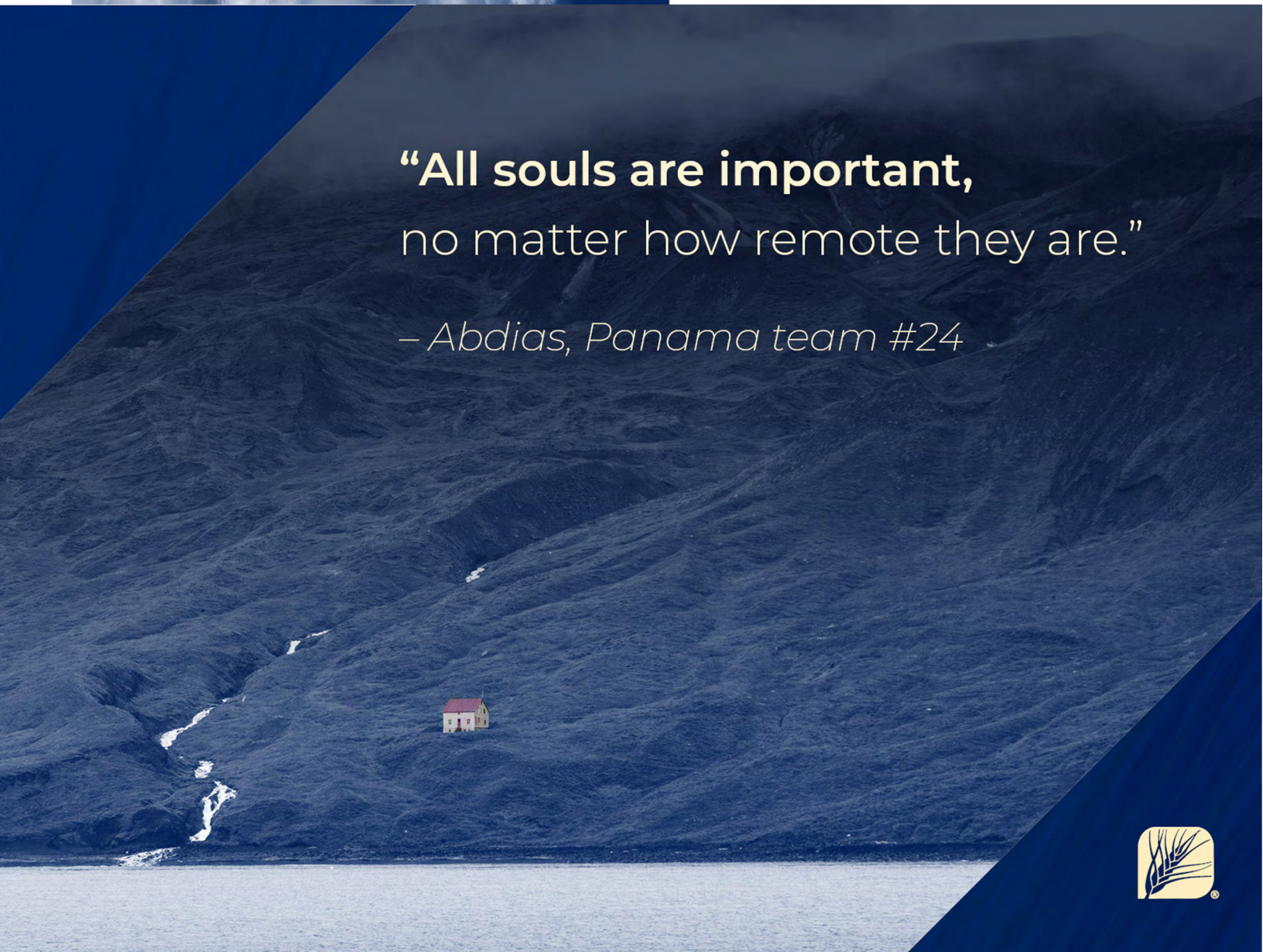
"And you know that
God anointed Jesus of
Nazareth with the Holy
Spirit and with power."

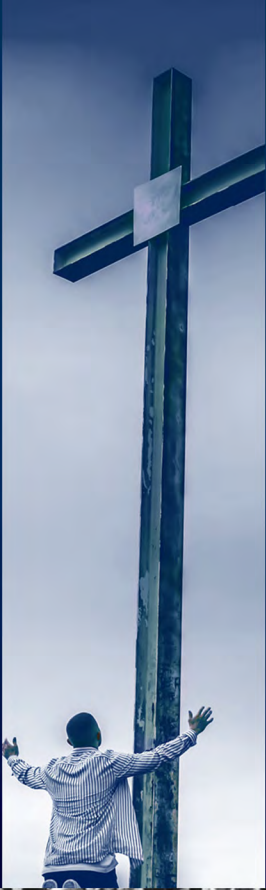
Acts 10:38a

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**"All souls are important,
no matter how remote they are."**

– Abdias, Panama team #24





“It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’”

– Luke 24:47 (NLT)

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World Population: 7.93 Billion

**Population
in Unreached:**
3.36 Billion



Over 42% of the world’s population has yet to hear the Good News.

Our vision is to give **every person** an opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ!



THE CALL TO FREEDOM IN GRACE



DR. MARCO A. VELASCO

It all begins with grace, continues with grace, and ends with grace. Paul urges the Galatians to stand "firm" in freedom. This is a military term that demands staying in one place without being moved or driven away by the enemy. This recalls one of the most provocative images regarding the task of the Christian: the story of the 300 Trojan soldiers depicted in the movies. They were an elite army during a certain period of history known for their warrior spirit. They were primarily known for the "Battle of Thermopylae" where they defended Greece against the vastly outnumbering Persian army, the most powerful army in the world at the time. According to history, three hundred Trojan soldiers remained on the battlefield to hold off the Persian enemy. They had a calling and an identity. Their steadfastness of spirit and sacrifice allowed Greece to defeat their enemies.

The letter to the Galatians is the letter of freedom. Paul writes to the Galatians, surprised that the church is straying from the one "who called you by the grace of Christ, to a different gospel" (Galatians 1:6 ESV). Paul fights against those who compel new believers to Judaize, to keep the law and be circumcised to complete their salvation by living under slavery (Galatians 5:1). Paul strongly opposes this position because it leads back to the slavery of the law and departs from the gospel revealed by Christ, as he states: "We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16 ESV).

Paul's call to the church is: "Stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1 ESV). This is Paul's concluding statement to the Galatians regarding the slavery of the law and freedom. Paul then goes on to explain what it means to be under the law in chapter 4:21 onwards. "Being under the law" (4:21) means being under confinement (3:23), from which freedom is needed, as it says: "to redeem those who were under the law" (4:5 ESV). To reinforce this idea, Paul presents a parallelism of two contrasting spiritual realities (cf. verses 23-26). On one hand, the slave: Hagar, Ishmael, the flesh, Mount Sinai, and present-day Jerusalem; on the other hand, the free: Sarah, Isaac, the promise/spirit, and the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore, living under the law is living in a state of slavery, while living in the grace of the promise means living in the freedom won for us by Christ.

Paul's statement in 5:1 serves as a fundamental expression that summarizes the message of the entire letter. What Christ has done to bring freedom is what matters. The imperative "Stand firm, then..." is a response to the gift received in order to live "...in the freedom with which Christ has set us free" (5:1-5). Christ has liberated us to live in the kingdom of freedom! Because of this, we can remain in that freedom, "...and not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (v. 1c). In Romans, Paul reminds us that sin should not reign in our lives but rather, we should serve God as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:12-14). "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14 ESV).



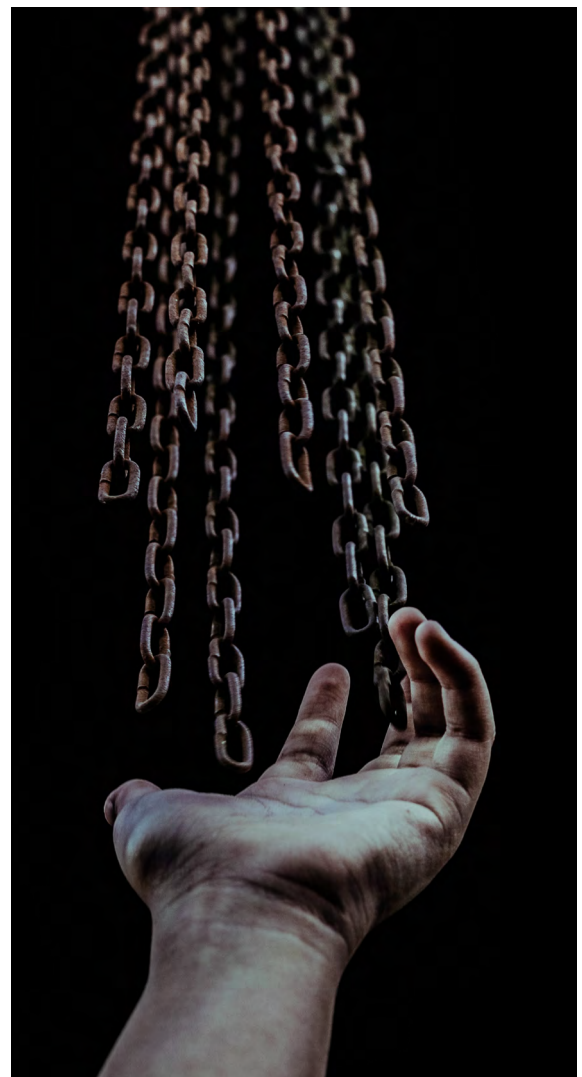
“For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”

Romans 6:14

In conclusion, first, the warlike imagery that appears in different parts of the New Testament (cf. Ephesians 6:12) highlights the valor and steadfastness of the Christian in living their faith and the freedom won by Christ. The Christian calling is to live in the freedom of grace that Christ has obtained. It is a gift given to us, but we must maintain it day by day. Our value and effort as Christians do not earn God's grace, but they are a response to that same grace. Just as "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6b), then, we also "love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Second, Paul said that in Christ Jesus, there is neither slave nor free, neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28). The same applies to the present-day church within God's mission. The freedom we have in grace is manifested when we overcome the barriers that separate us, such as race, class, gender, and status (3:26-29). We, as the People of God, are called to live in that freedom as children of God who model their relationships as an example to the world (Galatians 5:13-6:10). Grace operates when our sins are forgiven, and we are liberated from the power of sin; we are sanctified and set free from the contamination of sin (Galatians 5:24).

Third, freedom does not mean autonomy or individualism. Freedom by grace means, "...and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20 ESV). It is not a freedom like the Corinthians thought, "All things are lawful for me" (1 Corinthians 6:12), where one can do as they please. Rather, it is a freedom to love, to live in community, in "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6b ESV).





BY GABRIEL YIP

Summer vacations are approaching in Mexico, surely you are already planning outings with your friends or a picnic day where there is a river with fresh and clean water to practice some dives and stay in the water until your feet resemble prune.

In your mind, the idea is already circulating that you will be free from all obligations and tasks in a few weeks. So, I suggest you prepare yourself for these days without obligations, where you can attend a summer camp, learn something new, visit some relatives, and much more. Youth is a stage of life that allows for engaging in activities that may not have been possible before due to physical, intellectual, financial, or parental permission constraints. It is likely that in the future, it may not be as easy to engage in these activities due to increased responsibilities, studies, work-related matters, or family commitments.

Free Youth

1 Freedom is the ability to choose, and it can be practiced in many ways. During youth, these choices can be diverse, including decisions related to one's professional or vocational life. Interests, preferences, economic needs, and beliefs are put to the test when selecting between one option and another.

It is said that 38% of young people will have the opportunity to choose to study a technical or professional career, a freedom that 10 years ago was only available to 19% of young people. Today in Latin America (on average), according to data from UNESCO, "part of these trends correspond to a change in the distribution of beneficiaries in terms of gender, which went from 19% to 36% in men, while women increased from 19% to 41%, becoming the main beneficiaries of the increase in global tertiary education enrollment." These figures are not as optimistic in some countries, and if other variables are added, the number of young people with access to university education decreases even further.

However, freedom is not limited to the opportunity to choose a profession or career. Jesus knows this very well, to such an extent that he makes it evident in various conversations, for example, the following: "Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" John 8:31-32.

If we were to ask the question, "How many of the young people who choose their professional career are truly free?" It is likely that the numbers would not reflect the same figures presented earlier. A truly free person is not only someone who can choose among certain options. And in order to explain this, it is necessary to address two aspects of what we understand by freedom.



Negative Freedom

2 This understanding of freedom refers to the absence of impositions or external influences that condition our decision-making. For some, true freedom is about eliminating all types of coercion. This is known as negative freedom, not because it is inherently bad, but because it emphasizes the absence of obligation imposed by external factors. How much do you seek negative freedom? How closely does this emphasis align with what Jesus taught in the previously cited verse?

It seems that this concept of freedom was prevalent among Jesus' interlocutors, as they responded, "'We are Abraham's descendants,' they answered. 'We have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?'" John 8:33-34. It is common to think that if we are not slaves and if we are not bound by our family, customs, or government, then we are automatically free. However, Jesus teaches them something more.

Positive freedom

3 The other aspect of freedom is understood as "the positive concept of freedom, which means autonomy and the possibility of self-realization" (Jaramillo, L. 2016). In this sense, it is not enough to simply remove the impositions of others to be free. It is about taking responsibility for choosing a certain path, option, or life journey. It is a dilemma and tension that can be distressing at times, but it is necessary. However, this may not necessarily be the true freedom that Jesus speaks of.

We can read it as follows: "Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" John 8:31-32.

Freedom does come with responsibility. Each person must take on the path they choose, as seen in the teachings of Jesus. However, it also demands the decision to place our trust in our Savior and to remain in His teachings. True freedom lies in choosing to trust and practice what the Master and Savior teach. Freedom is not the ultimate treasure; it is the opportunity to be truly free in Jesus.

Freedom and obedience

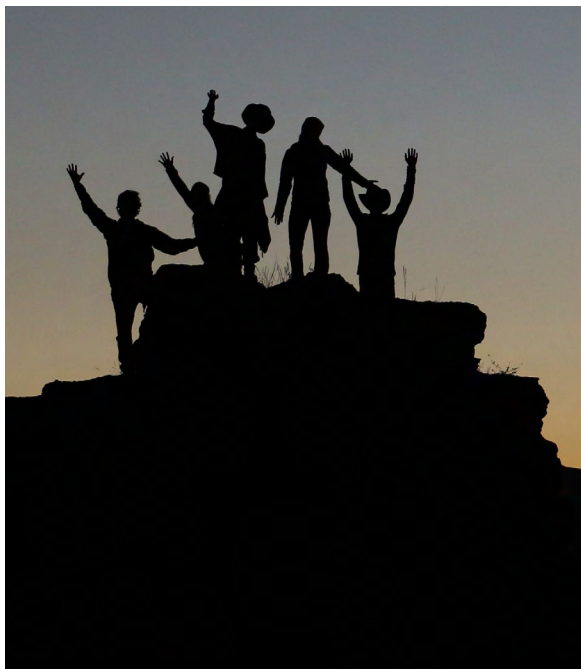
4 The passage continues and presents the issue of obedience. If one obeys something or someone, a certain freedom ends, but another type of freedom can be experienced. "Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'" John 8:34-35.

When discussing the great freedoms that young people have today, some may feel overwhelmed by the multitude of options. Others may staunchly defend their negative freedom as an urgent priority. Some may be determined to live life in their own way, taking their own path as young individuals, and even living their faith in Jesus in their own manner. However, this is clearly different from living in the way of Jesus.

Free youth to be like Jesus

5 Sometimes, dialogues related to topics like freedom can be better utilized when expanding the discussion beyond what you can or cannot do when exercising your freedom. It is necessary to share what true freedom in Jesus is, which goes beyond simply removing the impositions of others or living life on your own terms. True freedom is being forgiven and liberated from our sins, and practicing the teachings of Jesus as the true choice of freedom. This ongoing choice is unparalleled, choosing to be truly free in Jesus. It is something that is cultivated each day by attending to His teachings, reading them in the Bible, understanding them with the help of the Holy Spirit, and applying them in your daily life.

The Apostle John, echoing these words, emphasizes in one of his letters the implication of believing in and following the teachings of Jesus, the Son of God. "Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did." 1 John 2:6.



Young person reading this, I appreciate your patience in reading up to this point. I have no doubt that you are seeking to free yourself from the bonds of customs and authorities that condition your life. It may be that you are looking for a unique way of living life, one that truly reflects what is within you and may not resemble anything you have seen before. The aforementioned aspects are part of being free. But what if, at the center of your search for freedom, you recognize Jesus and His teachings?

Just like those who heard and believed, you too can truly live free from sin and from the customs that take away your freedom or the relationships that seek to condition your life away from Jesus.



Our true freedom lies in living in Jesus and His teachings, in sharing that true freedom with others. It is in those places where sin reigns, where people only focus on permissions and prohibitions, but do not seek to imitate and obey our Savior and Teacher, that we need to go beyond what cultural proposals of freedom tell us. These proposals often reject any form of obedience and aim for self-sufficiency without God, ignoring Jesus. It is there, young people, that you have the blessed opportunity to be truly free to be like Jesus through His love and grace.

Well, all of the above doesn't negate the fact that you can still plan your amazing summer getaway. Being truly free also means enjoying the blessings and every moment of life that God gives you. However, now you can do so with a freedom that the world cannot provide. Young people, who are free to be like Jesus, have even more reasons to enjoy this life with the promises of the life to come.

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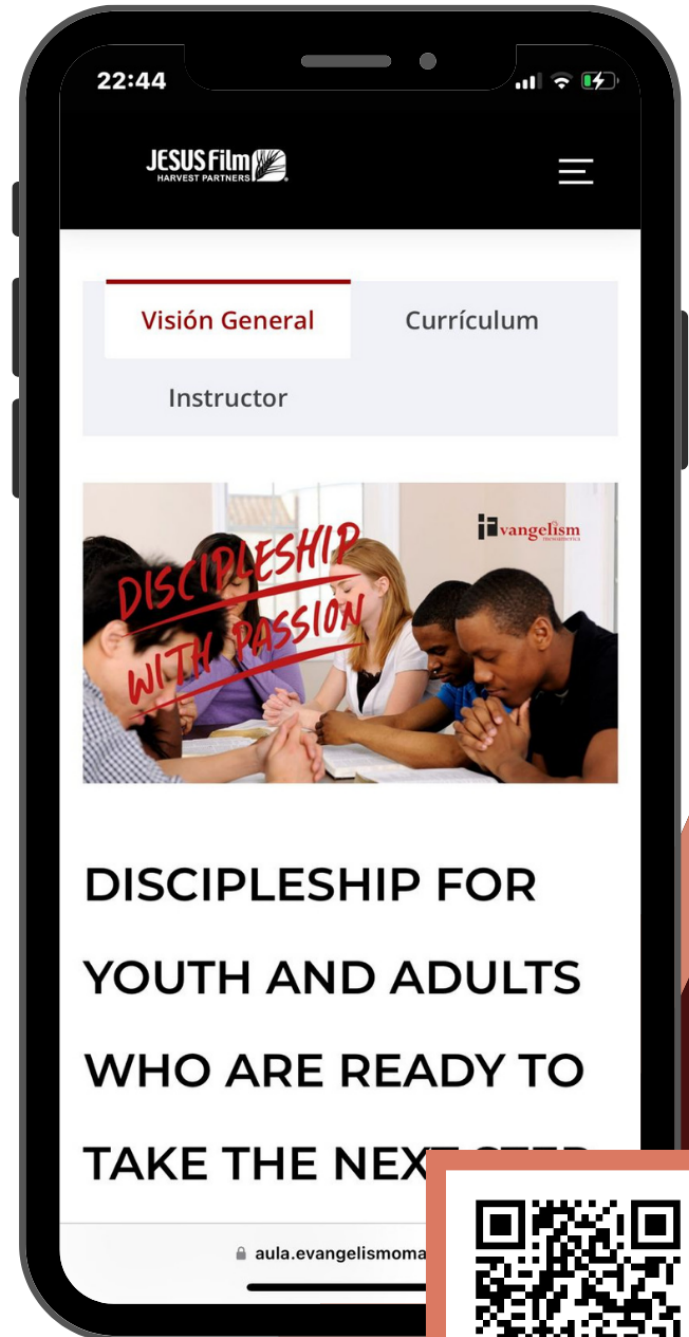
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BOUSIKO STATION

Used Methods: Personal evangelism

Exact location: Bousiko, 1 Communal Section of Thiotte, Southeast District. Haiti.

Mother church: Church of the Nazarene of Thiotte.

Collaborators: Edgard Wilcinot.

The Bousiko station thanks God for His many blessings. This station was planted on May 10, 2023, to worship God in this community that had no church, and we are confident that the seed has been planted, eagerly awaiting the harvest that God will bring. We pray for everyone and for the responsible planters, Edgard Wilcinot.



Sharing with people in hospitals

Last month in the city of Puebla, Mexico, on May 27th and 28th, as part of the Global Evangelism Month, the FRATER Church mission, led by planter Magdiel Martínez, a team of 7 brothers and sisters, were a testimony of God's love to the families of the patients being treated at La Margarita Hospital. They supported more than 100 people, sharing a loaf of bread, a sandwich, and a cup of coffee with them, and sharing the gospel using evangelistic pamphlets and collecting prayer requests.



They prayed for different situations, from praying for a granddaughter diagnosed with leukemia to praying for a first-time mother in labor. Five people accepted Christ, asking Him to be their Lord and Savior. Emotions flowed from joy to sadness as they perceived the pain of the people they served. There is hope for a world in need and brokenness, and that hope is found in Jesus.

Global Evangelism in the Mesoamerican Region

GLOBAL EVANGELISM is a united effort and collaboration of many denominations and ministries to mobilize and equip each believer to testify and reach the world together. Our objective is to reach each person with the Gospel of Matthew 28:19 until 2030.

As the Evangelism Ministry in the Mesoamerica Region, we are very happy to celebrate the decade, month, and day of Global Evangelism for four consecutive years. Over the years celebrating this, we have had incredible experiences such as people who would live hopelessly have listened what plans Christ has in store for them. Many growing churches have been able to join and share their faiths in creative ways and they have seen results. People have reconciled or given their lives to Christ for the first time. They become part of the churches and can share what they have heard with their families.



Each year the celebration has been increasing in number. We started with just a few, and now we are thousands of Nazarenes sharing our faith, providing food, visiting orphans, widows, and the elderly. There have been artistic performances on the streets, such as singing, dancing, and dramas. Constant prayer has been offered for the communities, and there are signs expressing God's love for people. So many forms have been used to manifest God's love here on Earth.

Countries throughout the region participated in this grand event celebrated in May, namely Mexico, all the countries of Central America, the Caribbean, and Haiti. All were united in celebration with the same Spirit, despite different languages, cultures, and social backgrounds.

The evangelism coordinators from each field and country shared photographs and videos. We could see joyful Nazarenes proclaiming the Gospel, and people welcoming them into their homes, workplaces, and the streets of their communities and cities. Undoubtedly, it was a beautiful celebration. However, we don't want it to be limited to May alone. These dates are for global celebrations, but the evangelistic work should continue throughout the year, and even more importantly, the work of discipling new believers.

Regional Evangelism has been dedicated to equipping the region with tools to share our faith. We have many resources that can be used for sharing faith and subsequently discipling new believers. All these materials can be downloaded from our website at <https://www.evangelismomar.org/>. We also have our Facebook and Instagram pages where we can answer all your questions. We want to hear your recommendations on how we can improve in this great mission.

Also, let us tell you that since 2021, the Regional Evangelism team has been dedicated to training planters, pastors, and local church members. This is so that ALL believers can share their faith in different ways: through sports, dialogue, study, the Jesus film, technological media, social networks, mobile applications, and many other strategies that you can also use to reach, disciple, and shepherd all the people whom God puts in your path. This year, the global evangelism celebration was a great success. We are thrilled to see that the Church of the Nazarene still cares about evangelism. This is just the beginning. The new believers have been born again and have all the potential to become God's servants. But they need you to guide them in this new walk with God.



We still have a lot of work ahead of us, but we are confident that we will not retreat. On the contrary, we will increase evangelistic efforts throughout the region so that more people can come to know Christ. Join us in the Global Decade of Evangelism! Together, we can reach the world!

News Evangelism with RSG and Kids Game

NYI Mexico South Field, Mexico Central District

Sharing the good news of Salvation is a passionate task, and what better than combining it with other passions like sports.

On May, the youth also joined in global evangelism, and they did it through sports. This was carried out with the support of RSG Sports Ministries.



In this event, they trained 24 people from the southern area who belong to the following churches: Bethel in San Lorenzo, Center of Restoration Hope and Worship, Cornerstone CotN, Eternal Grace CotN, 1st CotN in Xochimilco, CotN in Mixquic, New Life CotN, and His Glorious Presence CotN.

This group of 24 people was trained at level 1 of Ready Set Go in four sessions throughout the month of May and will subsequently work with children, teenagers, and young people to introduce them to Jesus through sports and games in the boroughs of Xochimilco and Tláhuac.

The training culminated with a practical Kids Games session at the Acuexcomatl Environmental Center on June 2nd. Around 90 children from the towns of San Gregorio Atlapulco, San Luis Tlaxialtemalco, and Santa Cruz Acapulco participated in this first contact, which is part of an initiative to continue working on follow-up and subsequently directing them to the Nazarene churches in the mentioned villages. For the Kids Games event, more than 20 young adults from the churches in the southern area were part of the staff, and another 50 people were involved in this event.

The atmosphere fostered more interaction among churches and brought people from the participating villages closer into a friendly environment of wholesome recreation that brings the good news of salvation. Thank God for what has been done in that area of the Mexico Central District!





OUR ALLIANCES

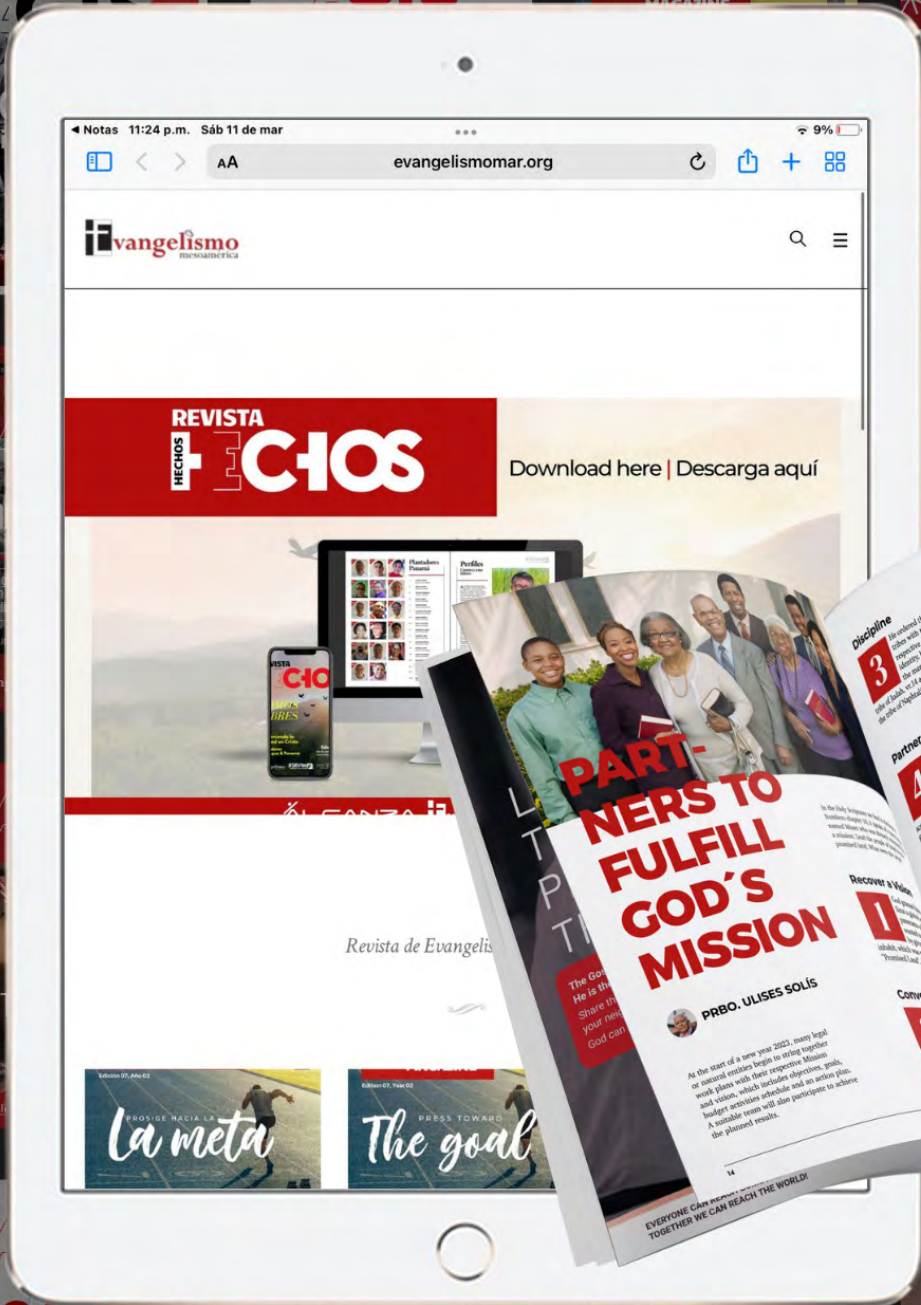


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