CLARK PRAYER UPDATE AND CALENDAR March/April, 2024



On January 22, to commemorate one year since his son's death on a highway in Wyoming with 4 other young people, Salomón invited all his family and neighbors to a meal at his home, and asked us to participate, sharing a gospel message for the villagers. We were grateful for Salomón's desire, in spite of the fact that he has not yet made a clear decision for Christ himself. Alicia remains strong and faithful.

We continue to pray for Salomón, as well as the others in this place who have heard the gospel so often, but only a few have believed in Christ. We did have many good conversations that evening, and some seem open. Please pray for conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit. Doña Mari, Salomón's 90-year-old mother has often heard but has never been very open to the message. Priscilla's mom, who was visiting, had good opportunities to share with her.





PESCADORES (FISHERMEN)



In January, the Lord led us to begin a group called **Pescadores**, inviting youth and families from our church to join us once a week for street evangelism. We invited sister churches in other cities to do the same, forming their own groups and weekly sharing with all the other groups on a chat, concerning the conversations the Lord gives, and prayer requests for those encountered. We have been encouraged to see 7 different groups formed!

We hand out gospel tracts and especially, seek to initiate gospel conversations with people. We rotate between Morelia's large, downtown park area, and the government hospital, both of which are usually overflowing with people on Sunday afternoons.

It has been so encouraging to see the enthusiasm among the young people for this activity. They are developing boldness and joy in the gospel message. We love to hear them share their experiences on the way home. We are hoping to develop the idea further to include a structured training time for the believers to help us all grow to be skilled "FISHERS OF MEN" out of love for Christ.

Ted near central plaza in downtown Morelia, handing out tracts.

AMOR DIVINO, MARAVATÍO, FEBRUARY, 2024

We cannot thank you enough for your prayers with us for the week-long AMOR Divino outreach in late February! We clearly saw how the Lord graciously blessed and answered prayer in so many ways! **THANK YOU for sharing a heart for the lost, and for the wonderful gospel message of hope.**





The Lord provided a wonderful little hotel right downtown. which allowed us to "set up camp" for our meals and meetings in the central courtyard. It was just a block and a half from the central park where we walked every evening to do our evangelistic presentations and engage with people about the gospel.

Maravatio is a smaller city in northwestern Michoacán state, and we were able to cover all the houses with gospels/tracts in our days there.



We have seen so much blessing through this project, not only because of the gospel witness in Michoacán, but also, the encouragement to the believing families and their children is a huge side-benefit!

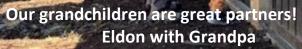
To be a part of an effort of eternal value, together with 90 kindred spirits is not easily forgotten. The joy of the positive responses of those searching for the truth, make it worth the long hot morning hours in the sun knocking on doors and the real threat of hostility and rejection from many of those encountered.







MORNING DOOR TO DOOR WORK





Annie's partner, Fatima is a new believer and this was her first AMOR Divino.

 Preparing for Mime Presentation in park

CLARK PRAYER CALENDAR FOR MARCH/APRIL, 2024

For the next two months, we are going to give you mostly names to pray for, of people contacted in Maravatio. We believe that these people who responded, and the many others who had good conversations with our team, are <u>the very ones</u> we had been praying for in the months before the outreach! God has been preparing their hearts for these encounters!

Michael and Sofi live 40 minutes from this town, and will be heading up the follow-up work. They have 10 Bible studies set up, and other people they are still trying to contact. Thursdays will be their day to go to Maravatío for these studies. Pray for strength for them, for wisdom, and divine intervention for locating and contacting the people.

MARCH 1-9 **Abimelec and Janet**: A young couple who seemed impacted upon hearing the message of salvation in the park the first night. She had studied with the JW's for a year but quit, feeling something was not right. They seem to be searching for the truth. He expressed gratitude and said we had given them a lot to think about. We are really hoping and praying they will have the courage and determination to call our number and ask for a Bible study.

MARCH 10-16 **Andres**: An sharp young man who watched the Mime presentation with close attention. He was recently released from a drug rehab center and seemed very open and attentive to the gospel message. He desired to have a Bible, which we took to him the following night. We are hoping and praying he will call our number for a Bible study.

MARCH 17-23 **Raul:** A disheveled man encountered at the park who came across kind of like a vagabond, but seemed sharp mentally. He attentively watched the Mime presentation, commenting that he almost wept upon seeing it (many people feel it perfectly represents their own life). He said he felt despairing about his life and was so grateful to be told this message of hope.

MARCH 24-31 Pray this week for our Holy Week family camp, usually the biggest of the year. Pray for the Lord's blessing on every aspect of this camp, and that it would especially be used for deep growth, encouragement and edification of the believers who attend.

APRIL 1-6 **Mari-Tere** is a young woman who was recording the Mime show, and then asked enthusiastically if we were Christians. She said she believed in Christ while living in California. She recently returned to Mexico and has not been able to find a good church to attend in Maravatio. She is concerned about the salvation of her family and was happy to know about Michael and Sofi's work in the area. Hopefully she will contact our number soon.

APRIL 7-13 **Susana:** A young woman with a very sad and terrible background. A single mother with 3 children, she has a jdb in the downtown plaza to support herself, tending a small shop and charging for entrance to the public restrooms. It is the only job she can find where she can take her children with her but she works from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. 7 days a week, for 650 pesos a week (about 38.00 USD). She has tried twice to commit suicide. The first day we did our presentations at the park, she was allowed off work early (a miracle), and saw our Mime show, and the stands for Wordless book, bracelets, coloring verses, verse puzzles, etc. She went to each activity and heard the gospel again and again, and was impacted by the message, saying she felt she had learned something new each time. She is feeling hope for the first time and has asked for a Bible study. The hard thing is to figure out how to fit it into her schedule. She is going to ask her boss if she could have 2 hours off, one day a week. Please pray for this to be granted.

APRIL 14-20 **Zebedeo:** One of our team girls talked with him for over an hour at his door. He agreed he was a sinner and deserved to go to hell. He had heard once in a Christian church that he is not one of the chosen ones, and thus cannot be saved. Though our girl went over and over the gospel with him and begged him to believe in Christ only for his salvation, he told her that it all sounded very nice, but it was not possible for him as he was too great of a sinner. Please pray for the Lord's light in his heart!

APRIL 21-30 **Miguel Angel:** This man, also encountered at the door of his home, is in a wheelchair, and listened attentively to the message. Then he expressed much gratefulness for having been told this message. He said he had tried many religions, but had never found hope, but in this message he was hearing, there was hope. He said that he had felt so depressed about life that very day, that he felt there was no point in living anymore, and he had needed this message desperately, that very day! He asked to be visited in his home for a Bible study.

MORE FROM AMOR DIVINO

We love to use this Mime presentation as it so clearly illustrates the gospel message (Christ carried our sins on the cross). We have found it to be impacting to those who watch it, often leaving people in tears as they are struck by the meaning.



GOOD GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS...







This is Andrés (prayer request for March 10-16)



WITNESSING



The Wordless Book bracelets are meant for kids, but many adults want to make them as well, and great gospel conversations took place at this table all the nights it was set up in the park plaza.

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While kids color verse pictures, our team gives the gospel to the parents.

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GOSPEL VERSE PUZZLES



FAMILY PICTURES



8th grandchild, Jehosheba (Sheba) born to Nathan and Keyla on Jan. 26. What a precious blessing from the Lord to us! She was, amazingly, delivered by Nathan, as the midwife did not arrive in time!







FAMILY REUNION KENDAL SIDE

(Late January)







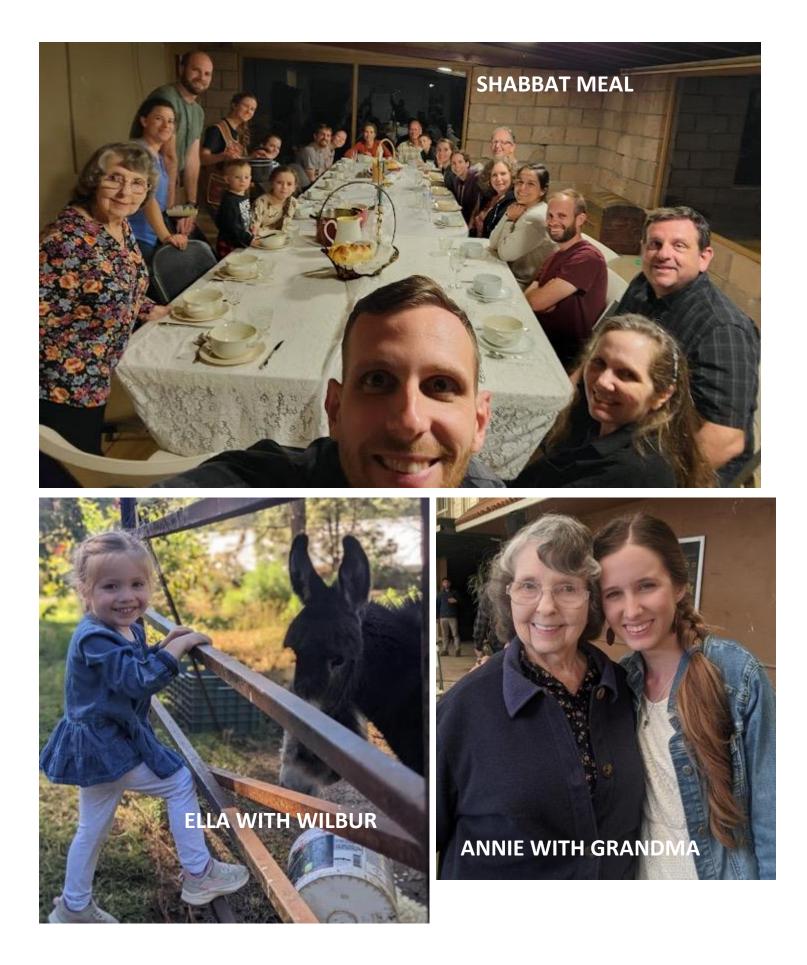






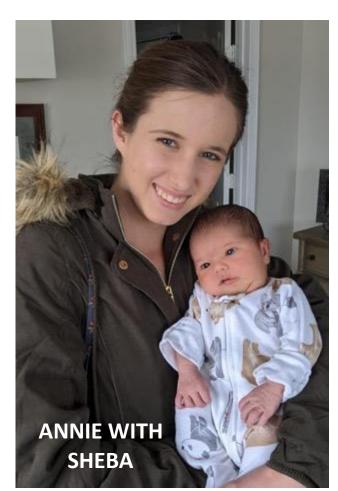
FAMILY HIKE













REGIS, KATIE AND THE TWINS

ANNIE AND KATIE

OWEN AND ELLA ON THIRD BIRTHDAY



MANUEL VALENCIA'S STORY By Annie Clark

"Hey! Lárgate!" yelled 7-year-old Manuel Valencia as he ran after the squealing piglet, a stick held firmly in his right hand. It was his job to keep the little pests away from the chicken food and he took his task very seriously. Sometimes, too seriously. His mother had threatened him the last time, that if she ever saw him beating her pigs again, she would beat him! The last time hadn't ended all that bad for the pig, though, he remembered. Mother had taken the half dead animal, put a piece of tin over him and banged the tin with a stick in order to revive him. Manuel had seen it done many times. It worked every single time. After the tin was removed, the animal would always go running off as if nothing had happened.

Once Manuel's Uncle had been working at a sugar cane press when a lightening bolt struck the press. It knocked him unconscious. He was immediately taken down to the river by some villagers and dunked over and over again, while the whole village looked on from the banks of the river, yelling at the top of their lungs. The common belief was that noise scared away the spirits. The poor Uncle was then put under a piece of tin and made to lie there as they banged the tin with sticks. Sure enough, it worked!

These were just some of the beliefs and superstitions Manuel grew up with in the rural and isolated village of La Cruz, Michoacán. The nearest town was 8 hours on horseback. These amazing people lived mostly independent of the rest of the world and made everything they needed from scratch. When Manuel's family butchered a hog, they would use every single part for something. The lard was used for soap. And not just any kind of soap. It was really good quality soap that produced creamy lather. Every year the family would butcher one cow and make it last the whole year, without refrigeration! They used a unique process for drying the meat.

When someone in the village got very sick, four men would carry them on a stretcher all the way to the nearest town. Four additional men would also come along to take turns carrying the sick person. They had the stretcher fitted with a make-shift shade to shield the sick person from the sun. However, there were times when the sick person didn't make it. Manuel's little 5-year-old sister had succumbed to her illness and died because they hadn't been able to get her out in time.

The Millenium Cartel (or Valencia Family Cartel) was a criminal organization started in La Cruz by Manuel's relatives. The Valencias were notorious in the whole state for their illegal drug trafficking and shipment of cocaine within Mexico and to the United States. Although most of Manuel's immediate family was not involved in the cartel, they suffered for their relatives' criminal activities. One time when Manuel was older, he was mistaken for his cousin who was on the cartel's blacklist and he was almost shot on the spot. Fortunately they realized their mistake and left him alone. After that incident, he shaved off his mustache to avoid being confused with his cousin again. In spite of the ambient in which Manuel grew up, he determined to take a different path in life than that of his violent family.

When he was a little older, his parents moved to the larger town of Aguilillas. Being very smart, he was a straight "A" student through school. His parents sent him to Mexico City to study Junior High. He found learning fun and easy and thought of knowledge as a pathway to happiness. While in his last year of Junior High, Moises, a friend from Aguilillas invited Manuel to move in with him and some other college students who were renting a house in the city of Morelia. He told Manuel he should come and finish his schooling

there. Manuel agreed and moved to Morelia. In spite of the ambient of living with so many guys, Manuel was staunchly business. He studied hard and ignored his friends' urge to take it easy and have a little fun in life. He was determined to attain the highest education possible, feeling sure it would bring fulfillment to his life. As expected, he did so well in High School, he received a scholarship and went on to get a college degree.

In one of his very first college classes, a professor started out the lecture by quoting the great Greek philosopher, Socrates, who said, "...all I know is that I know nothing." Manuel stared with dismay at his professor. He had come to university to find knowledge. But if not even Socrates, (one of the greatest philosophers of all times) knew anything, then how could he expect to know a fraction of anything. This greatly disheartened Manuel in his pursuit of knowledge as a means to happiness. It was at this time that he began pondering the questions every human heart asks at some point or another: 'Why are we here?' 'What is our purpose in this world?' As a boy he had been dirt poor, and now he was receiving more money than he ever could have dreamed of, due to his scholarships. He had started his own business and still, he didn't feel happy.

His friends encouraged him to relax and try enjoying life a little more, and not be so uptight about everything. Manuel wondered if maybe they were right. He went from being a straight "A" student to getting straight F's. He figured that if knowledge wasn't the road to happiness he might as well try parties and alcohol. He decided to go all out. When they got good grades, he and his friends would party and drink to celebrate. When they got bad grades, they'd party and drink to console themselves.

One day the school director called Manuel to his office. "Manuel, what's happened to you?" he asked with worry in his voice. "I've just been reviewing your grades and you've gone from the top of the list to the bottom." After a moment of silence, the middle-aged man continued. "Your grades have been so high up till now, we've decided to give you a break this time. You may keep your scholarship in spite of your recent score. But next time, the school board might not be so merciful. Give it your best, man!" he said encouragingly. The words of the director impacted Manuel, but try as he might, he could not get out of the pit he had fallen into.

Manuel filled his life with worldly pleasures and enjoyments, and denied himself nothing his heart craved. But by the end of it, he felt just as empty as after his first endeavor. He realized this was not the path to happiness either.

Unsure what to attempt next he finally decided to join the Communist Party to try and change this unhappy world and make it a better place. In this new environment, they squelched all ideas of religion and God's existence. Up until now, Manuel had kept to the religion of his parents, but the people in the Communist Party soon convinced him that God wasn't real. After two years of being part of this, he realized that in theory, it was a great idea, but in practice, it just didn't work.

Disappointed and despondent with all his vain pursuits of happiness in life, his mind turned to a dark alternative. He had tried everything in life he could think of to make him happy; he was curious to see if maybe happiness could only be found in the next world. Besides, he was miserable in this life anyway. 'Why not? I couldn't be worse off than I am now. I might as well try.' he thought to himself as he toyed with the idea of suicide. Manuel was not afraid of dying. It was just the process that intimidated him. He wanted to make sure and not leave the job half finished. He considered his options. The gun he owned was a small 38 Special. 'Nah' he thought to himself. 'That might not do it.' He decided it would be best to use his dad's powerful 357 Magnum. Due to the size of those bullets and their poisoned tips, the bullet only needed to touch the animal and it would die instantly. 'This is what I need.' thought Manuel.

The appointed day arrived. Manuel was visiting his parents home. He lay in bed, his bloodshot eyes betraying his utter exhaustion and despair. He had hardly slept for weeks. But he took courage, remembering that today, his sleepless nights would be over and his miserable existence would end. Then perhaps he could really find happiness. As he lay there, he looked up to a painting his mom had hanging on the wall. It depicted a half-naked man asking for help from a figure mounted on a horse. For whatever reason, this famous Catholic painting caused Manuel to think of Judas, one of Jesus' 12 disciples who committed suicide. Manuel gulped as he wondered with trepidation if perhaps because of this sin, Judas never was able to discover the purpose of life. For a moment he reconsidered his reckless plan. For an instant he thought about God and in a moment of anguish cried out, "God, if You really did exist and if I knew You, I might change my mind about taking my life. I might even serve You." he added.

After a minute he sat up slowly in bed and swung his feet onto the cold tile floor. He buried his head in his hands just as his mother walked into the room. "We're leaving for the party now, son." she said with concern in her voice. "Why don't you come with us," she urged. "It'll make you feel better." added Manuel's father coming up behind his wife, wearing his stylish "sombrero" (cowboy hat) and boots. They could both see how despondent their son had become in the past few months and they worried for his wellbeing. "I'll be fine here," Manuel replied listlessly. "By the time you get back, my troubles will be solved. Believe me." he assured them as he waved them off. Once alone, he headed towards his parents room where his dad kept the 357 gun to culminate his plan. But just as he was crossing the living room, he was halted mid-stride by a loud knock at the front door.

BUT THEN CAME JESUS...

Manuel stared at the door and methodically changed his course to go answer the knock. When he opened up, he found a young woman standing there. "Well hello, Manuel!" smiled the woman. "It's been quite a while since I last saw you. You don't look so good." she laughed.

"Hi Alicia. Uh, well, I guess I haven't been sleeping very well recently." he said hesitatingly. "So, tell me, what became of your life? Are you still married to my cousin," he asked, hoping to change the subject. "The last time I saw you, you were considering divorcing him."

Manuel thought back to the last time he had seen Alicia five years before. For some reason she had come to Manuel back then for advice concerning her troubled marriage. He recalled very clearly her words, "My marriage is about to fall to pieces." she had begun. "Your friend has asked me to be his girlfriend. Do you think I'd be happy if I were to divorce your cousin and marry your friend?" she had asked. "How should I know. I'm not married." Manuel had replied. "Try it. You'll never know unless you try." had been his unwitting counsel.

Coming back to the present, he looked across to the woman standing in his doorway. He noticed she looked different than five years before. He was curious to know what the outcome had been between her and his cousin.

"Who do you think these kids look like?" Alicia said pointing to the three children hiding timidly behind her skirt. Manuel hadn't even noticed the children because he had been so taken by the glowing change in Alicia's face. When he finally turned to look at them, he had to admit there was no mistaking his cousin's features in every one of the children's faces.

"No," continued Alicia, "I didn't end up divorcing your cousin. I'm still married to him and I'm happy. But it's not because my marriage recovered or because I had children that I'm happy. It's because I've met the Lord Jesus Christ." she finished with a radiant smile spreading across her already glowing countenance.

"Well introduce me to Him then, because I've never heard of Him before, and I want to be happy too." Manuel laughed sarcastically.

Alicia looked at Manuel searchingly and finally strode past him into the living room setting herself comfortably on a chair. She waited for him to follow her and once he was also seated she began, "Look, God is real Manuel, only we don't know where to look for Him, but the place we can find Him is in the Bible." She went on to tell him the message of the gospel. Manuel listened politely for several minutes. After a while he interrupted her and said, "My religion didn't work for me; what makes you think I'm going to change to your religion? No, no, no, I don't want anything to do with another religion." Manuel said throwing his hands in the air.

"I'm not here to tell you about another religion, Manuel." Alicia said calmly. "I'm here to tell you how you can draw near to God." She reached into her purse and pulled out a cassette tape which she handed to Manuel. "Listen to this," she urged. "Believing in God, does not mean becoming part of a religion, it means having a personal relationship with Him." She rose to leave stating that she had to get back and fix lunch for her little ones. "I gave your mother a Bible recently." she commented on her way out. "I greatly encourage you to read it. The cassette I gave you might be helpful in understanding the message, but the real treasure is in the Bible. Well, goodbye Manuel, it was nice chatting." With that the woman proceeded out the door with her children following close behind.

The story Manuel listened to on the cassette tape was of a man who had tried everything to find happiness. As Manuel lay there on the bed, he felt as though he was hearing his own life narrated, up until the point when this individual found the solution to his troubled heart. This man, like Alicia, claimed that the change came when Jesus came into his heart. He then proceeded to give a brief overview of the whole Bible starting from Genesis. Adam and Eve broke God's law and their sin immediately separated them from God. As a consequence, death came into the world. God, being a just Judge could not simply pardon sinners and allow them back into His presence. Justice demanded that the price be payed. According to Romans 6:23, Manuel learned that the payment was costly—for nothing but death was sufficient to satisfy justice, "For the wages of sin is death..."

He learned that all men are under this condemnation for Romans 3:23 assures, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," But the message didn't end there. The man went on to explain that, "...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Could this really be true? That Jesus, the perfect One who had no sin to pay for would actually be willing to take our sin upon Himself, and pay such a heavy price for me?

Manuel listened attentively, wondering if this could be the truth. At this point the preacher said, "Look, I don't know who you are or what you are going through, but if you truly believe that this God is the God of Creation, then fall on your knees wherever you are and ask Him to come into your life and your life will never be the same."

"Well God," Manuel started, "I don't think You care if I do it laying down, standing up, sitting down or kneeling, but if You are really the God who created me and who can take me out of this pit I've gotten myself into, then here is my life. Come to my life and tell me how. I will follow You."

After this short but heartfelt prayer, Manuel closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep such as he had not experienced in weeks. In the meantime, his parents arrived from the party and his mother went into his room to retrieve the ironing board. The Bible that Alicia had given her was laying open on the ironing board so she quickly grabbed it just as it was and placed it beside Manuel's head to get it out of her way.

When Manuel finally awoke, he turned and saw the Bible lying right beside him. He reached for it and his eye fell upon the following verse, "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you." (Pro. 3:1-2) Manuel looked up from the verse in amazement. "God is communicating with me for the first time!" he whispered in awe and wonder. He looked at the Bible once more and made the observation that Proverbs was in the middle of the Bible. In school he had always been taught to start at the beginning, so he turned the pages back until he found Genesis. He then began to read. Everything there made sense now. It all coincided with what the tape had said. He read on and on. Manuel felt like he couldn't get enough of this wonderful Book. He continued until suppertime. "Come and eat!" his mother finally called. As Manuel got up to go to the kitchen, he was aware that something was different! Were you finally able to sleep?" "Yes dad," replied Manuel, "I did sleep, but you know what. God is real, only we don't know where to look for Him…" he then went on to tell his dad the same things Alicia had told him just hours earlier. When he got through explaining what had happened to him, Manuel's dad threw up his hands in exasperation, "Hey, this son of yours has gone crazy!" he complained to his wife. "Stop fighting! Both of you

exasperation, "Hey, this son of yours has gone crazy!" he complained to his wife. "Stop fighting! Both of you eat and be quiet!" the woman called back. Manuel ate his meal hastily for he couldn't wait to get back to his reading.

During the following weeks, Manuel found out about a church in Apatzingán. Every Sunday he began taking the four hour long bus ride to Apatzingán. He would arrive for the morning service and stay until the evening service after which he would make the long trip back to Morelia. On one such occasion he approached the pastor and asked, "Sir, why is it that the sins I used to commit without a second thought now bother me?" The pastor smiled as he explained, "You've been converted Manuel. God has given you a new heart with new desires." Manuel smiled to himself that Sunday as he walked out of the church service. A new heart indeed. What joy it brought him to think of how God had done for him what a lifetime of worldly pleasures had been unable to do. He had found true happiness, and just in time—when Jesus came!

Epilogue: The pastor at the church in Apatzingán saw that eight hours of travel every Sunday was not the best situation for Manuel, who was still in the university at this point. He suggested introducing Manuel to a missionary friend of his who worked in Morelia. This is how Manuel met Art Mikesell who discipled him for many months.

In the following years, Manuel became a dedicated evangelist. He never missed an opportunity to give the gospel. He eventually led almost every member of his large family to Christ, including his mother and father. Manuel began serving the Lord in various cities of central Mexico, including Salamanca, Salvatierra and Oaxaca. During his time in Salamanca, he married Ana, a sweet young girl who had also become a fervent evangelist since her conversion at age 20.

Manuel and Ana later moved back to Morelia and began a small Bible study with several people there, but after the incident of being mistaken for his criminal cousin, Manuel realized the best place for him was far away from his family. Not wanting to abandon the new converts in Morelia, he contacted Ted Clark who at the time was looking for a new city in which to begin a new work, along with his family and partners, Denny and Arlene Norris. Manuel invited them to come to Morelia and take over his Bible study. Because of this, the Clarks and Norris' decided to come to Morelia rather than Aguascalientes, a city they had considered.

After this, Manuel and Ana went as missionaries to Spain. There they served the Lord faithfully for 20 years in this place known as hard soil for the gospel. In all their time there, they never saw one Spaniard turn to Christ, although they had quite a fruitful harvest among foreigners who would come to the country to work.

Now, fast-forward 25 years from the time Ted and Priscilla Clark arrived in Morelia. They had a team doing one of their evangelistic outreaches at a park one day and a woman was standing nearby watching the Mime Presentation. She wept as she saw how truly her life was replayed before her eyes in this simple burden skit. She realized for the first time that Christ had died for her sins. She expressed interest in receiving a Bible study at her house. As the believers began to study with her and her husband, they realized that the husband, Moises, was from Aguilillas. Immediately recognizing the name, Ted said, "Oh, I know someone from Aguilillas. His name is Manuel Valencia." "I know him well!" was the surprising response. "We lived together in Morelia for several years."

You must remember that the reason Manuel even came to Morelia in the first place was because Moises, (his friend from Aguilillas) had invited him to live with them in their students house. Now the reason the Clarks came to Morelia is because Manuel invited them. So in a very round-about way, the Clarks came to Morelia because of Moises. And now, the gospel had come back to him through the Clarks.

Just recently, Manuel and Ana returned to the area and were able to reconnect with Moises and Esperanza. Manuel wasted no time in begging Moises to turn to the Savior. After several days spent at Moises' house, Manuel and Ana joyfully reported that he had finally made a sincere confession of faith in Christ, joining his wife, who had trusted in the Lord early on after beginning her study of the Scriptures.

With a knock on the door, just in the nick of time, God miraculously snatched a soul from the fire and has since used him to bring countless others to Himself.



