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JOURNEY OF FAITH

FORWARD

All the glory goes to Jesus Christ, Who continues to do great and mighty things through His people, people who are much of the time just simple seemingly insignificant and common individuals. This is a story of a small army of these individuals working together drawing strength from, and depending fully on, the God they seek to serve, in caring for some very precious and needy children in Baja, Mexico. It's a story of how God called one man and his wife to be part of that special army.

The purpose of recounting this story is to encourage its readers to keep reaching forward and pressing on to attain the ultimate goal, which is knowing and obediently following God's perfect will for their lives. To remind them not to faint during times of tribulation, but to patiently and faithfully expect God's timely and miraculous intervention. This story is an account of how Jesus is seeking, even today, to glorify His Father through those who will believe and put their trust in Him.

... "I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:12-14

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To my mother and my father I offer my thanks for never giving up on me and for faithfully being a light in the darkness and inspiring and nudging me toward God for as long as I can remember.

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There are large volumes of books in heaven revealing detailed testimonies of countless heroes and donors who have been so faithful in our times of need, many giving and laboring behind the scenes. Some day the records will be opened to justify God's gracious outpouring of generosity.

Last, but most important of all, I give publicly all glory for all that has and is happening in our lives and in the ministry to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has been a closer friend than any this world could ever hope to produce. To Him be all the glory both now and forever.

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I GIVE MY LIFE TO YOU LORD . . . CHAPTER ONE

NAVIDAD (CHRISTMAS) 1992.

The excitement could be felt building all over the orphanage as we made final preparations for what was our annual Christmas Outreach to the poor. We had, for the last four years, invited the needy families from some of the surrounding communities nearby to share Christmas with us. We provided dinner, a service, and hopefully a gift for each person. For many little ones it was their only gift. We were expecting 300 guests this year and it was becoming evident that we were going to come up short in the gift area! We told the children the problem (the grapevine is the quickest way to get the word out around here). It wasn't long before some of the kids came to our house with gifts in their hands. They brought gifts they had received from visitors a few weeks before. These gifts had been given to them. We didn't ask them to give them up, we just let the Lord touch their hearts, and He did.

To our amazement Miguel brought his most prized possession! Someone had given him a really nice remote control car. He wanted to give it to the needy children.

“Wait, wait Miguel, you don't have to give them **this!**” Suzi, my wife said.

“This is for the poor kids,” he said, “We have so much and they have so little,” and walked away. Miguel had come to stay at the orphanage when his mother died. He was the one that had so little. He was the one that was the "poor kid." He had come full circle and had expressed the view of the many children, "our kids" as we affectionately call them at Colina de Luz. They wanted to give as it had been given to them.

It was probably one of the greatest blessings that we have ever had at Christmas time to see our kids from Colina de Luz orphanage being so generous.

We filled all the gift bags that year. Nearly all the orphanage children gave from their hearts to see the gifts bags filled. You should have seen their joy when they saw one of the scruffy little visitors who came from the colonies opening the gifts they had personally given. That was when they knew for sure it was more blessed to give than to receive.

When Miguel said "we have so much and they have so little," I thought about our first visit to this orphanage. When we drove up the hill, we had no idea what to expect. What we found was nearly one hundred poorly cared for children, and a very dirty place. The conditions were absolutely unbelievable; it looked like the place had been trashed. The name at that time was, La Puerta de Refugio. It means The Door of Refuge. Almost all the windows had been broken out and the children were filthy. Most of the children had lice crawling in their hair. The situation was overwhelming and sad.

Foul odors wafted up wherever we walked. Most were unidentifiable. There had not been electricity for some time, which meant they couldn't pump water. It was necessary for the kids to go down the hill to the neighbors to fill buckets of water and lug them back up the hill, and even then the supply was scarce. God has miraculously

changed the orphanage, now named Colina de Luz, so much since we first saw it that the children truly could say, “We have so much and they have so little.”

A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST

Karen is a good example of how God makes changes in the lives of the children at Colina de Luz. She caused us innumerable problems after she first arrived. For a period of time she had found refuge with her godmother before she came to us when she was thirteen. Life with her family had become unbearable for her. Her father was a heavy drinker, going from job to job and not being able to hold onto any one of them. Karen's older sister and mother would yell and hit when they wanted something. From the physical appearance of Karen, it was evident she was their target. She had scratches and scaring all over her beautiful face. Fighting was how the family functioned, all of them. Karen had succumbed to her sister's pressure to steal money from her godmother and bring it back to her. And when she was caught, Karen was told by her godmother she was not welcome to live with her any longer. She was tossed back and forth, in and out of her family and with friends and relatives. Often the police would come to her house, when the fighting was at its worst. Finally her parents were reported and Karen was removed from her home. The DIF, Child Welfare, brought her to the orphanage.

Trusting adults was out of the question for Karen. She made it her goal to make each and every one of us who crossed her path pay for what her parents had done to her.

We did just about everything we could to let her know we loved her. We gave her many opportunities to adapt to her new life. But eventually the day of reckoning came. Her missionary dorm parent came into my office and said that either Karen had to leave or she was going to leave. She could not handle her anymore, no one could. So I told the missionary to go get Karen and bring her to my office.

When Karen came in, I said to her, “Well, Karen, we’ve tried to be good to you, and we’ve reasoned with you. I told you before that if you couldn’t behave the time of grace was going to run out and I was going to have to discipline you differently. Now is that time. Karen you’ve gone over the line just once too often. Now it’s time for a different kind of discipline. No more sitting on your bed or doing dishes.”

Karen looked unconcerned and replied, “What do you mean different discipline?”

“I’m going to have to give you a spanking,” I said.

She started laughing at me and replied, “You think you’re going to spank ME?”

I knew for sure it wasn’t going to be easy. She was a very strong girl. We found that out when the Health Department came to give inoculations and it took five or six of us to hold her down! But I answered just the same, “Yeah, I’m going to spank YOU!”

“If you spank me, then I’ll just run away,” she threatened.

“In that case, Karen, I’m going to give you one hour to decide whether I spank you or I drive you to another orphanage. But you’re not going to stay here in the same condition you’re in now.” And I started to walk out of my office.

“Wait, wait, where are you going,” she said excitedly.

“I’ll be back in one hour to get your answer,” I called over my shoulder.

“You don’t have to wait an hour; I’ve decided . . . I’ll tell you right now . . . You can spank me.”

I gave her a couple of fairly good swats. They weren't drastic but I knew I needed to get her attention. We are very careful when we discipline the children because we are constantly scrutinized since we are foreigners. We don’t want to do anything that could be considered abuse by the Mexican government. We always have two adults present when we, or any of our staff, spank. There is a little paddle board that we use, and there is no other physical contact.

After the spanking Karen started sobbing, and that was the beginning of her healing. I put my arms around her and told her once again how much we love her and how much Jesus loves her and wants to help her change. Inside all that bitterness and resentment we could see there was a really good person. She began to change. It was not the end of her spankings, but the ones that followed seemed to reaffirm how much we cared and caused her to attach herself more and more to my wife and me. After a while she became Suzi's, (my wife) Chicle (that’s Spanish for gum). She has stuck to her more like super glue than gum, and is to this day, more than seven years later!

Karen had been at the orphanage about five years, when one day I asked her what she wanted to do with her life. She was getting close to eighteen by that time.

She answered me, “I’m hoping to go to secretarial school. I want to be the orphanage secretary some day. I’m going to help Suzi because I can see she has more work than she can handle.”

Her goal really touched my heart and two years later we were honored to attend her graduation from computer school. Now she helps run our computers at the orphanage.

She knows how to do the banking and the payroll. She is always running errands to assist my wife. She has the respect of the other children and adults as well, not to mention her testimony as a girl who came to Colina and God turned her life around.

Karen has had numerous boys interested in her. She is a beautiful girl, with an outgoing personality. But it's very clear, if they aren't interested in becoming a missionary at Colina, she's not interested in them. She often says she is planning to be around to take care of us in our old age. God has miraculously transformed Karen. She is a new creature in Christ.

OUR EARLY MARRIAGE

Colina de Luz is an orphanage in Mexico, where my wife and I have been called by God to Administrate. Our lives have repeatedly been blessed by children who have been abused or abandoned and call Colina, "home."

Suzi and I were married on February 27, 1965. I was eighteen years old and she was sixteen. We had been boyfriend and girlfriend for two years before our marriage. Just after I turned eighteen, I took a good job that paid well. I was accustomed to working hard most all my life. As a kid, I mowed lawns and had two paper routes. Later I worked in car washes, gas stations, or just about any other work I could find. Just about as far back as I can remember I had a job.

Within the first six years of our marriage we had four children, three boys and one girl. All were delivered Caesarean and our insurance didn't cover a lot of the extra costs. Our medical bills soared. There were times when I worked two fulltime jobs, or one and

as much overtime as I could get. We always tried to pay our bills and accept our responsibility.

A LIFE AND DEATH SITUATION

When my daughter, which is our third child, was born, April 29, 1969, our lives were in total spiritual shambles. The doctor came to me in the waiting room and said that my wife was more than likely not going to make it. At that very moment I fell on my face before God. It was late into the night. I wandered into a room I found empty and cried like never before. I had been continually rejecting the Lord all my life.

I was twenty-three, at the end of my rope, and I knew I needed God in my life. I wanted to have a serious discussion with Him about helping my wife through this delivery to save her life. I knew I couldn't speak to the Lord about anything until I first settled some old business we had, my relationship with Him. So that is what I did. It took a long time as I went over one thing after another, repenting of the many serious things that were wrong in my life. Finally I just asked God to forgive me. With true repentance in my heart, God did forgive me . . . I could feel it, the peace of God that infiltrated my heart. There was no doubt He had forgiven me of all my sins. With that behind me, I petitioned MY Father saying, "Lord, I have to ask you to be with my wife. Please don't let her die. I love her . . . I need her. I have to have her in my life. Have mercy on us."

And the Lord did have mercy on us. He spoke directly to my heart and that peace of His filled me once again. I just knew that God was taking care of my wife and she was

going to be all right. Then I asked the Lord to be with our baby. “Save its life Lord. Help it to be born without complications.” God again spoke to my heart and gave me peace, so much peace that I started laughing and rejoicing. I was just sooo happy. I knew God was taking care of Suzi and the baby. There wasn’t a doubt in my mind. God had told me so Himself.

Incredibly as I was rejoicing, it came to me that while God was in the business of making miracles, I had one more petition, “Could You make it a girl?” God gave us our beautiful baby daughter, Heather, that day!

That is how the Lord saved me. It was one of the happiest days of my life, probably *the* happiest. I knew I was clean in the Lord. It was the first time I had ever felt clean inside like that. Only the shed blood of Jesus can give us a bath from the inside out.

THE FOUNDATION FOR GOD’S LEADING

We had struggles in those first days as Christians. I can testify to the importance of connecting with a good Bible believing, Bible teaching church. After more than a year I was able to stabilize and use what the Lord had been showing me as I studied His Word. I read my Bible over and over again and began sharing with people what I knew, which really wasn’t all that much; just a basic salvation message. For example, I told them that if they would repent and give their heart and life to Jesus, God would keep His promise to forgive them for all their sins. They would be cleansed like never before and God would make a totally new creation out of them as the Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:17. That’s

the simple message that I was able to share with people. Some would receive it and others chose to reject it.

After being a Christian for a couple of years I began teaching Sunday School. Suzi was asked to help out in Vacation Bible School. We both enjoyed working with different ages of children. Later I was a Youth Director and a Sunday School Superintendent. How I loved it all. I also helped teach some Home Fellowship groups. Although we had no idea at the time, we can see clearly now how God was preparing us for the work He had planned with the children at Colina de Luz.

As I studied the Word, verses spoke to my heart like the ones in John 14 where Jesus says in verses 12, 13, and 14; that if I put my belief in Him, the same works that He did, while on this earth, I could do too and even greater things, and in doing those I would be glorifying the Father just as he did.

This was on my mind as I continued to read my Bible. God's Word had told us all as Christians that our faith will come as we hear and study His Word. The more I studied the more I knew He was talking to me and to all who call Him Lord. He wants to use us so that He will be glorified in the Son. (Verse 13) And in verse 21 I could see that if I loved Him, which I did, then I'd be keeping His commandments. God had done so much for me. I wanted more of His Will for my life. I wanted to do something in return to show my appreciation.

Continuing in my studies, I found in John 14 verses 16 and 17, that He would send me a Helper, one that would always be with me; I did not have to go it alone. And then in verses 18, 19, and 20, it's confirmed that I would be living in Him and He would live in me.

What's clear in God's Word is a real relationship that God has offered each one of us. I wanted to be one with the Lord as much as it was possible. That relationship was growing deeper and deeper as He worked in my life. Verse 21 says, "*He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*" If I wanted to have God use me in this life, then I could see that keeping His commandments was going to be a major part of Him manifesting Himself to me so that I could be used.

My studies were showing me that I could have a relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Not just me alone, but all four of us together. The complete Trinity walking and talking together with me as we worked and ministered. This is God's desire for me, and for every Christian. This is the key to a successful, exciting, fulfilling and victorious life with Him. This is the foundation that I was to build on.

WALKING BY FAITH

We really need to learn God's Word as we begin our walk with Him by faith. We are like babies first learning to walk. We don't take giant steps when we first begin. We need a guidebook, and instructions to live by. That is what the Bible is, our guidebook, our instruction's manual. We make mistakes, fall down, get up, and try again. There is nothing different in learning to walk by faith. Mistakes are made, but we must do the best we can. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Attending a good

church is so very important. We need to be built up with the teaching of the Bible, and in study time alone, good quality study time. Then God will speak to us.

Not realizing it, I was being prepared as a young Christian by God for the work at Colina de Luz. I would ask Him to help me through all kinds of things in my daily life. Little miracles occurred and I knew that they were miracles and not just coincidences. I had found there is a big difference between the two. God was preparing me for the bigger miracles that were to come later. Different things would happen as I would pray for people. God brought people into my life and seemed to bump me up against them. I knew it was Him working in my life.

This particular day, I was running one of the largest machines in the shop. As I was standing there waiting for it to finish a cut, I had an incredible vision. In this vision we were seated on a train that was parked in the station. All of us on the train were rejoicing. Everyone was really happy, because we knew where we were headed. We were heaven bound and the train was getting ready to leave for its destination. The joy that we shared together was nothing less than overwhelming. Then the train started to move forward. As I looked out the window, I could see a friend of mine standing in the distance. It was Mike, a co-worker who Barry, a Christian co-worker, and I had tried to share the Lord with. Mike was well aware of the need he had in his life. As I looked closer at Mike, I could see that beside him, holding onto his hand, was his wife and children. They were the only ones in the station.

The vision was over and my eyes began to tear up as I realized the significance of it. Mike and his family were not going to be with us on our journey home, or with the Lord. I started crying and couldn't stop, I began praying, "God don't let anyone see me

like this. What kind of testimony would it be, me standing before my machine crying like a baby?" I tried to hide my face in my machine, but the vision of Mike and his family missing the train just stayed with me. "You gotta get a grip, Jim," I thought. After several minutes I sensed that someone had walked up behind me in the shop. I felt like the Lord was telling me to turn around. But how could I? My eyes were wet, my whole face was wet, yet I felt I had to turn around. How was I going to be a man of faith if I wasn't going to heed what I felt God was telling me to do?

So I turned around, and as I did, there was Mike, the one in my vision. I just looked at him, and with all the compassion that God had shed in my heart I said, "Mike the train's pulling away and you're not on it" He looked at me intently and with surprise on his face answered, "I know it, Jim," and he turned and walked away.

When I finally got my composure, several minutes later, Mike came back to my machine and said he'd like to talk to me. "How about at lunch?" I said. And that was the day Mike invited Jesus to come into his heart and life. Nothing planned, nothing too profound, just a young guy willing to turn around at God's direction and let Him change Mike. I was learning that God really did want to work through my life and would if I would be obedient to His instruction.

GOD LOOKS ON THE HEART

When the Lord first taught me about not looking on the outward appearance, I was working in another machine shop. There was a guy named Barry who worked there also. I really didn't care for this guy. He had a foul mouth and had been known to steal from the company. He seemed to me to be very arrogant, a proud sort of guy. When he quit, he stole tools from the company on his way out. That only made me dislike him all the more. A week or two later the company hired another worker that was similar in appearance to Barry. They both had the same name too. I suppose it was because they both had reddish hair that they looked alike to me. At any rate, I took an immediate disliking to this new guy. I really wanted nothing to do with him, and rarely even took the time to say, "Hi." I figured that anyone who looks so much like that other guy probably acts like him too. It was an ignorant thing for me to think, but honestly that's what I thought.

It was probably weeks before I said much to this new guy. Then one day the Lord spoke to me. I worked the second shift then, and I would usually pray before I went to work. I'd go into a room in the back of our house, and spend time in prayer. As I was praying, I found myself praying for him, his name was Barry.

The Holy Spirit interceded my prayers, as it says in Romans 8:26 and 27, and I began praying for Barry's salvation. I had to repent to the Lord, telling Him I knew it wasn't right of me to judge and compare him to this other guy. "Lord," I asked, "Forgive me." I asked the Lord to allow me to witness to him, but I wanted it to be totally by Him.

“Nothing I’ve dreamed up, just at the leading of your Holy Spirit. If nothing else Father, let me be a good testimony to him, something that will really bear fruit in his life.”

As I went to work that day, I forgot about my prayer. The foreman I had at the time, Lyle, came up to me and commented on the new worker, Barry. He told me what a nice guy he was and what a good employee. He was pleased with the jobs Barry had done. When I left that night, or actually around two o’clock the next morning, I started to pass Barry as I walked out the door. I looked over at him and he was looking back at me. I remembered what Lyle had said and took the opportunity to say something to this guy I had been so rude to. I shared with him that I heard he had been doing a good job and encouraged him to keep up the good work.

Then he asked me, “What do you do, go to college or something?”

“No,” I replied, “Why?”

“Because you’re always carrying those books around.”

Looking down at the pile of books under my arm I answered, “Oh this is my Bible that I study and some study aides I use.”

“Why would you want to do that?” he asked. So I started sharing the Lord with him. We went outside and talked, and talked some more until we realized the sun was coming up. We found ourselves doing that for several nights. Eventually I asked him if he would like to ask Christ into his life, and he said, “Yes” and he did. God reminded me of my prayers on Barry’s behalf. He became known to me affectionately as “Brother Barry” that day and was, and remains, one of my closest friends, confidants and encouragers. I know I can always share anything on my heart with my “Brother Barry.”

These were stepping stones in my life as I was learning the ways of the Lord, things that happened that were an encouragement to me. I enjoyed also reading books about how God was working in other peoples' lives to minister as He led them.

PRAYER OPENS THE DOOR

Looking back, we can see that nearly everything God was doing in my life and my wife's life was getting us ready for Colina de Luz. In 1981 we were with some friends in prayer. We had felt led to pray for a specific ministry, a mission. We felt ready to be used by God in whatever He saw fit to give us. We had never had much interest in missions before, nor had we got involved in them. Missionaries would come to church and tell about their mission. We would support them for a while, prayed for them and most often lose track of them.

This particular evening when we were praying we felt a definite leading to pray for a ministry that we, as a team, could be involved in. We prayed that God would lead us, and equip us and go before us and behind us. We made ourselves available to Him. As our prayer went on, we felt the Lord was laying Mexico, specifically Baja, on our hearts. And we asked the Lord to direct us further, but then there was just a silence. We had a beautiful time of prayer with our four friends. It was the foundation of many changes in our lives as well as the ministry we now serve.

OUR FIRST VISIT TO THE ORPHANAGE

As we went on about our lives, the Lord remembered our prayer. One day Vivian, who was one of the friends we prayed with for a mission, was in a Bible bookstore in Lake Elsinore. She overheard a young man talking to the store clerk. He was saying he had just come from an orphanage in Baja where he had been working. He said it was in great need of help. He was getting married soon and could no longer help them. He was trying to spread the word around about the need at the orphanage. Vivian asked him for directions to the orphanage, saying something like, “I think I’m supposed to ask you more about this orphanage.” He drew her a very sketchy map and when she returned home she excitedly called the rest of us who had prayed. We felt this was the answer to our prayer.

We had heard so many “horror stories” of people going into Mexico and never returning or being arrested for no apparent reason. Some of our group was reluctant to go and it took several months of encouraging each other before we actually made our first trip. We have come to the realization since then that what we had heard were just that, “stories.”

Finally four of us we were on our way. Of the original six who prayed, Vivian, our very special friend Mack her husband and Suzi and I left for Mexico. We had the assurance of Roy and Cathy (the other two) that we would have their prayers as we ventured out. Mack drove his van and when we got to the border we switched and I drove.

Going to Mexico was one thing, driving there was another! All we had to guide us was the sketchy map from the guy in the bookstore. It was a little worn after two months. We did quite well until we came to this place where Mack told me to turn. Just as I started to make the turn I felt the Lord leading, “No, don’t turn,” I listened and kept going straight.

Mack said excitedly, “What are you doing? You were supposed to turn right there, now what are we going to do?”

I told him I really felt like the Lord was telling me to go straight. Mack reminded me that *he* was the one with the map! I replied with, “I don’t know Brother (I always called him Brother, and he me) let’s just go straight for a while and if it doesn’t work out then we’ll turn around and go back.”

So we went straight and there was the Sears store in Tijuana, over on the right-hand side, just like the map showed. “Wow, I guess I read the map wrong.” Was Mack’s reply. But I hadn’t paid much attention to the map. I guess that’s just one of the ways the Lord led us there.

On that trip we made no wrong turns, in spite of the map. We went directly to the orphanage. The map we had truly was a joke. Maybe God wanted us to get there without incident on our first trip. But for at least a year after that we got lost every time. I suppose the Lord had in mind for us to explore and find our way around Tijuana that year.

The orphanage was deplorable and the bathrooms were by far the filthiest I had ever seen in my life. They did have flush toilets, but it was evident they had not been flushed in a very, very long time. They were overflowing on to the floor. Flies covered

the walls, the seats, and the floor. Was it possible the children were still coming in here, or had they found a corner somewhere that was more suitable?

As we walked around, we went into one of the two areas where the food was stored. The other area was locked. We found that when the generator quit working and the electricity went off, no one had bothered taking the food out of the freezers or the refrigerator. The food had been rotting and the flies had found it! There were maggots all over the food area and into the kitchen. We later realized, when we went to wash the dining room tables where the children had just eaten, that what we first thought was rice on the tables was in reality maggots also. It was without a doubt the most overwhelming thing four people like us had ever seen, smelled, or experienced. How could this happen just twelve miles inside the border of Mexico, not that far from downtown San Diego and a whole different world? Nothing was the way we had expected it to be, no heaters, no working showers, no decent place to go to the bathroom.

Needless to say our first mission turned out to be a foreign one all right, totally foreign of all our expectations (let that be a lesson to all future missionaries). I had an idea that maybe I would come and instruct some of the Mexican people on how to fix something, or some such thing as that. I had such an arrogant attitude about who we are as Americans verses what the Mexican people are. The world I grew up in had never prepared me for this --- or had it?

After we looked around for a while we couldn't help thinking that no one should have to live like this. But what could we do? We said we were coming to help meet their needs, but how could any one place have so many needs? There was only one place to start --- those toilets and that food area. Mack and I found some baggies somewhere, put them on our hands and started digging the crud out of the toilets. My wife and Vivian went to the kitchen to scrape the food and maggots off the floor, and that's where they

spent the day. We spent our day knee high in crud. After a while the baggies just filled up so we tossed them and ended up bare handed. It took us all the entire day to do the job that we knew was only a small dent in the work that had to be done, but we needed to get back to our families so we packed our things in the van, said our good-byes and headed out for home. We didn't stop until we got on the other side of the border. Then we parked to watch the sunset from the top of a hill, and listened to praise music.

We hardly spoke on the way home. I'm sure we were all in some sort of state of shock, running over in our minds all that we had seen that day. Our lives were never to be the same. A commitment was made that day by the four of us that we would come to the orphanage on a regular schedule and do whatever we could to help. That is just what we did. That was our first encounter with Colina de Luz (then La Puerta de Refugio). Little did we know that we would eventually be living there and would become the Administrators? God had much in store for as we made ourselves more and more available to Him.

GETTING INVOLVED

We began to share our experience with our church and home fellowship group. It wasn't long before we had a team of people who wanted to go down with us. We started collecting the things we knew they needed like clothing, blankets, medicines and shampoo. Our two and a half car garage was now a no car garage. We would take down a load and by the time we got back people had already dropped off stuff for the next trip.

In time we got to know the directors of the orphanage. We made it our goal to support them in any way that we could. We believed that they must have been the best Christian people on the face of this earth. After all, who would have been willing to live in a situation like that, day after day, year after year. They were Americans in their late fifties. He was a former pastor and accountant.

Over the next few years we had the directors in our homes many times. We treated them like royalty when they came. It was our desire to bless these “saints of God.”

We had been visiting the orphanage for about four years when an emergency came up. They had a Board of Directors meeting and didn't have enough members to meet their quorum. The four of us, Mack, Vivian, Suzi and I, were asked to be on their board. We were honored to accept that position and at the same time it made us feel like we had a responsibility to get more involved.

There were many attacks over the years. It seemed as though these people were put on this earth to suffer. The government kept saying the place was unfit to live in. Truly they were right, but what could these poor people do? The government authorities were threatening to close it down.

One day we got an emergency call. The DIF (child welfare) was coming and there would be no more opportunities to clean up the place. They were closing it once and for all. I took off work and rushed down to see what I could do to stop the whole thing. If nothing else I knew I could pray, and that's just what we did well into the night.

The next morning we stood out in front of the orphanage waiting for the inevitable. Then we saw them --- a troop of soldiers marching up the hill. I remember

thinking, my Lord, does it takes an army of soldiers to close down an orphanage? This was more serious than I'd thought! I was no doubt on my way to jail. What was coming next? But I believed in what I thought was going on at the orphanage and I wanted to stand up for what I thought at that time was right. So there we stood, and the soldiers kept advancing. Then right before they came to the entrance of the orphanage they made an abrupt turn and started marching down the hill. It was then I realized they were only on their regular maneuvers, and they just happened to choose this location, on this particular day.

We waited all day, and laughed together over the soldier incident. The government officials never came. We found out that some of the people in the community who had been receiving a lot of goods from the directors had gone to a local radio station and made a protest. That protest had slowed down the process with the government.

There was another time when the directors had an emergency and called for our help. They were supposed to be at a meeting of their covering ministry in Georgia. They said it was an important time to share the needs of the orphanage and perhaps get some help in staffing the place. It seemed they could never keep a good staff. So we told them we would come, the four of us along with some other friends, and we would do the very best we could. Not knowing Spanish was a definite disability, but this would be a good opportunity to get to know more about the orphanage first hand.

DEEPER INVOLVEMENT

The Directors lived in a single wide trailer with a living room that a visiting group had added on. It was located at the entrance to the orphanage. Our four-day stay there allowed us time to surprise the directors. We fixed the ceiling in the living room and then painted the room. We also cleaned out many piles of “junk” that had been stacked in every corner. We were very careful not to throw out anything of any value. The girls washed curtains, and cleaned extensively.

Five of the orphanage children were living in this house along with the directors, so someone would have to sleep in there to care for the children. Suzi and I were the ones. What an experience sleeping in the director’s bedroom. The screens on the windows (there was no glass) were nothing more than chain link fencing. Just about anything could get through it and just about everything did. We were really tired from our busy day, but it was hard to get to sleep. It was cold and there were many strange noises right outside the window. Packs of dogs would come up at night and go through the trash that was readily available. But what disturbed us the most were the sounds coming from inside the bedroom. Finally I got up and turned on the light. The walls were literally crawling. We had seen plenty of cockroaches and mice outside, but now they were sharing the night with us! There was nothing we could do but to pull the blankets up over us, and pray for God’s protection, and that He would give us some rest.

Most of the days were spent redoing the director’s front room. While we were working, some of the children came frantically running into the house. They were jabbering a mile a minute.

We needed to know what they were saying! One of the boys knew some English and finally we understood what they were trying to tell us.

One of the ladies who worked in the dorms had been kidnapped. They said her boyfriend had come in, grabbed her, threw her in the car and drove off! We had absolutely no idea where he was taking her or even in what direction they were going. What were we supposed to do, four Americans, no phone, no 911? This was Mexico, we were strangers, so we did the only thing we could and that was pray. We gathered in a circle and prayed together, "Lord, bring her back. Find some reason to bring her back so we can protect this girl." Sure enough in a short time she returned.

We asked her then, "Do you want to go with this guy?"

She was adamant, "No!"

We found out why he had brought her back. She left her purse in the room and there was money in it, and he wanted the money. We let her know that we would do our best to protect her and told her to return to one of the rooms and stay there until we told her to come out. Then we went to her boyfriend and told him that he might as well leave, because she wasn't going anywhere with him. He left only to return a short time later with some friends.

"Oh great! Now what?" I thought.

They parked outside and it was like a stand off. Were they going to come in? Were we about to have a war? And where were the police we had sent one of the older kids for? After many hours he and his friends finally left. Perhaps they got the picture or maybe they had other plans for later. But thank God, they never returned.

So much happened on that trip. Were things always like this in Mexico? This was a much different life than any of us were used to. We found out that many things happened at this orphanage. It seemed like they were constantly having attacks, and we questioned God about that and asked Him to help us all out.

As time went on, we discussed the situation and thought of the various possibilities for the reason behind all the difficulties. We kept coming up with one very possible answer. I believe it was our pastor, John Duncan, at Calvary Chapel Lake Elsinore, who led us in the right direction. Perhaps it was “sin in the camp.” There were several situations that had troubled us, and we felt like it was time to deal with them.

There was a couple living on the premises that we thought were married, but found out there were not. They were living together in sin. Then there was an American missionary, Rusty who’d been there for some time. Rusty had become very lazy over time. There was always so much to do and Rusty wasn’t doing his part, he really wasn’t doing much of any part!

We as board members wrote them both a letter calling them to repentance and decided to hand deliver it. It was close to eleven when we arrived at the orphanage that night. We went to the front house and woke up the director. We told him that we felt it was urgent to deal with the sin in the camp, and deal with it now. He went with us as we spoke to these men. One by one we called them to repentance. The one, obviously, could not live there anymore. He was not married to the woman who shared his house. The other one had to have some direction. It wasn’t unusual for his entire day to consist of only burning trash. He had gotten into a trap and he needed to climb out.

In the coming weeks Rusty made an effort to improve. It was difficult for him, and he had little support from the director. The man who was living in sin dragged his feet using one excuse after the other why he could not move. The director did not follow up on their restoration and the result of that was our church withdrawing their support. We personally continued to help, but had many questions that really were never answered.

During the time that we were bringing groups down, several of us in one group came down with hepatitis. I must have gotten it from an outside water faucet where I washed my face after eating my sack lunch, because the food at the orphanage had never passed my lips. Forget what the Bible says about praying for the food and eating it by faith. There was no way I was going to touch that stuff! So the Lord in His ultimate wisdom allowed me to get sick despite myself. Our son Matthew also got sick.

As I lay in my bed, and my son Matthew lay in his, days and weeks passed. It was all I could do to go to the bathroom, just steps from my bed. When I got up I would take a nap after I got back into bed. Matthew too was very sick. The sickest I had ever seen him.

The Lord had plenty of time to speak to me, and He did. The Lord gave me many weeks to reinforce my relationship with my son. He also showed me He wants us to live by faith in every area! I made a promise at that time that I would never refuse any food offered to me again. Since then we have prayed over many questionable meals. The Lord has blessed me with good health and hardly any stomach problems from the different foods I have asked Him to bless. I learned a very important lesson from Hepatitis!

WHEN GOD GIVES A QUESTION TO ASK, ASK IT!

During our first years of visiting the orphanage the Lord laid it on my heart to build a bathroom. The children didn't have a decent shower. They had a little room with cold running water, and that room was always filthy. I think they used it as a bathroom, although there was no toilet. They went to the sink and poured water over themselves to get clean. When the weather was cold, I'm sure the time between bathing was longer. The Lord wanted us to build a complete bathroom facility with showers, toilets, sinks, mirror and floor that could be kept clean.

When I talked to the pastor of our church, which was a small church, I ran the idea of building a bathroom past him. I wanted to know if he thought we could send a team to build it. He didn't think so. But he felt that if we could find someone to build it then our church could help finance it. That was a generous offer and I was praising the Lord for the financing. Now we needed someone to do the building.

Finding a group of people who would build the bathroom turned out to be a bigger problem than I anticipated. The orphanage was in bad repair at the time (still with the original directors) and people were not too anxious to build something they could see would not be taken care of. I couldn't seem to find anyone the least bit interested. I was batting zero everywhere I turned and getting a little discouraged.

Then one day I was walking near the bathroom. There was always a problem in that facility. The sewer pipes that were put in were undersized and always getting clogged. When I walked by there, I saw a guy working inside. He introduced himself as

Terry. He was from a large church in San Diego. He was nice looking, and well-dressed. I introduced myself to him.

After talking to Terry for a while I found out that he was a contractor, experienced in several different areas of the construction business. He knew his stuff. At the same time we were carrying on that conversation I heard the Lord telling me to ask him if he needed some money. I just shrugged off the thought, thinking I'm not going to ask this well dressed and apparently well educated man if *he* needs money! It was clear by his appearance that he was in no need of my help. But the Lord kept telling me to ask him, did he need money? It was even hard for me to continue with an intelligent conversation because all that I could hear was the Lord telling me again to ask that question.

It was one of those times I had to respond or I wasn't going to have a moment's peace until I did. But still I didn't ask the question. Instead I headed out just like Jonah did to Tarshish, so to speak. I left and walked down to the patio area, and when I got there I felt in my spirit that the Lord was very serious about asking this guy if he needed any money. It was truly not something I wanted to do, but I knew I better obey the Lord. If I'm not obedient to the Lord then I'm going backward in my Christian walk instead of forward.

Slowly I approached the bathroom Terry was still working in. Hesitant, I walked in. I walked up to him and said, "Terry, I have to ask you something,"

"Yeah, what," he replied.

I went on, "Terry, this is probably going to sound really ridiculous, but I just have to ask you . . . do you need any money for anything?" He looked at me with surprise on his face. Oh, how I hoped I had not insulted him.

He reached back in his pocket, pulled out a paper and said, "Do you know the Lord laid it on my heart to build a bathroom for this orphanage?" I've sketched out what God laid on my heart to build. The only problem is, I don't have the funds to build it. I have about six weeks between jobs now and if I had the money, I would build the bathroom."

I stood there in total awe, and then I said, "When do you think you can start, Terry?" He said he could start any time. So I said to him, "If you can meet with me here on Monday I will have the money you need to get started."

When I got back home, I went to my pastor, John, and told him that we had the contractor. I told him how the Lord had laid it on the Terry, the contractor's heart to build the bathroom complete with everything we envisioned. I shared with Pastor John the struggles I had with asking Terry the question about needing money. Pastor John wrote me out a check and we started building the bathrooms. That is how the main bathrooms were built. Often I've wondered what would've happened if John had not opened up his heart to share with the financing or I had kept walking down to the patio, continuing to ignore the Lord. Maybe we would still be trying to build some bathrooms. I don't know, but I do know that we each have our parts and we each need to be tuned into that voice inside that lets us know just what that part is. Imagine what could happen if every Christian would hear and obey the voice of God.

OUR EYES ARE OPENED

Another couple from the church we attended began coming with our groups. They were of Mexican descent, and both spoke fluent Spanish. We were glad to have Fausto and his wife Suzi ministering with us. We all became very good friends. As we ministered at the orphanage and in the nearby village we became more and more dependent on Fausto and Suzi to help us communicate.

Fausto and Suzi spent a lot of time talking to the children and staff. One day they came to us and said hesitantly, “We need to tell you something. This place is not what you think it is.”

I was stunned and answered, “What do you mean? Explain what you’re talking about.” They said, “There are all kinds of things going on around here. There are no devotions for the kids like they told you there were. In fact the directors are rarely here during the week!” Then they started telling us what the children had been sharing with them over the course of our visits. Our first response was, that this was not possible! These are really good missionary people who are just having a hard time. We wanted to believe in them. Being on their board of directors we felt very responsible. Perhaps if we had not had that extent of involvement we would have just walked away, as many others had. But, we needed to get to the bottom of these accusations.

For the next year and a half, or more, we spent a lot of time following up, talking to the sparse staff through our friends, Fausto and Suzi. We talked to the children too. The nightmares we had heard were confirmed on nearly every hand. Young children were going in dark rooms, and getting naked together. Many of the older children, especially the ones who lived in the director's house, had freedom they never should have had. We found the directors were not there much of the time, and had been withdrawing

fairly large sums of money out of an orphanage account, while they were telling us as board members there was no money.

On one of our visits Mack walked into the bathroom and found some of the boys looking at a filthy magazine and he took the boys to the director. "Look at what these kids are reading! How did they ever get their hands on a book like this?" It was absolutely disgusting, the lowest type of pornography!

The director's response was, "Well you know, boys will be boys."

We felt as though we had been suckered. No one looking out for the best interests of these children would take a book like that so lightly.

Our board meetings were twice a year at that time, and we all had more and more questions as time went on. It disturbed us even more that the director never seemed to have time to compile a financial report. He was a former accountant. We knew from some records we had seen on one of our visits that something was wrong. By this time three years had passed without any financial accountability.

Now we began to see a different side of the story. We realized that all the good things that we knew about the directors were things they had told us about themselves! We had never really witnessed much of anything ourselves. Because of the love we had felt for them over the years, we decided together what the Lord would have us do. Call them to repentance! We did so together. That day was perhaps one of the hardest days of our lives. Who were we to tell these people that they were in sin? But someone needed to for the sake of the children, and we were their close friends. They refused to hear us and did not repent. That was the saddest part of all. They refused to be accountable to

anyone. Things went from bad to worse. We found that the Governor's office in Baja was again in the process of closing the orphanage.

CONFRONTATION

Finally we were forced to call their legal covering. It was an organization in Georgia. The head of this organization and the director were long time close friends. The director had actually been their accountant at one time. This covering wanted to hear nothing negative about them or their ministry. We did our very best to fill them in on the many things they should have known about, but they would not listen. We gave them example after example. Our own church had donated money for mattresses one time when our pastor visited. Month after month passed and the director never got the mattresses. Our pastor kept asking us, "Was it enough money? Do the kids sleep better now?" The truth was, the director never bought the mattresses. Then one day when we were there visiting, a group arrived with a truckload of new mattresses. We thought the mattresses had finally arrived. We struck up a conversation with the young man who had driven the truck.

"Yeah," he said, my church got these mattresses free and I knew there was a need down here and decided to bring them down."

"You mean Clarence (not his real name), the director didn't buy these?" was our reply.

"No, we just thought you could use them," he said.

Later in the day Clarence came up to me and said, “See, Jim, I told you I would buy those mattresses,” and proceeded to tell me how much they cost him and how I had been pressuring him for so long.

It was then that our suspicions of Clarence's sense of honesty were confirmed. We told their covering organization that something had to happen. There were too many unanswered questions. They set a date several days later to come out with a team of pastors and investigate our allegations. These pastors were also under the covering of this organization. Eight of us who were on the orphanage board at the time met with them in San Diego. We had, for all intents and purposes, a regular trial. We were allowed to present our testimonies and documentation in the director's presence. And they, the directors, were given every opportunity to respond.

After many hours of discussion and reviewing of documents the pastors asked if they could meet with the directors alone. We left to return the next morning and the directors and pastors talked and prayed well into the night.

The next morning we were called back into the meeting and they told us of their decision. They had voted unanimously that the directors were to leave the ministry. Although it grieved our hearts for these people who had become our friends, we knew it was the best decision for the children. But now the ministry was turned over to us, the board of directors. There was some pressure put on us to join the same legal covering that the now former directors had, but we refused realizing that if so much could go on without them knowing, this was not the kind of covering we would be seeking.

THE LAST STRONGHOLD

When the directors got back to the orphanage and away from their covering and board of directors, they changed their mind about leaving. We didn't know that when we left our house, one hundred miles away, but for some reason I felt in my spirit that something was going on. I brought my binoculars with me. Then I could check out the situation before we ascended the hill to the orphanage.

Everything looked quiet from the top of the adjoining hill, too quiet! It was very strange. We drove up and got out of the van to walk through the grounds. Were all the children on a field trip or something? We didn't see anybody! When we walked through the dorm area and reached the dining room, Clarence came out. With him was a small army of men who came from several different areas as if they had been hiding, and he asked me, "Do you come in peace?"

I replied, "Clarence, there will be no peace as long as you don't repent and change. This place can't go on like it has been."

Clarence answered back with, "I have some men here that want to talk to you."

"Who are they," I asked?

And he answered, "They are local government officials, called the Ejido. They are the ones with the authority here. They own the property."

"Well praise the Lord, Clarence, because I would really like to talk to them."

Suzi and I and two other board members walked into the dining room and sat down to talk over the situation. The first question they asked opened the door to what we had hoped to share, "Just why you want these people to leave?"

The Holy Spirit came over us and we shared from our hearts. "Coincidentally" we had with us all the documentation that we'd shared earlier with the covering organization, and even more "coincidentally" the Ejido president had with him his daughter who was gracious enough to be our interpreter. If my memory serves me right, it was about an hour and a half, or possibly longer as we went over one thing after another. When all the information was presented, the Ejido president stood up and asked the director, "Clarence, why are you still here?"

When the directors prepared to leave, they packed up nearly everything that wasn't nailed down. When we came back that weekend, we asked them why they had taken everything. He told us that everything had been donated to them personally, and I replied with, "If you think you need to do this, then someday you're going to have to answer to God."

There was not a nut or bolt left when the director cleaned out the tool shop. The only things of any significance that were left were some bunk beds and some pots and pans. With our permission they also took the trailer that was attached to the front house. That left us with a half a house that needed to be boarded up. The half they left was filthy.

We were left with a bare orphanage, and almost no financial support. Clarence had told people that he would be starting 'something else,' and hoped that they would continue to support him. Some came up to the orphanage to check out the story. Some did not. There was so much confusion that many former donors withdrew support altogether not wanting to be part of such a mess. It was a most difficult time for us all.

SEARCHING FOR A DIRECTOR . . . CHAPTER TWO

We prayed continually that we would find a director. We were connected with a young man from Oregon named Bill (not his real name). Bill came in as Director. What a quick answer to our prayer, we thought, not listening to several of our older children who had been in the room when we interviewed him and thought differently. Bill did get a lot of things done. He was a real go-getter. His goal was to clean up the years of junk that had accumulated. He wanted that place clean. By that time we had changed the name to Colina de Luz, which means Hill of Light. We had been advised by our good friend Dean Tinney that we needed to be a new organization from the name out. Actually we had Dean in mind for our first director, but the Lord had other things in store for him, and directed him to a piece of property to start his ministry, Sparrows Gate, also a home for children.

I am sure we hauled more than one hundred truckloads of garbage from the orphanage during that first year. It was so bad that the junk and trash were layers deep. When it would rain the trash that was on the ground would get stepped on, then buried. It was sticking out of the ground almost everywhere we turned. There were mounds of accumulated junk all over the grounds and in every room that wasn't housing children.

People who were once discouraged started hearing that things were changing and some started coming back. On more than one occasion people would tell us of how they tried to seek change, but had walked away in defeat.

Early in January the next year we had a huge rain storm. The roofs were damaged. One of the buildings had lost nearly all its roofing paper. I remember

standing near the dining room close to the point of tears. I was thinking, God, how can we succeed in this. It is taking all the money we can get our hands on just to keep things going, now this. We were both still working full time jobs, and spending nearly every spare moment there.

It was normal for me to work a fifty-hour week and Suzi's job at the Post Office was a forty-two hour a week job. We went down to Mexico every Friday night after work, came back on Monday morning, usually around 1:00 a.m.. Then we would return on Wednesday night after work to bring supplies, and return home in the wee hours of Thursday morning. We kept up this schedule for the better part of the next two years. The drive was 100 miles which took us about two and a half hours each way. We couldn't keep this up much longer!

ASK AND YE SHALL RECEIVE

I remember feeling really discouraged and telling the Lord, "You gotta send some more help. There's just not enough help, not enough finances. I know you love these kids even more than I do, Lord. We need your help. We need more of your help."

Not too long after my plea a man called me from Northern California. He said, "We have more than one hundred people that want to come down for Easter vacation. We have \$8,000 to put toward a project. Can you house one hundred people?"

I heard myself blurt out, "No problem." We really needed them to repair those roofs, but I had no idea how we were going to accommodate one hundred people! But I had confidence that the Lord had sent this group and He had a plan.

We ended up going to the secondary school behind us asking the director if we could put up some tents around the school. “That would be fine,” was his answer, “but don’t put up tents, use the classrooms.” School was not in session for two weeks.

The classrooms were cleaned and we prepared for the group. During that week all the roofs on the dorms were refurbished. Much of the outside of the orphanage was painted, as well as a lot of work done in the dilapidated kitchen. God has been so faithful. He has been so good to us. We have had so many trials and tribulations, but that is a chapter in itself. We have always had the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

DIRECTOR PROBLEMS

We had several problems with Bill, the new director. He had a hot temper and had a hard time being accountable. He had not used good judgment in his wife’s absence, and had been in several situations with some young girls who regularly visited the orphanage to help us. This indiscretion along with his inability to be accountable caused us to ask him to move on.

A Mexican couple, Juan and his wife Celita (not their real names), who had come with Bill to minister at the orphanage became the next to be in charge. We loved and respected Juan and Celita. We got to know them well and spent a lot of time with them each time we came to the orphanage. We felt good about them being there. They shared the bulk of responsibility in the months to come with an American couple, Poncho and Karla we had hired.

I had heard from a friend who visited that Juan had been under a lot of stress. From time to time there was a tremendous amount of pressure caring for the children and dealing with the hiring of staff and the problems that arose. Then one day I got a call from Karla. She said we needed to come right away. One of the girls had been very rebellious and disrespectful to Juan. Juan had gotten stressed out and hit the older girl with a broom. He kicked her as she lay on the ground. We rushed right down.

In my heart I knew that I could not allow Juan to stay. The children would now be afraid of him. Many had come from situations in their families that were abusive. This was their haven. We had to protect them and let them know that this was going to be a safe place. We counseled and wept with Juan and his wife Celita before they left that day. Months later, I along with many of the orphanage children, were present when he went before his home church and repented publicly. It blessed us all to see such an act of humility and deep desire to continue to serve. He and his wife went on to a ministry further south in Mexico. We correspond with them to this day.

During the same time period there were two couples who were in the process of beginning a ministry in Mexico. They had asked if they could park their trailers at the orphanage, observe the goings on, while they continued with the legalities and searched for property for their ministry. They would pay a small amount for “rent,” water, etc., in order not to be an expense to the orphanage. They let us know from the beginning that they were there only to observe and that they would help out wherever they could, as time allowed.

We found out, after a short time, that they had a different philosophy than ours. Their children had a lot of special privileges that the “Colina” kids did not. It was like

their children were in a higher society or something. One of our goals has been to treat Americans and Mexicans as equals on the mission field. We felt like that was not being done.

Part of our regular visits included going to a ministry food distribution warehouse in Tijuana. We looked for every opportunity to get enough food to care for the children. There was no way we could buy everything that was needed. This particular day, after we arrived at the warehouse, we were told we had already gotten our allotment that week. Well, we knew that wasn't possible so we asked to see the voucher that had to be signed when the food was given. They got us a copy and there on the bottom line was the name of the people who were 'observing' at the orphanage. They had signed as directors. We were to find out later that they actually registered with the DIF (child services) as directors. When we got to Colina, we found that the food they had signed for in our name had never gotten there. It had been taken off to another place that these people were working with.

In the coming months we were struggling even more with finances. The two 'observing' couples came to our Board with an interesting proposal, and they had the finances to back them. They would assume full responsibility for the orphanage, if we would turn everything over to them. About the only involvement we would have would be to visit. All in all this was really a tempting offer. We had nearly exhausted our strength and finances. After much prayer and consideration we all knew in our hearts that, although it certainly would have been the easy way out, this was not the Lord's will and we needed to refuse their offer. Soon after that they moved to another part of Baja where they would start their own ministry, also a home for children.

When we started having problems with Pancho and Karla (not their real names), we couldn't believe it. Lord, why so many problems? Why were we having one problem after another finding someone who would properly care for the kids?

On one occasion we made an unannounced visit to the orphanage on a Monday. What we found was children and Mexican staff going on about their day, with no one in charge. It seemed Poncho and Karla had taken an unscheduled mini-vacation hundreds of miles across the border up into California and had taken the orphanage's van. We were in shock because they knew we used that vehicle exclusively for food pick up and emergencies. It was the only dependable vehicle the orphanage had at the time. That was one of the first signs that we could not be sure what was going on when we weren't there.

Our biggest problem at that time, and for some years to come, was paying our electric bill. We'd always just barely gotten by. It was very difficult to come up with the \$500 to pay the bill in addition to our regular expenses. God was faithful though, He nearly always gave us the money just in time to avoid the electricity getting shut off. (NOTE: Once or twice, it was shut off for a very short time, but not long enough to cause us any big problems.) Several times the electric company employee would come with an order to turn off the electricity, but after seeing the kids and the situation it was too difficult to fill the order. Most would just leave with our promise to get the money in as soon as we could.

There was one time when we were told the money needed to be in that day. We were considerably short of the total bill. Our director at the time suggested that we take up a collection, and offering. We passed the hat among the staff and kids and expected the Lord to bless. We dumped the pennies, pesos, dollars and centavos that we collected

on the floor and started counting. With a few added pesos by our Director, Carmen, we had enough. She went down to Rosarito to pay the bill to one of the officials before the day ended and our electricity was cut off. When she got to the office, they counted the money once again. While they were counting, Carmen recounted the story of how the kids and staff had scraped together all they had, and we finally came up with the balance we needed. Then the count was finished . . . but it was 20 pesos short. The official, being moved by her story, reached into his pocket, took out the 20 pesos and said, "Please, allow me. The honor is mine. I want to put the last 20 pesos in. Your bill is paid in full."

A church group from Los Angeles came to the orphanage to visit one day with the purpose of taking on a ministry here in Mexico. **They wanted to pay our electric bill for us from this point on!** I was so excited about that, I rushed to tell our workers and Poncho and Karla about the offer. It was without a doubt some of the best news we ever had!

What happened next was unbelievable. Some of the staff came to me really upset. They said that right after I shared the good news; Karla had gone to the ladies in the visiting group and asked them to come to her house. She asked for prayer for their family who had such personal needs and that \$500 would be just about what was necessary to meet those needs. She started crying as she hinted for the money.

Before the visitors left that day Karla and Poncho had the \$500. The ladies did not have the heart to say, no to Karla's sob story. They didn't have enough to pay the electric bill also. Those directors were supposed to be representing the ministry at Colina de Luz. What they said was a direct reflection on the ministry. We were never to see those visitors again, and continued to struggle to pay the electric bill.

IN NEED OF A BIBLE TEACHER

Before the original directors left the orphanage, and the bulk of the responsibility of running it was on our shoulders, we made visits to a community several miles away on a weekly basis. It all started out very simply. We had gone there to visit the mother of one of the boys who lived at the orphanage. She had a very small piece of property and was building a one room house there. When we drove up and got out of the car, some little children who lived nearby came up to the van. They could see it was packed with clothing and other things (we were on our way to the orphanage). Most of the kids were dirty. Water was hard to come by. Nearly all of them had scruffy clothes and no shoes on their feet. One of the girls asked us for shoes. "Zapatos," she said pointing down to her dry and cracked bare feet. No, we didn't have any shoes that would do, but Mack got out a piece of cardboard and outlined her foot. We would have shoes for her on our next visit, he promised.

That is how our ministry in the little community of Los Ponchos started. We would stop off there before going to the orphanage and distributed clothing and shoes and sometimes food. It grew into much more than that. We began sharing the Gospel with our needy friends, and they were very receptive. We would go down on Saturday to pass out whatever the Lord would supply and Sunday afternoon we would have a church service right up on the little hill across from where we measured that first foot for shoes. We came to know many of the people there and shared their blessings and their grief's. They were hungry for more of the Word and offered to open up their homes for studies

during the week, if we could find someone to teach them. I was sure this wouldn't be difficult, and started contacting churches to see if someone could go. They had to be fluent in Spanish, something I had not accomplished yet. I tried several churches and Bible schools on both sides of the border. To our discouragement we found no one willing to go. The scripture came to my mind that says, "*The harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few.*"

GOD GETS MY ATTENTION

One Sunday we were able to make it to our home church, Calvary Chapel in Murrieta. I was sitting in church that Sunday when I realized how fortunate we as Americans are. We have such beautiful churches. And beautiful music and instruments to sing and worship the Lord with. Everything is done so professionally with almost no distraction. It is truly a place where you can come before the Lord, get filled with the spirit, and sing praises unto God.

As I was sitting there toward the front of the church and feeling very blessed, the Lord gave me a vision. I really wasn't looking for a vision, just worshiping the Lord. All of a sudden I could see that little village of Los Ponchos right in front of me. It was just as though the Lord had transported me to that hill and I was looking down seeing the people there. I could see them walking across the street. I was there at that moment, as the Lord touched my heart.

The people were carrying on business as usual. They wanted to be fed the Word of God, and there was no one there who was willing to feed them. I started weeping. It

says in Romans 5:5, *“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”* God’s love had just baptized my heart and I could not stop weeping.

I got up from my seat, bowed my head, and tried not to be too conspicuous as I walked out of the Church. Our church was out in the country. I was all alone so I sat down by a tree and poured out my heart to God. I wept before the Lord, so sad about what I perceived as the lack of concern for the Mexican people. It was at that moment that I said to the Lord with all my heart, “Lord, here I am. I don’t know of what good I am or what good I can do, but I know that You can use anyone that You want to use. You can transform anyone. If You choose to use me, Lord, I’ll make myself available and I will do anything You say, and go anywhere You want me to go.” Everyone who wants to be used in some ministry needs to present themselves to God totally, no strings attached and most important, with all their heart.

GO YE

I worked at Advanced Cardiovascular Systems, a medical supply firm in Temecula, California. I was a machinist and helped design and build tooling for the engineering department. It was an excellent company and I had a promising career. I worked between forty and fifty hours a week at that time. I was trying to be a good employee and still be responsible in the ministry God had put before me. Suzi had been able to quit her job and spent a lot of time writing letters, keep the financial books, and collecting necessary items for the orphanage.

Not too long after I had the vision at church, I was at work and feeling very exhausted. The frequent trips to Mexico were taking a toll on me. I was sitting in my work area by myself and started crying. I couldn't stop. I was truly exhausted and losing control of myself. I really thought I was having a nervous breakdown or something. I cried out to the Lord, "Lord, stop this. Help me to stop this. I don't want these people to see me so out of control. They know I'm a Christian. What will they say if they see me going crazy like this?"

Nothing like this had ever happened to me. I cried before, but I never had a breakdown like this. I considered dialing 911. No, I couldn't make such a big deal out of this. My testimony would be ruined, I thought. I could not even think logically. I was really going out of it, and kept pleading with the Lord, "help me, help me, help me," I cried.

Finally the Lord allowed me to get my composure. My thoughts became normal again and I had my senses back. I'm not sure just how long the incident lasted, maybe ten minutes. I left work that day and went up into the mountains above our house and began to fast and pray. I had to ask God, "Why are you letting this happen to me? Aren't I trying to serve You? Aren't I giving it all I can? Why Lord?"

It became clear to my heart that He was no longer going to let me have a career and the orphanage ministry too. I had come to a fork in my life. It was time to make a decision. Either go all the way into my career, or all the way into the ministry. What was it going to be? Suzi and I loved the ministry we shared, but she made it very evident that it was not her desire to ever live in Mexico. "Lord, You know my choice, but I love my

wife, you are going to have to talk to her! I know it's not Your will for me to go without her by my side."

Over the next year the Lord was speaking to my wife. Neal Pirilo, of Emmaus Road Ministries, and his wife Yvonne, were unknowingly very instrumental in our move to the orphanage. It was at a dinner meeting with them, a dinner meeting to hopefully find a director, that the question was asked, "If you're having so much trouble finding a director who cares for the children like you do, perhaps it's God's will that you two be the directors." Suzi battled with the prospect of that suggestion then, and over the coming year, but finally asked God to direct us both. And He did. We made the decision together to make the move. It was much too hard to run the ministry and not be there to see how things were going. We put our house up for sale, and it sold very quickly. Things were falling into place. The search for a director had finally ended.

MOVING TO MEXICO . . . CHAPTER THREE

We spent a great deal of time trying to decide exactly how we should live when we moved to the orphanage. It was our heartfelt desire to go there to give, and not to take, so we felt as though it came down to two choices. We could take the proceeds from the sale of our house and build a nice house on the premises, or we could buy a mobile home. Knowing that our time and efforts would be limited, we chose to buy the more immediate form of housing, a mobile home. After a lot of consideration we also felt it would be the Lord's desire for us to live moderately, in a place where the children and staff would be comfortable to come in, and at the same time have somewhere to speak with the different officials and visitors that would be coming.

We were told, when inquiring about moving a mobile home, that unless we wanted to do some major road modification the widest mobile that could be moved up the hill would be 10 feet in width. We found an old "fixer-upper" just that width and 54 feet long. It had two very small bedrooms, a pop out living room, bath and kitchen. The smaller of the bedrooms was to become Suzi's office where she could work on letters and financial records, among others things.

Prior to buying this mobile home I was confronted with the thought of what we were going to do about financial support for both of us while we worked at Colina de Luz. The orphanage could not afford to pay us any salary. It was barely making ends meet most of the time. We had no intentions of draining any support from the orphanage. So I went back to the Lord and said, "Father, what would you have us do about money? I

mean, if you're leading us there. You know we need to have some finances. How will we get by?"

Suzi and I had been turned off for many years by ministries begging for money. We did not want that type of ministry and asked the Lord for a faith ministry. We wanted to be totally led by the Lord. Then we would know that whatever happened, happened because the Lord had intervened and done something miraculous to make it so. It would not be because of some fund raising skills we acquired. Then we would know we were in God's will.

One day when I was asking the Lord about our finances, He laid on my heart the verse where Jesus says that he takes care of the fowls of the air, and how much more valuable we are to Him than the fowls. He gave me a great peace in that verse. I didn't know exactly how, but I was sure God was going to take care of us. Together our income was \$80,000. We were going down to zero!

Our church had just sent a missionary family to the Philippines and wouldn't be able to help, at that time. Their budget was at its limit. We still knew that God was going to take care of us, somehow.

As we were getting our business in order and preparing to make our move I got a phone call from my father. He was an active member and elder in his church in Fullerton. He told me that he and my mom would be honored to commit to sending us \$100 per month. We were blessed to receive it. This was almost the only support we received for a good part of those first two years. The proceeds from our house were used mainly to keep Colina de Luz afloat, and we knew that was exactly what God wanted us to do with that

money. You might say we went from riches to rags, but we never ever had a need that God did not meet.

THE TRAILER

With our home sold, and the new owners anxious to move in, we had until noon the next day to be on our way. At about 4:30 that evening I went with a couple of friends to rent two trailers. I thought it would be an easy task. We would rent a couple of trailers, hook them up and drive away. I would haul one and my friend the other. So we went to the local rental yard and I told the guy I would need two of his trailers because I was moving to Mexico.

“Sorry” came the reply, “Our trailers are not allowed to go to Mexico.” Now this was news to me.

“O.K. so where can I get a trailer that can go to Mexico?” I asked. He suggested I try down the road, but thought I would get the same reply.

“Lord, I’m going to this next place,” I prayed, “and if You want them to know their trailers are going to Mexico, then You have to specifically have them ask me. I’m not volunteering any information. Protect me Lord, I need these trailers and it’s almost closing time.”

We went to the place down the road, hooked up the trailers, signed the necessary paper work and got in the van ready to drive away when the guy asked me, “Hey, by the way where are you moving?”

I casually said, “La Gloria” as I started the engine.

His eyes widened and he said, “La Gloria, just where is that?”

Now we had made a deal, the Lord and I. This guy asked, and I needed to tell him. “Mexico,” I replied holding my breath.

Then he yelled out to his co-worker, “Hey, Frank, disconnect these trailers and get 'em off of there.”

“Hey wait a minute,” I said, “I need those trailers I have to move by tomorrow. What do these things cost anyway?” I must have been getting really desperate. After he told me how much they cost I offered to secure them with all the cash I had along with my credit card. I was sure this would convince him to let me take the trailers.

“Sorry, but I can’t do that without consent from the owner,” he stated flatly.

“So O.K., get consent from the owner,” I quipped, “I’ll wait.”

“He’s out at the river fishing, there’s no way to get a hold of him,” he said with finality. Then they took the trailers off our vehicles.

My only thought was, “My God, what are you doing” It was well after 5:00 P.M. by now and everything was closed, so we went home. I told the guys with me that we really needed to get on our faces and pray because we had to be out of there by the next day.

As we prayed together, the Lord put the name of a guy I worked with on my heart. His name was Woody. I had a vague remembrance of him saying at one time he had a trailer. I thought that maybe Woody, although he wasn’t a real close friend, would rent me his trailer.

I knew where Woody lived because he owned a hardware store a mile or so down the road from my house. We got in the car and drove to Woody’s house. When we found

him, I said, “Hi, Woody, I’ve got a question for you. I’m really stuck and I need a trailer. I seem to remember hearing you say that you had one. Did I hear you say that?”

Woody knew that I was leaving for Mexico. “Yeah,” he said. “I have a trailer.”

Hopefully I asked, “Would there be any chance of us renting it from you?” I’ll be taking it to Mexico (better get that straight from the beginning), and I can bring it back in a few days.”

“No,” was all he said.

“Well, O.K. thanks anyway,” I said and went on my way to ask the Lord for plan “C.”

Then Woody said, “I’ll let you use the trailer free, but I’m not going to take any of your money for it.”

“No, Woody, really,” I protested. “I want to pay for it. It’s a long haul.”

He answered, “Either you take it free or you don’t take it.”

“Hey, I’ll take it, I’ll take it,” I quickly agreed.

We went out back to look at the trailer. I had no idea what to expect. His trailer turned out to be the length of both of the other trailers combined. It was a huge thing. Woody added, “You can keep this thing for as long as you need.” Now that was really good news, because I wouldn’t have to make a special trip to bring it back.

ON OUR WAY

We went home and started loading up. Suzi kept telling me, “Jim, you can’t put any more in this trailer,”

I just kept packing things on the trailer saying, “I don’t have time to make two trips.” We ended up fitting everything we had in our van and that trailer.

We sold the majority of our things. Suzi had a lot of antiques that we either sold or gave away. The orphanage would not be a place for valuable antiques and the Lord spoke to her that she needed to let loose of them anyway. We did take with us our washer and dryer, a couch, refrigerator, and our king size bed, along with clothing and personal items. The bed had been built by a friend of ours. He made it out of redwood. I loved it. I asked the Lord to please let us keep our bed, reminding Him of how good the firmness was for my bad back. I felt like He agreed. The Lord doesn’t necessarily want us to give up everything. He just wants us to be willing.

We had a ton of stuff in that trailer. Even though we had a big 440 cubic inch 3/4 ton Dodge van, I still couldn’t get over 35 miles per hour on the highway. We drove as far as the border and then stopped at Motel 6 for some rest. We slept for just over an hour and a half. I still needed to go back to meet the guys with our mobile home.

A remodeling company sold us our mobile. It had been set up way out from where we lived and where we were going. I went to meet the movers out there early that morning. I also hired the diesel moving company and three of the remodeling company’s employees to help connect and set up the mobile when we got to the orphanage. They were hauling the trailer with a big truck, and the extending living room with another. We would have to disconnect the mobile at the border where a Mexican mobile mover would reconnect and move it into Mexico. (There were so many technicalities).

I went back to the remodeling company, met the three men and they followed me out to the mobile. Then we were on our way. It was a sight to see as we approached the

border, our van, totally packed out, hauling an over-loaded trailer. We must have looked much like the Beverly Hillbillies. Behind us was this mobile. It could have been used by the remodeling company as a “before” picture. And on a truck behind that was the living room. There we were parked in the commercial truckers parking lot on the American side of the border, waiting for the Mexican Mobile hauler, who had been contacted by Maggie, our friend, and one of the members of our Mexican Board. The Mexican Mobile hauler was in the process of getting his truck impounded by the highway patrol. It seemed he had broken the law somehow when he crossed into the U.S. And when they ran a check on the license plates they found they were that of a small compact car.

CROSSING THE BORDER

During the last several years we brought many, many things across the border, always by faith and never were turned away. But this was too much. When I started in the preceding weeks to get permission to cross, I kept hearing the Lord speaking to my heart. He was saying, “No, I don’t want you to do that. I want you to continue to cross the border in faith. Go there and wait for further instructions.”

I couldn’t help but replying, “Give me a break this is too much stuff.”

But the Lord spoke clearly saying, “You asked me for a faith ministry. If that’s really what you want, then you need to start obeying me right now. You are going into a full-time ministry. Listen to what I’m telling you and do it My way and not yours.”

I had no choice. I felt like the ministry would be destined to fail if I did not do it the Lord's way. I had to take this step of faith, leap of faith. But I really wasn't looking forward to it.

So we were at the border, this caravan of vehicles, and were told by the official there, "You can't bring that across!"

I thought maybe the Lord had in mind to blind their eyes as He had done so many times in the past, or maybe He was going to give us favor with someone. I wasn't sure what to think now, so I began to pray, "Lord help! We have gone this far and were not going to be able to go any further unless you have a plan, You do have a plan, Lord, right?" Inside I was sort of embarrassed. I needed those "further instructions" now. Knowing that we could pay the bribe offered earlier in the day, I also knew that the Lord had shared with us in the very beginning that we were not to pay any bribes. He had not yet told me that He had changed His will about that. I decided that if I couldn't do it God's way then I wasn't going to do it at all.

Hours had passed and by this time the guys who had come to help with the mobile were getting somewhat impatient. "Don't worry, I told them everything's under control, there's a plan." After all they were being paid by the hour, and there was a plan, I just didn't know what it was yet! But I didn't tell them that. I just continued to pray.

Soon Maggie, the Mexican board member came driving into the parking lot where we all were. She wasn't at the wheel of her car, and I didn't recognize the person driving. I could see when the door opened she was literally falling apart. She had been driving back and forth across the border, in those long lines, looking for us. She had been trying to find us and offer her help. Finally her nerves had given out and she pleaded with one

of the men she encountered in a pay parking lot to drive for her. She was a nervous wreck. We took some time to calm her down and let her know how much we appreciated her coming. Evidently she heard from the mobile mover, the one who now had his truck impounded, that we were stuck at the border. She came up with a plan.

Maggie has always been good at plans. “I just found out that the father of one of the boys in the praise group at church is an official here at the border,” she shared with us. “Let’s go talk to him and see if he can’t help us.”

“We can do that on one condition,” I said. “No bribes.” She told us this father was not a Christian. I did not want to do anything that would interfere with God’s will or our testimony.

Suzi and Maggie headed out to his office while I stayed back with the vehicles and the men who by this time were pacing the parking lot. Nothing seems to move very fast in Mexico, and I’m sure the situation made it seem like things were moving even slower. But they did return with good news. The father of the boy invited us to the Head Commandant’s office right at the border.

“We appreciate what you people are doing here in Mexico,” the boy’s father said turning to the head commandant and ordering that we and all our convoy be allowed to pass.

The Commandant answered him, “Yes Sir!”

My prayers had been answered. Then the man in charge turned to me and offered to help us in the future. “Please come and let me know when you have a need,” he said. “I want to be a small part of what you are doing here.”

For years we had been looking for some kind of contact at the border. Especially for church groups that would come down. They usually felt more comfortable with a written permission. Smuggling things did not excite them as it had us. We enjoyed watching God work one miracle after another, week after week. This man was to be our source of getting those letters. Had we paid the bribe, and not waited for the Lord's further instructions, I believe we never would have met that man. It pays to obey God. He will supply all our needs if only we put our trust, all of it, in Him. This was a tremendous faith building lesson.

GETTING UP THE HILL

When we finally met up with the mobile mover who had gotten his truck impounded, he was on his way back home to get his tow truck, which was much smaller than the impounded truck. He assured us that it would be sufficient, for the short distance we had to go. He came back, made the connection to the mobile, and off we went, all of us, waived right on through the border at 5:00 P.M. in the afternoon. We passed right through downtown Tijuana at probably the busiest time of the day, but it didn't seem to matter to the tow truck driver. There he was flying down the street with our mobile home behind him. There were big hunks of insulation coming up from underneath, falling off onto the street. We were right behind him, and the guys with the living room were behind us and then Maggie brought up the tail. What a sight!

Because of the difference in size of the mobile mover truck (now in some Highway Patrol impound yard) and the tow truck that was pulling the mobile, the driver

was unable to make it up the hill and around the building at the front of Colina. He calculated the whole move based on the other truck. So there we were, for all intents and purposes, stuck. He couldn't get up the hill and it would be very difficult to back down. Then the guys I had hired to hook up the mobile jumped out of the truck carrying the living room. They were what I would call the Macho, rough red neck type guys.

“Aw just unhook the thing, buddy” they exclaimed. “We'll take it from here.”

One of them said to the other, “bring the pick up and hook it up to that, and we'll move this thing up there.”

This must have hurt the Mexican tow truck driver's pride. He wasn't about to be outdone. He got back in the tow truck and started peeling rubber, but he still couldn't get around the turn.

Then someone said, “Hey, we can do this if we work as a team.” The American guys got under the trailer and jacked it up, putting boards at a slant. After they raised it up in the air, they knocked the jacks out from under it and let the back end slide down the boards until it was at the right angle to make it up and around the corner. All the time they were under the trailer. It was very risky!

I started getting worried and said, “Hey guys this is too dangerous, you're going to get killed or something!” They weren't the least bit worried, and they kept jacking and moving until the trailer was around the corner and up the hill. All the kids and staff were watching and cheered.

GOD'S BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY . . . CHAPTER FOUR

Things started changing for the better after we moved down here. Being at Colina seven days a week really made a difference. Poncho and Karla decided to help in a ministry in Southern California. We did not feel comfortable with them in charge since the mini vacation and electric bill money incidents. It all worked out for the best. We began by running the orphanage the way we always felt the Lord wanted it run. There was much more emphasis on cleanliness and care of the children. The kitchen, baby room and medical attention were given top priority. It made a world of difference, just to be down here.

MISSIONARY LIFE

My expectations of being a full time missionary were quite different from reality. I thought I would have time available to do some things I always wanted to do. I could spend a couple of hours a day studying my Spanish, and at the very least a couple of hours studying my Bible. Suzi and I wanted to visit some other ministries here in Baja. We wanted to get to know other Christians that were serving the Lord in this same area. I thought we would have time to do it all. But it didn't happen like that. We became extremely busy.

Along with doing many other things, we were going through legal proceedings to have the orphanage registered in Mexico. We changed the name to Colina de Luz, and now we wanted to become totally legal under our new name.

We were working very long hours, from about six in the morning until nine at night or later. Suzi and I thought we would be seeing a lot of each other, but we really were not. Her office was up in the house, and mine was down in the front building. We would sort of just cross paths on our way around the orphanage. Days off did not exist. We went to the States once a week to carry on orphanage business and get a van load of supplies. That was our 'day off.'

The Lord brought Bob and Irene Blanchard, a devoted couple from Oregon, just in the nick of time. They worked along side us for more than two years. They now are in a ministry of their home church established for disabled children near Tecate Mexico. God knew that we needed them to take up the slack. Our church invited us to a marriage seminar. After spending some time in the sessions offered, we realized that we were not really married anymore, we had become working partners. This seminar helped us change our way of thinking. We realized there was more to being a Christian than being involved in a ministry. There was also family and personal relationships, and private time with the Lord. We had been so engrossed in Colina that we had forgotten everything and everyone else, including ourselves as a couple.

Jesus said, *“My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* When the burden is no longer light and the yoke no longer easy, then we probably have taken on things that God has not given to us. There were so many, many needs around us, but we had to realize that we couldn't save the entire world, or even all of Mexico. We couldn't do it all by ourselves.

After we left that marriage retreat, we did some reevaluating. We decided to set aside time every day when we would meet together and talk about the things going on in

the ministry. Irene made us a red flag to hang outside our door. Everyone knew that our door was off limits when the red flag was out. I used to say not to interrupt us unless someone was dying. One of the girls, Karen, who is close to us both, used to try to hide the red flag, but we always found it.

Then we found that we needed personal time also. Before we came to that conclusion, I would come in at nine or later and Suzi would want to talk. I would be tired, and just wanted to take a shower, watch the news and crawl into bed. The Lord showed us a lot of things about priorities in our lives. The members of our board encouraged us to take time off, at least once a week, and so we tried to do that as much as possible. The kids were somewhat insecure during that first year. They did not like it when we left. One of the little girls, Yenny, just four years old, who had really gotten attached to my wife, would stand at the back of our car and cry her big alligator tears when we left. Her mother had left her several years before, and she probably thought we were going to do the same thing. It wasn't uncommon for the kids to say, "Are you coming back, you are coming back aren't you?" In time they figured out that we were going to be there until the Lord told us differently and it became easier to leave for a little rest and relaxation.

Within the last three years we have established even more priorities. Now we try to meet together at five o'clock every day to talk business and have devotions. We usually take two days off per week, thanks to our wonderful Director Maria Robledo and all our devoted staff. The first day we use to catch up on paper work and other business we fall behind in. We make it a priority for our staff to take their days off, and we try to be an example to the married couples who work at Colina. It has taken us a while to make these necessary changes, but we have found things go better when we are at our best.

I felt the Lord called me to be the Administrator. Suzi came to Colina as my helpmate and wife. She wanted to be more directly involved with the children and staff. She has taken on a lot of responsibility, which includes being the Secretary and Treasurer of the orphanage. There is a tremendous amount of bookkeeping that goes with all we do now. She is also the problem solver. People are always bringing problems to her and she nearly always finds a good workable solution.

Some people have expectations of what an administrator's wife or pastor's wife should be. Well, she is not some of those things. She doesn't consider herself to be a good public speaker, or public relations person. She sometimes feels the pressure of being expected to be something she is not. It really is not her calling and she does not feel comfortable doing some of those things. She is a book type person and doesn't like to talk much about herself, or even what she is doing for the Lord. She has spoken on occasion in churches, but it makes her extremely nervous. She is my wonderful wife and helpmate. She does a great job at the things the Lord has called her to. She is a good mother to our now grown children, and to the kids at Colina. I feel she fulfills the role that God has called her to do.

Sometimes maybe people expect things from pastor's wives that are not humanly possible. God doesn't make a cookie cutter pattern and cut us all out of the same one. I have found we are all different, and I think we should respect those differences. Why not love and appreciate each other for who we are and what God called us to be and to do.

OWNERSHIP

When the orphanage acquired this property, it was actually owned by the local government, the Ejido. They were allowing it to be used exclusively for an orphanage. In those first days after the directors left, we began to establish a new work. The new name was Colina de Luz, which means Hill of Light. We had sought to establish a new Mexican board of directors and an American covering to come along side our American board. We wanted Godly men, who would be accountable. Too many ministries fall by the wayside because they refuse to be accountable to Godly advisors.

It was our heartfelt desire that nothing would ever jeopardize the children's well-being. We needed to know that the donations put into this place would never be taken away from the children by some government official who might decide to make a community center out of the new improved facilities.

With all this in mind we went to the local officials and asked them to come up and talk to us regarding securing the property for Colina de Luz. We knew we didn't have any money, so we wouldn't be able to buy the property, and we made that point clear from the beginning. We shared with these local officials what we really had in mind, that they *give* us the property. We told them it would be in Colina's name, not ours. And we planned to make a lot of improvements, which would be a real benefit to their community. Well, that proposal didn't go over too well. They thought we were joking or something because they all had a big laugh. But we learned when God is in it, anything can happen. So after their laugh we waited for their reply. The offer they made us wasn't a bad one, as business offers go. We could lease the property for \$500 a month indefinitely with the price rising yearly. Not a bad deal, but we didn't have \$500 extra a

month. So we closed the meeting and agreed we would get together again to discuss the property possession in the near future.

I felt like it was God's will for the local government to give the orphanage the two and one half acres. They had been given thousands of acres by the federal government to disperse or sell. And we needed ownership in order to be registered. We shared what was happening with the staff and children. "Maybe we have not been fervent enough in our prayers for this property," I said, "We need to get more serious because the Ejido officials haven't heard from God yet." And I left it at that.

In the coming weeks and into the next month we prayed for the Lord's will regarding Colina. Then the Lord let me know it was time. I set up another meeting with the Ejido. Nothing had changed, same property, same lack of finances, same Ejido members. We went into my office and after a few minutes of greetings and 'small talk' I got to the point. I once again went over our plans for Colina, reminding them we wanted nothing for ourselves. We came to make improvements, to make Colina a really good home for the children, and they could be part of that. They looked at one another as I made them the same offer as before, which was: They give us the property, for as long as it remains an orphanage. Without a minute's hesitation these same men who had laughed over this same offer just weeks before, all agreed. God had spoken to them! I wasted no time and went to the Ejido office that very afternoon to pick up the contract. Now we could move forward with the registration, and with the many improvements knowing that no one could ever take it away from any of God's children.

POSSESSING THE LAND

We hired a surveyor to come out and verify the land boundaries for the registration papers. Much of the property was on a steep hill that was unusable. We decided that we would build up one corner, little by little, and eventually make a sports field out of it. Since tires are so plentiful around here, we started to put up a heavy duty tire retainer wall.

When we were working one day, our neighbor came out and confronted us with, “You can’t build that fence there, it’s on my property.” I let him know that we had it surveyed and that was where the record showed the line was.

This neighbor had caused us a lot of problems in the past. We tried to help him out by letting him use our water and for a while some electricity. We gave him scrap food to feed his pigs, even though they smelled horrid, and the odor would permeate the orphanage when the wind blew just right. He just had a bad attitude. What I really wanted to say was something more along the line of, “Go fly a kite.” But I felt like the Lord wanted me to be nice and respectful toward him, so I was.

I said to him, “Look, I wouldn’t want to take anything that belongs to you. I’ll go to the Ejido and we’ll have it surveyed again.” This was probably going to cost us money that could well be spent on something else, but I knew that God had a plan and that He would provide. I was sure it was His will that we re-survey the land to satisfy our neighbor. When we had it surveyed before it was by a private surveyor.

The sports field that would be finished one day was already going to be very narrow. Now it looked as though if what the neighbor was saying was right there would

be nine feet cut off an already narrow field. We put our trust in God, because He always knows what's best.

After the situation was explained to the Ejido official, we agreed that the Ejido engineer would do the survey this time. The Ejido President sent out the engineer to survey the property. He went all around the land. He started down at the bottom of the street and measured all the way up. All the time he was measuring, we were praying. We said, "Lord, have mercy, you know we need at least as much property as we have now, or there won't be a sports field."

When the engineer was finished with all the measuring, he came back up to my office. "Well," he said, "Looks like your neighbor is right. The property line is not where you thought it was." My heart sank. Then he went on to clarify, "It's thirty-six feet the other way." Thirty-six feet the other way! We'd just gained thirty-six feet!

God was so good He knew all along that the first survey was in error. That is why He allowed the neighbor to complain in the first place. God will direct our steps if we will listen to Him. We continue to make an effort to reach our neighbor, and he continues with the same attitude.

TRUCK LOADS OF DIRT

That was nearly six years ago today. With the help of many people, especially an adult Sunday School Class of 49 from New Life Church in Minnesota, we now have a soccer field. It took the best part of six years putting truckload after truckload of dirt down and leveling it off. We got dirt wherever we could. The kids hand shoveled a lot of

it, going down to the factory below, filling up the truck and shoveling it off onto the field. The factory owner said we could have the dirt, and the kids have worked to have their field. Many individuals and groups have helped to have the soccer field we have today. Now there is a fence around it, to keep the balls from going down the hill. It really is a blessing from the Lord and His people. We praise Him for it.

LAY HANDS ON THE SICK, EVEN SICK AIR CONDITIONERS

Our cold storage room was run by an air conditioner. It really wasn't a cold room it was more like a cool room. The walls were made out of concrete block, and the air conditioner did not work. A friend of ours donated a newer air conditioner which was installed and it ran for a long time. Then one day it too stopped working. We couldn't find anyone to fix it. We left the door open because it got hot and stuffy in there. We hoped the outside air would come in and cool things down a bit.

Back in those days we didn't need the cold room very often, were eating a lot of rice and beans, a real lot of rice and beans! I understood how the Israelites got tired of manna. I was tired of rice and beans. Then God opened the gates of heaven and we picked up a lot of fruit and vegetables on the food run. We felt so very blessed. That is until I thought about our so called "cold room."

As we unloaded the van and started carrying the food into the cold room I realized that it wasn't going to last any time at all in that hot stuffy room. There was no way we could eat it faster than it was going to perish. We were no doubt going to end up throwing out or giving away most of it.

Somewhat discouraged, I said to the Lord, “Why would You give us all this food the kids really need, if we can’t keep it long enough to get it into their stomachs?” And the verse came to me, I John 5:14-15, *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”* I actually spoke the verse out loud and it gave me a surge of faith. I knew without a doubt that it was God’s will for us to have those fresh fruits and vegetables. So, I walked over to the air conditioner, and laid my hands on it and boldly said, “In Jesus Name, be healed.”

I was all alone in that room and I figured it was okay to act a little boldly. After all, if the air conditioner didn’t get healed, nobody, but the Lord, would know. Somehow, though, I knew that God wanted to heal that thing. And when I turned it on it was no great surprise when it worked. It had never worked as good as it did then. It used to freeze up, but not anymore.

A REAL COLD ROOM

That healed air conditioner worked right up until the time a brother from West Covina blessed us with a real refrigeration system. After the system was installed, my father, sister and brother-in-law made a visit and took on the project of insulating the whole cold room. They also had a regular cold room door built and installed. That would really help in keeping the cooling cost to a minimum. Again we could see God taking care of His children using everyday people who just wanted to be open to His direction.

SKYLIGHTS AND WINDOWS

One of the projects on our agenda was making the children's dorms better. The ceilings were open-beam, and we wanted to insulate, drywall and paint them white. Nothing fancy, but nice, warm and clean.

On one of the visits from the health department we were told there should be more light in the dorms. We hoped to put new windows in. The ones that were there were small louvered windows. Wind and bugs could come in through the slats. Our hearts desire was to put in some skylights to bring in some natural light, but for now that was definitely way out of our budget.

The pastor from a Rumanian Baptist church in Los Angeles called us one day. His church wanted to do a project so I told him about the dorms. In the coming weeks their church sent us \$700. That would be enough to insulate and drywall two of the dorms. The Rumanian group chartered a bus and came down to Colina to begin their project. Not long after their arrival a guy came up the hill with five good used skylights in his pick up truck. We believe this was definitely one of those Divine Appointments. He came just at the right time, and had no idea that the group was working on the ceilings that day or that we even wanted skylights.

I told the guy with the skylights about the group that was working on the ceilings. He said he would stay and help install them if we wanted him to. Once again we could see God blessing His children. He was taking care of them, and providing our hearts

desires for this home. God tells us that He will give us the desires of our hearts if we will delight ourselves in Him, Psalms 37:4.

The insulation along with heaters that a group from our church had donated and installed made all the difference in the world. The windows and the heaters were a blessing for the children on the cold winter nights.

ALL PURPOSE ROOM

When we plan a construction project, it is usually done by the groups wanting to help work on one of these projects. Very little of the general fund money goes into building projects. Just before we started making our first trips here, about fifteen years ago, two Rotary Clubs got together and started construction on a building. They put the walls up and the second floor poured before they got discouraged and quit.

Years later we were told by some Rotary members that the construction was halted when they realized the dining room and kitchen they funded was not being taken care of. For two years we hoped and prayed that a group would come and make a commitment to finish the already started construction. We needed classrooms for our school. We could also use an all-purpose room. We could use it to hold services, or for any other programs and meetings. Nothing seemed to be happening until one day when we were contacted by a Korean group. They asked me if they could visit and if I would give them a tour. Of course I was happy to give them a tour, I told them. They came one Saturday and I showed them around the orphanage. When we came to the unfinished

construction, I shared with them the vision of our future plans for this school/all-purpose building.

Someone in the Korean group asked me, “Do you know why we are here?”

I answered back, “No, I don’t, why?”

They told me, “You Americans came into our country after the Korean War and set up orphanages and took good care of our orphaned children. We want to show our appreciation and help you Americans help children from another culture.” With that they wrote out a check for \$8,000, saying, “We would like to see you fulfill the vision you have for this building, please put this money toward that project.”

Wow I could hardly believe my ears. Only by believing in God could I believe it possible. After the group left and we were all rejoicing about the financing for the building, I felt compelled to hold the check up to the Lord. I said, “Lord, I have this check, it’s for \$8000, but then you probably know that. The problem is, Lord, I don’t know enough about construction to take on a project like this myself. Please send us an engineer and a general contractor so that we can build a building that will be worthy of Your name.”

In the coming weeks a general contractor made a visit to the orphanage. He wanted to know if there was something he could do to help us out. I told him about the project, which seemed to really interest him. He had an engineer friend, and told me he thought his friend would be interested in doing the engineering for us and so he sent him down to set things up. We got together to decide just how to build this all purpose building. He asked me to make a sketch of what I thought we needed, which I did. That sketch was turned into blueprints and with the \$8000 we built the extension on the

backside of the existing structure. The older boys and men on staff hand dug the foundation. We had to dig about ten feet out of a big bank of dirt which was about five or six feet deep. The building is about seventy feet long. That was a lot of digging!

A good friend and brother in the Lord who was a masonry contractor came all the way from Oregon and constructed an eight-inch thick cement block wall, two stories high, filled with cement and rebar steel. He built a really strong wall that we attached to that building. Then a sub floor was put on top of the second story cement floor. We did this because we were not sure of the quality of the cement previously put down. We also had no way of determining how much rebar had been used for strength.

The money from the Korean church covered the cement, block, rebar, and lumber for the new phase of the building. After the framing was complete, we ran out of funds. But we knew in our hearts, God was going to finish what He had started. And He did. One group after another came and worked on the building. Each had a very good attitude about helping in whatever capacity we needed them. They would bring supplies such as, dry wall, insulation, and electrical supplies. We were seeing our multipurpose building become a reality. It was truly an international effort. Brothers and sisters from all over the U.S. and other areas of the world had a part in what was to become one of the most used buildings at Colina.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL CLINICS

Part of the vision we had for Colina was a free medical and dental clinic. It would be used for the benefit of the children and staff and for the poor in the surrounding

communities. We wanted those in need to be able to get the medical attention they needed. Many people go without help because they don't have the money to see a doctor, or to buy the medicine they need.

It is a major project here in Mexico to have a free medical clinic. To have a complete service you have to be able to provide the people with the medicine they need. There is a class of people who are so poor that if you give them a prescription to fill, they won't fill it because they don't have the money. If you give them the money to fill the prescription, they will end up using the money on something they might consider more important. It is a waste of time to have a medical clinic if the medicine can't be provided at the same time. That is why we wanted to have a totally stocked free clinic, one that would provide for as many of the patient's medical needs as possible.

Over the years different people have supplied examination tables, shelving, new cabinets, sinks and the different things a clinic needs. When these items came we didn't have the clinic yet, but we knew the Lord was providing in advance.

In 1993, we were able to start a regular clinic twice a month. We began with alternating doctors seeing the children and staff at Colina. They were our first priority. The children were getting a better diet, thanks to our donors who gave consistently and helped us see that the children had what they needed, so they were a lot healthier by this time. As new children came in they would see the doctor and finally the doctors had time left over to see outside patients. At this point in time we are expanding the once very small clinic to meet the needs of the doctors and their patients.

Our Clinic Director, Dr. Dave Robinson, who had his practice in Temecula, California, has taken on the orphanage as a mission project. His home church, Sunridge

Community, has also done the same. They set aside several thousand dollars per year for medicines. Other medicines are donated to us or through Dr. Robinson or one of the other doctors. With these donations we are able to keep the clinic stocked. More than likely our supply is as good as some of our local pharmacies.

Along with supplying medical attention every other Saturday, we provide transportation for the outside people who want to come to the clinic. Occasionally the doctor will make a house call if the person is too sick to come in. After the people arrive they are shown Christian videos, and provided with lunch. Whenever we have an abundance of something, food or certain clothing items, we also share these things with the people. It is one of the ways that Colina de Luz can be what God intended, a Hill of Light.

At present we are working to staff the dental clinic. Just as God supplied for our medical clinic, He has supplied for the dental clinic as well. He has given us a great dentist, Evan Mc Millian, to direct the dental area. We have the chairs and equipment. The vacuums and pumps are hooked up. Now we are waiting for some committed dentists who want to come and bless and be blessed at Colina. We will also need supplies to fill teeth. Sporadically we have dentists who visit and treat the children and staff. It is our short term goal to have the dental clinic running alternate Saturdays with the medical clinic and then eventually both every Saturday. All services are and will continue to be free.

Dental clinics are important. For the poor it is a real luxury to get a tooth fixed. They usually get their tooth pulled when they have a problem. They cannot afford the

proper care. With the help of some good dentists, Colina de Luz can reach out in another way to the nearby communities in Jesus' name.

MISSIONARY AND JOVENES APARTMENTS

There was a piece of ground behind the kitchen that was pretty much useless. It was on an incline. Someone had planted a few trees there. The tires and a concrete wall helped hold the dirt back, and keep the hill from eroding. By total faith we started digging away at the hill by hand. It took several months. We put the dirt on the sports field with all the other dirt we were able to acquire. We were still trying to fill it in and level it off at that time.

Eventually the hill was dug out and a strong retainer wall was built. We really needed more staff housing. Some people were living in converted closets or closed in hallways. So little by little we started to build a warehouse with five very small apartments on the second floor.

The beginning funds were donated through the company of one of our faithful "child sponsors." Different groups would help buy more materials. They came and worked for a week or weekend, and when they left to go home, we would continue until the materials ran out. Our oldest son, Ken, who has lived and worked at Colina with us for the last three years, has done many projects, including the majority of the finish work on the apartments. He has trained Jorge and Carlos in detailing and painting and they have been a big help in finishing up most of the work on four of the five apartments.

Each apartment is around two hundred square feet, very small, but big enough to house some of our missionaries and older kids who are in the Jovenes program. We look

forward to having the last one finished this summer. How good God has been to us as He provided for our children and our staff.

THE NEW STOVE

Just before Christmas of 1993, a man who manufactures commercial stoves called and said he was sending us a brochure. We selected the stove we felt would best suite us, and he had it to us by Christmas. Wow, we did not even think we needed a new stove. The six burner one we had worked just fine, if the cook planned everything just right. She could cook the rice first, which took four burners, and then put it on the grill to keep warm. Then she cooked the next thing, added it to the grill. Whatever else we were going to have she cooked last. We had a regular system. But the Lord had something better in mind.

When we got the brochure, we didn't know what to think. These stoves were beautiful, so big, so shinny, and with two ovens. Which one would we pick? Later I called our donor to ask some questions about size or something. He encouraged us to pick the one we felt would best suit our needs. "Don't worry about size, or cost," he said, "just get the one you want." So we did. It was not the biggest one, or we would all have to cook from the dining room. But it was beautiful, a twelve burner, dual convectional ovens, energy saving beauty. Incredibly, we were to have more than three hundred visitors that Christmas, not to mention our own one hundred or more people. The stove was and continues to be a great blessing. God knew our need before we even thought about it. Our old stove went to Sparrows Gate Home to bless them.

BORDER CROSSINGS . . . CHAPTER FIVE

God has worked many miracles as we crossed the border from the United States into Mexico. For fifteen years He has gotten us through with the supplies the orphanage and poor around us badly needed. By His grace we have made it through every time and have not been (permanently) turned back. Our van has been loaded with all kinds of things; washers, refrigerators, bikes, computers, building supplies, all the things that would not normally be allowed. Nearly enough stuff to sink the Baja peninsula! But God would always make a way.

Years ago I read *God's Smuggler* by Brother Andrew. It always amazed me how God would get the Bibles into China, yet in the past fifteen years we have been living miracles every week as we pass through the border.

There was a time when Mack and I bought a moving van for an investment. A cable company had gone out of business, and the lease was up on their trucks. We bought the van hoping to make some extra cash. We knew we could use it on trips to the orphanage until we did some minor repairs and were ready to sell it. We packed it full; it was so low to the ground it could hardly move. I'm sure it was overloaded. In fact I doubt if either one of us would do the same thing today, but we were "young bucks" back then, risk takers.

When we had the moving van filled, we met the work group at the church that was going to the orphanage. We all laid hands on the van and prayed for it. It was Christmas and we were doing the biggest outreach we had ever attempted. Everyone in Los Ponchos was waiting for us. We had clothes, food and gifts for everyone. A lot of the

youth at church had wrapped gifts and some of them were coming to help do the distribution. We were excited as we saw our weeks of planning coming together. There was just one little problem. We did have a letter this time, but it said *food*. All the food we were distributing was in one of the other trucks that had left earlier that morning. We had everything in the van except food. As we shared the predicament with the group, someone decided to run into the church and get a bag of food. We placed it right at the back door of the moving van, and asked the Lord that if the guards at the border opened the back door, they would see the food and only the food and nothing else.

Sure enough, when we got to the border they pulled us over. I got out of the van. Then some of the guards came over. We were so loaded down, how could they miss us. He asked me in Spanish to open the back of the moving van. I knew exactly what he was saying. When I opened the door the lumber that was obviously sticking out caught my eye first. Lumber is a real “no-no,” but the people in Los Ponchos needed it to build their shacks. Then I saw the beds (hey, they needed beds to sleep in, even if it was only one per family, they shared). That moving van was packed with just about everything; I think we even had a kitchen sink! But there in the middle of the back, as the door raised was that little bag of food, and that is what the guard saw. He read the permission letter and he looked at the bag of food, “O.K. pueden pasar.” We could go. We got back in the moving van and praised God once again for allowing us the honor of being His messengers to the people in Mexico.

NO BRIBES

On another occasion when we were crossing the border and our van was packed full, the guard informed us, “You’re going to have to pay a ‘tax’ on this.”

“That’s O.K.,” I said, fully knowing that it was not a tax he was after. I was what he saw as an opportunity to get a little “Mordita” or bribe. “But we’ll have to have a receipt.” I was going to play along with him.

“Oh, no receipt,” he replied.

I responded with “Then no tax, because we have a policy that we have to have a receipt for all money spent.”

The guard turned around talking under his breath to himself, then turned back to me and said, “Actually this is a little ‘mordita,’ bribe.”

“Well, I’m really sorry,” I told him, “But we can’t pay a bribe, either.”

“Porque?”(why not) he said.

“We have another policy, and that is we don’t pay any bribes” was my answer. I told him the truth. We agreed from the very beginning that God didn’t need our help to get things across the border, only our faith and prayers.

Then he replied angrily, “O.K., then get this thing out of Mexico and go back to the United States. You’re not coming into Mexico.”

Then the Lord gave me the words to say to the guard, “You know what?” I said, “We have done everything in our power to get this stuff here to God’s children. God gave us these supplies and it comes in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for His children, but we respect your authority. If you tell us to go, then we will go. You will have no problem with us. But there’s one thing I must tell you first.”

He asked, “What?”

I responded, “You need to know that *you* are the one stopping these children from getting the food and supplies that was meant for them. And *you* are the one who will have to answer to the Lord some day.”

As I prepared to turn around, I took one last look at the guard and he was standing there with his mouth dropped open. He closed it just enough to speak some final words, which were, “O.K., go ahead, you can go.” And he quickly waved us through. In the next few years we saw big changes at the border. Mexico is making a big effort to clean up corruption in its government and the old system of bribing has nearly disappeared.

GOD LIKES VARIETY

We have seen God do many miracles over the years. Once when we were packed to the gills and wondering how the Lord was going to get us through one more time, a bird flew over the guard and dropped a little “present” on his shoulder. The guard became preoccupied trying to clean his shoulder and waved us right on through. We also got waved through when there was a wreck in the lane next to us. Everyone turned their attention to the accident. We had a big load again that time and praised God for getting us through once more.

I have to believe God likes variety, because He has used so many different methods to get us across the border. On one occasion, we were pulling up to the line at the border and it seemed especially slow. As we got closer to the front, we could see that the guard was checking everyone, even older people with small conservative cars. He had them get out, and open their trunks. He also checked under the seats. I wanted to get

out of that line because I could see how tough this guard was, but it was too late, I would only bring attention to our van if I did. We began to pray, “Lord, You have Your will be done. Please get us through if possible. We want to get this stuff to Mexico.”

When it was our turn for inspection, we pulled up to the security stand and the guard looked right at us as though he knew us. He smiled as if he were our best friend as he waved us right on through. It was so obvious that we were packed out. The supplies were up to the ceiling in the van, but our “guard friend” who had checked everyone else, didn’t even take notice of a thing. Someone commented from the back seat, and we all agreed, “That guard must have been an angel” . . . our *guardian* angel!

WHERE THERE IS A WILL, THERE IS A WAY

On one trip Suzi and I were pulled into the Inspection Area on our way back into Mexico. We were tired from the long day which usually started in the early morning and ended around 9:00 p.m. The van was full of the food we picked up that had been donated or purchased and we were ready to get home to Colina. This time the guard said we could not enter Mexico with all the stuff that was in our van. Usually we had letters to pass with the DIF’s help. But this particular week someone was on vacation and we were passing without our usual letter.

“We have to go into Mexico,” I told him. “That’s our home, we live there,” I told him when he wanted to know why.

“No, you gotta go back,” he said firmly.

“But we don’t have anywhere to go back to,” I argued. “We don’t have another home or anything in the United States, our home is in Mexico with the kids now,” I pleaded.

“Well you can’t bring that stuff into Mexico, without a letter,” he stated flatly.

What more could I say? We did all we could. “O.K.,” I relented. With that he walked our van across the roadway, opened up a huge gate that passed into the line going into the U.S. and closed and locked the gate behind us. A million things were going through my mind as I drove all

the way across all the U.S. lines to the very end. My wife, of then 27 years, could see I had something clicking in my head.

“Jim,” Suzi said, “You’re not going to do something risky here are you, you wouldn’t do what I’m thinking you’re going to do, would you?” And before she finished I had started to back up. At first I went slowly, then I picked up a little speed, backing up about a quarter of a mile or so right back into Mexico. I knew they would never let us back into the U.S. with all the food and produce we had. We were stuck. There was no way to get into Mexico with all the food, and it would be confiscated on the way out. We needed to get home and this was one way to do it. On our way to the orphanage I was running things over in my mind hoping I had not disappointed the Lord in some way. But I had a peace about what I did, and I felt He was going to give me a break on this one. God has never turned us down, nor has He let us down. If we have the will, He always has a way. In this case it was possibly His will and our way. Although this was no doubt

the most unconventional method that we ever were a part of. We have always been able to bring the food into Mexico that the children need.

CHARIOTS OF GOD . . . (COLINA VEHICLES) . . .

CHAPTER SIX

When we became administrators in 1987, the only items left in the orphanage were some bunk beds and some large pots and pans. We had many needs, but the biggest one was for a vehicle. Two of our newer board members, who are now missionaries in Costa Rica, Ed and Sara Matelli helped us meet that need. Sara was Secretary for her church and Ed was the police inspector for the intelligence section of the San Francisco Police Department. They had come down on several different occasions and they could see our need for a vehicle. After one of their trips down they went to their credit union, took out a loan, and bought us a 1979 Ford three-quarter ton van. Before they brought it down, they surprised us by having it painted white and putting Colina de Luz and our logo on the side, along with the verse the Lord had given us for Colina, Matthew 5:14 *“You are the light of the world, A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”*

When they arrived with the van, we were all surprised and excited. We drove that van for many years to come. For a long time we used it when we took the kids to church. Also, the outreaches used it to transport people from one community to the other to have church services. It was used for the food run once a week, and for bringing people to the clinics. It really took a beating. By the time it was on its last legs (or wheels) it was badly rusted out. The top was coming off, and it needed, and would be needing major mechanical repair. We let some of the older boys make it their project. They did some work on it, then sold it.

When we could see that our van was giving out we began to pray for our next van. We always try to include the children in our prayers so that they can be part of the blessing of seeing God provide, in His way and in His time. Often he puts it on the hearts of people who have come to know about the ministry here to make those provisions.

We were praying for a more dependable van, one that was not falling apart. I was out in the far corner of the orphanage yard one day. One of the boys was cleaning up trash and I decided to give him a hand.

“There’s a guy here who wants to give you a van,” one of the kids said as he ran toward me. The first thought that crossed my mind was the Lincoln someone wanted to give us. They had called and left a message and before I could return their call they had hauled it to the junk yard saying they didn't think I wanted it. I really wasn't getting my hopes up too high this time. I went to wash my hands and then walked down to the office to talk to whoever it was that had the donation. All the time I had in my mind that I would see something behind another car that had been towed up the hill, so I didn't even notice the nice van that I passed as I walked to the office.

The man was waiting for me. As I approached he asked, “Are you in charge?”

“Yes,” I said, “I’m the administrator.”

Then he said, “I have this van that I want to give you.”

“Where is it?” I asked skeptically.

“Right here,” he answered pointing to the van I had just passed. I couldn't believe my ears, or my eyes. By that time the word was out and many of the kids and staff were hanging around. It was a beautiful blue 1988 Ford XL, custom model, with a 460-V8 engine.

I was stunned as I asked him, “Who are you?”

“Look I have to get going. I’m late for a fishing trip,” and he jumped into his jeep, where some friends were waiting. Before he left, he gave me all the paperwork, mentioning a lady named Lupe from the Good Shepherd church.

When I came back to earth, I went over to the van, opened the door and thanked God for what He sent us. The kids and staff were as surprised as I was. We all rejoiced together, and our faith grew yet stronger through seeing this tremendous answer to our prayers.

In the coming weeks I found out that it was Lupe’s ex-husband who donated that van. She asked him to donate toward some food they were going to bring down, but he refused saying he wanted to give us a van. Lupe thought he was just making excuses or maybe just kidding. She told us he was not a Christian, yet the Lord used him to drive up the hill to Colina, keys and registration in hand, and provide us with our gorgeous new van.

That van served us all for many years. When the odometer hit 150,000 very hard miles, and the breakdowns were coming closer and closer together, we went back to the Lord, and asked if it be His will, would He see that we had a more dependable van.

Not too long after we began to pray, I had a call from the wife of my friend, “Brother Barry,” the one in the machine shop with the reddish hair. His wife’s name is Christi Vazzana, and she worked at D.V.I. in Temecula a sister company to A.C.S. where I worked prior to our move to Colina. She asked if I could come up there because her company had a donation for the orphanage.

When I arrived at the D.V.I. personnel office, one of the staff, Shannon Wagner, took me into the office to ask me some questions about the ministry. The Temecula newspaper had recently run an article for two days about Colina de Luz and our involvement in it. After we did the interview, she took me back into a warehouse where about three hundred people were waiting. The whole thing was a surprise to me. There was a stage set up and they walked me up onto the stage and presented me with the keys to a new 4 x 4 Toyota truck. Now, those who know me will be quick to say I'm not often at a loss for words, but I was not prepared for this! I told everyone how surprised I was (no exaggeration there) and said a few words of thanks.

The presentation was over, and the people were going back to their work stations when Shannon told me that we could do whatever we wanted with the pickup. She said we could sell it, trade it, or keep it, whatever would be of greatest benefit to the orphanage. They really didn't care. The truck was part of a contest for their employees. If the sales were up to a certain point at that date they were going to put everyone's name in a hat, draw a name and give away the truck. If the sales were not up then the employees could submit the name of their favorite charity and they would pick one of those charities. Colina de Luz was chosen, and we had a brand new truck.

I explained to Shannon that if we have a choice between luxury and practical, then we choose practical. The Toyota truck is a luxury, although I'm not sure our older boys would agree. I let her know we had been praying for a van, and that the proceeds from the sale of the truck and some donated funds would purchase us the van we need. We were able to look around and find a good deal on a year old van. It is a one ton,

fifteen passenger van. God is faithful and answered our prayers through a series of circumstances that only He could orchestrate.

When we have a need, we usually bring it before the whole body here at Colina. We include the children and staff. They have been able to see miracle after miracle and the faithfulness of God. They know it is not a coincidence when God supplies our needs after we have prayed for them. I have to admit I was never expecting a van as nice as the one we got. I cannot say it was because of our faith; it was just our Lord's grace and His goodness toward us. Sometimes our response to God needs to be like that of the father of the demon possessed son who said, "*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!*" Mark 9:24.

THE BUS

My father told me about a bus his church had fixed up and was planning to sell. They put a new GMC engine in it, and close to \$13,000 in total repairs. They were hardly using it and felt like it wasn't good stewardship to keep it. My dad knew that we had been praying for a long time for a way to safely get everyone to church at the same time. Up until this time we loaded two vans with close to fifty people and drove ten miles to our church in Playas de Tijuana.

When he told me about the bus, I started contacting people who were close to the ministry. I asked them to pray with us, and before long we had \$2000 to go toward the purchase of the bus. But that wasn't close enough to the \$5000 (a super deal) that my Dad's church said they would sell the bus to us for. I called my Dad and told him to hang

on, if they could, that we had \$2000 and I was sure the rest would come in. I really felt like the Lord wanted us to have this bus.

At the elder's meeting my father told the other elders that we had part of the money, the \$2000, but it might take us a while to get the rest. Most of these older guys knew me. I had grown up in their church, and no doubt my parents had spent many hours before the alter on their knees in prayer during my more rebellious years. We attended there after we were saved. They knew where my life had been and where the Lord was taking it now. They made us an offer no one could refuse. "Tell Jimmy (I was always "Jimmy" to them) that we will sell the bus to Colina for \$2,500."

When my dad called me with the good news I could hardly wait for him to hang up so I could share it with some of the other board members. Someone was moved to donate the remaining \$500. We purchased a really nice 66 passenger (that's 132 in Mexican passenger calculation) bus!

WE NEED A TRUCK, LORD

Hauling dirt was a real problem without a truck. The owner of the factory below us said we could have all the dirt we wanted if we could get it from his property. We were still in the process of building up the sports field and we needed a truck for this and various other needs. We asked the Lord in our prayers that if He agreed, would He provide us with a truck.

I was in Pastor Brian Bell's office one day. He is my pastor at Calvary Chapel Murrieta. Brian and I were talking. I noticed through a window that there was an old truck parked out behind the church.

"Hey Brian, what are you doing with that truck?" I asked. I thought I might as well ask. Brian said that it had been donated and they were fixing it up. They were planning to sell it, take the proceeds and buy a van that they needed. Then he asked me, "Why?"

I replied with, "Well we could sure use that truck, Brian," just kinda' joking around with him.

Pastor Brian said laughingly, "You just get your eyes off that truck, Jim!"

I said, "O.K., Brian, whatever is right."

Several months passed and I got a call from Brian, "We finally got the truck fixed up and registered. We are going to use it to bring the Christmas gifts down to the kids. We still want to try to sell it. This will be like a test drive." It had a rebuilt engine and nearly everything else had been overhauled. It was in excellent shape.

I was sitting at the desk in my office when the group was supposed to arrive, and Pastor Brian walked in. I could tell something was wrong by the look on his face when he came in so I said, "Brian, what is it, what's that matter?"

He said, "You know the truck?"

"Yeah" I answered.

"Well," he went on, "the thing blew up in Escondido. The engine just blew a rod right out the side of the block." I couldn't believe it. I knew how much they put into that truck. "Do you still want it?" he asked me.

Excitedly I answered, “Oh yeah, yeah I want it!”

Brian told me he felt badly about giving me a truck with a blown engine. But he knew God wanted us to have this truck. He said he would pay for any towing charges, and told me again how badly he felt about giving us a broken truck. I told him that if God really wanted to give us that truck then surely He was going to provide an engine for it. Not two days later a young man drove up with an engine in the back of his vehicle. He said his dad had been building an off road vehicle and wanted us to have this engine. It was a rebuilt 350 V8. He asked if we could use it. Could we use it! We were waiting for it! God gave us a completely restored 1955 Chevy two ton truck, and we used it constantly until the Lord showed us it was time for us to give it to another ministry that had a greater need, Sparrows Gate.

It wasn't too long after Brian gave us that truck that someone donated a mini bus to the church. Brian was really excited and so were we. Brian had provided for us and God had blessed him by meeting their need in return.

THANKS FOR THE TRUCK LORD, BUT WE REALLY NEED A DUMP TRUCK

We took the new truck down the hill and hand shoveled the dirt until the truck was full. Then we brought it back up to the sports field and shoveled the dirt back out. After numerous trips of unloading dirt we realized that we had prayed the wrong prayer. So we went back to the Lord in apology, “Lord, we're truly sorry, but we've made a little mistake here. With the truck we have we're never going to get the job done. Can we

change our minds? If we had a dump truck, we'd only have to load it once and it would unload itself. If it be your will Lord, please provide us with a dump truck."

A short time later, a friend came and told me he had bought a dump truck. He was always buying and selling vehicles on the side. He was going to take his truck down to El Salvador in about a year, but he wanted to know if he could leave it parked at the orphanage in the meantime. Perhaps his landlady didn't appreciate the sight of a dump truck parked out in front. Then he told me, "If you allow me to park it here, you are welcome to use it all you want." Now that was a great deal, just what we needed. We didn't really want a new vehicle to register and pay insurance on; we just wanted to move that dirt. God's timing was perfect. He gave us an International dump truck. It saved our older boys many hours of unloading, and the job was finished much quicker. God blessed us again.

MORE THAN WE CAN ASK OR THINK

God often gives us things we don't even think of let alone pray for. He knows our every need. Pastor Brian had called three or maybe four years ago to tell me Murrieta Calvary was not using their minibus much anymore. (The one the Lord gave them, when they gave us the truck). He said it was hard to justify the expense of keeping it and if we could use it, it was ours.

We did not pray for a minibus or for anything like it. But since the day they delivered it to us the engine has hardly had a chance to cool. We use it four times a day to go back and forth to school. It is used to take the boys to their soccer games and

practices, and to take our older children and staff to the outreaches. Every other Saturday it picks up the people in surrounding communities for our free clinic. That bus has been a tremendous blessing to Colina's ministries.

We serve a God whose grace is abundant toward His people. With our prayers or without them His heart is always to bless us.

MORE TRUCKS

"Brother Barry," my reddish haired friend in the machine shop, took my place at A.C.S., the company I worked for before we moved to Colina. We keep in contact and he and his wife have been great supporters of the ministry here. He gave me a call one day and told me he had a 1983 Mazda pick up he wanted to donate to the orphanage. It has been great for running around, not too good for hauling big loads, but a great gas saver. It is a light weight truck with a high geared rear end.

Several months after Barry donated his truck his father also donated a 1978 one ton truck he wasn't using much. The Lord has blessed us in the transportation area of the ministry here. He has given us the vehicles we need to get the job done. We praise Him for that blessing.

When we moved to Colina, Suzi and I had a 1981 Honda Accord and a 1976 Dodge van. We put a lot into the van to make it dependable for our frequent trips to Mexico. We put heavy-duty suspension for hauling heavy loads. Rather than sell the Honda we dedicated it to orphanage use. It now has well over 200,000 miles and continues to be used for trips to the doctor and for missionaries on their days off, so they

can get away for a break. Our son, Ken uses it a couple of nights a week going to Southwestern College for classes.

AND CARS TOO

After the Lord blessed us with the 1987 Ford van, we stopped using our personal van for business. It got such horrible gas mileage. For just the two of us to use, it was a real gas guzzler! When we went somewhere on our day or days off, the gas was a real expense. You could watch the gage move! One day when Suzi and I were talking I told her we needed a more economical vehicle, one that we could use to visit my folks up in Fullerton, or go somewhere, when we could get away. We felt trapped, in a way. The gas was expensive, and the van was getting older and not as dependable on longer trips. We had definitely gotten our money's worth out of it.

I told Suzi, "Let's start praying that God will help us with a nice transportation car that we can get around in. We'll have a little more freedom to take a drive or something now and then." Near the end of summer we started praying, looking to God because we didn't have any money for a car.

By October Colina was in one of its worst financial situations ever. We had electric, gas and water bills outstanding. When we bought supplies, we limited it to the barest necessities. We cut till we could cut no more. Books were needed for the children's school, \$700 worth of books and there was no money! We were paying the workers for a few days at a time instead of the usual week, and making payments to the electric company so they would not turn the electricity off. It was a trying situation and a

bookkeeper's nightmare. Some of the kids had gotten sick and there were medical bills and medicines to pay for. We were on our knees more than ever. The situation went from bad to worse.

During that same time we had a major attack from the enemy. Accusations had been brought to our Board about the way we were conducting some aspects of the ministry at the orphanage. Several people had made a case, and we were their target. We are blessed to say two of those three people have since repented to the Lord for the things they said and did to us personally and for the hurt they caused us. But that didn't change things at the time.

In the midst of these trials we continued to pray to God to work it all out, because He is the only One who could. We went to the Post Office and picked up the mail. There was a letter from Suzi's Mom. Suzi was really excited. Her Mom doesn't write too often and Suzi was anxious to hear from her. When she opened the letter, a check fell out. Suzi picked up the check, and she saw it was for \$4000! "Wow, what is my mom doing sending me \$4000", she said in total amazement. Then she read the letter. It said when her mom received an inheritance from her sister's estate, she felt like she wanted to share it with her children, and so had sent each of them \$4000.

There was no doubt in Suzi's mind what that money was for, and it wasn't the car we were praying for. There was a need at Colina we could not ignore. The car would have to wait. We needed electricity and water, and food. It had worn on my wife that she was not able to pay our faithful staff on time. Not to mention the pressure she felt of all those due bills that seemed to just hang out there. We used the money along with the donations that were trickling in to pay as many of the bills as we could.

When we had our board meeting in March, the four thousand plus dollars we used from our personal funds showed on the financial report. In our absence the board voted to write us a check for the money we had put in the orphanage account. We told them they didn't owe us anything. We just wanted their love, but it was in their hearts to give us back what we decided to share.

We bought our car just a few weeks later. With the money we received from the sale of our van and the check from the Board we had just enough to get a really good buy on a 1991 Ford Taurus. It's a basic model, no power equipment, but a good dependable vehicle that gets good mileage.

The van was sold to Y.W.A.M., who quickly took us up on our offer of \$2000. (\$1000 under what we were asking). They use it for the ministry they operate here in Playas de Tijuana.

Once again God blessed us far beyond our expectations.

SOWING AND REAPING . . . CHAPTER SEVEN

Over the years God has taught us many things about finances. When we were a young Christian couple, Suzi and I had a lot of bills. We had four babies by Cesarean, and had a lot of

Medical bills that weren't covered by our insurance. Our children were just two years apart, so about the time we paid off the bills, it was time to start a new collection.

My parents taught me from childhood that a man's obligation is to pay his bills. Some doctors were sending us threatening letters. We sat down and wrote to each of them asking for their patience and letting them know we intended to pay every dollar; it might just take us a while. Without exception they were all very understanding and allowed us the time we needed to fulfill our obligations. Eventually we had every doctor and hospital bill paid.

We had convictions as young Christians about tithing, but it never seemed as though it was a possibility for us. How could we even consider a 10% expense like that? I worked at the same machine shop at which my father and his stepfather had worked. Also employed there was an uncle of mine. We were both foremen at the time. My Uncle Jim was a good brother in the Lord and one of my closest friends. He was a large man, around 6' 6", and probably weighed 350 pounds. He was a solid, really big man, whose heart was just as big. I grew to love and respect him more and more as we spent time together at work.

One time when we were talking the subject of tithing came up. I told him how I felt, that we just didn't see how it would be possible for us. He gave me this advice,

“Why don’t you think about doing what your Aunt Lila and I did when we were young. We really didn’t have the faith to tithe either. We let the Lord know that we wanted to tithe, but knew we needed to pay our bills also. So we started by tithing a smaller percentage, making a firm commitment to the Lord that whenever we got a raise the whole thing would go to the Lord until we could get up to 10%.”

We took my uncle’s advice. We soon found that 90% or less is really 100% of what God intends us to live on. God certainly does not need our money. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, but he wants us to learn to live by faith and be giving people. Malachi 3:8 goes as far as to say that if we don’t tithe, we’re really robbing God.

OUR FIRST HOME

We had four children and had lived in thirteen different houses or apartments and we were looking for a house of our own. We were finished with throwing money away on renting, but it seemed as though every time we got close to making a purchase, the deal would fall through. We just about gave up.

When we rented a house, we always fixed it up. Then the owner would say it was worth more money and raise the rent or put it up for sale. That happened in the last place we lived. We were there for about six months. We painted the inside, cleaned it up and did a lot of yard work, which we both really loved doing. Then owner decided to sell. We had two weeks to find a new place before the new owners wanted possession. We couldn’t find anyone willing to rent a decent house within our budget to a family with four little children. The house we ended up moving into should have been condemned.

The floor was so slanted that when the kids put the ball on the floor it would go rolling off to the other wall. When we got in bed at night we had to sleep in just the right direction or all the blood would rush to our heads. It actually was something we could joke about. We have many happy memories of the time we lived in that house, in spite of the dwelling, the Lord and our little family were the center of our lives.

While we lived in that rickety old house, people started giving us furniture. We stored it in the old garage that must have been built for a Model T, it was so small. There was no way the furniture would ever fit into the house!

“Maybe the Lord’s about to give us the house we’ve been dreaming of, because He’s already got it furnished,” I said to Uncle Jim one day at work.

With that comment he was reminded that he and my Aunt Lila also had something for us. They were buying a new dining room set and they’d like to give us kids (they always called us kids) their old one.

When I came home from work that night, I told Suzi to start packing the boxes. I really felt like the Lord was going to give us a house. It had nothing to do with our financial status at the time. We just had our last baby, Matthew, and we were on a very tight budget. Going out for hamburgers was a rarity. If we did anything, it was camping. Our kids loved going to the Salton Sea, playing in the water and camping out. Gas money for a trip like that was all we could stretch out of an already tight budget.

Suzi told me about a house she saw in the paper that day. We checked out house ads on a regular basis, and then we dreamed about the “what ifs.”

“There’s this house I saw today,” she said. “I really think we ought to look into it. But it’s one of those Real Estate things you don’t like.”

I always hated to go into a Real Estate office, knowing our financial status; they really couldn't take us seriously. But this time I said, "O.K., let's go."

When we got to the office, I sat down with the agent. He was anxious to show us the house. We packed the kids into his car and started out to take a look at the house that had been advertised. He turned down the street we lived on. He passed our rickety rental (really an eyesore to a nice neighborhood of older homes) and drove down the street to the next block and pulled into a driveway we passed on our walks many times.

When we went for a walk, with our kids on their trikes and the baby in the wagon, we always slowed a little as we passed that house. To us it was beautiful. It was close to fifty years old, but solid looking. The large front porch was made of river rock and it extended across the whole front of the house. It had a huge back yard and a big tree that would be just perfect for a swing. It was truly our dream house. We would say to each other as we all passed by, "Wouldn't it be neat to own a house like that someday." Now we were there driving up the driveway!

We heard the house was for sale, and that the sellers were asking quite a bit for it. It had not even been a consideration for us. We had no idea this was the house in the paper. The Realtor walked us through. The kids were already in the backyard checking it out. We weren't even halfway through with the tour when the Lord told me this was our house.

I turned to the Realtor and with enthusiasm in my voice and said, "I want to tell you right now, we'll take this house"

"But you haven't seen it all yet, let me show you the rest," he said.

“That’ll be fine, show us the rest, but I’m telling you now that we’ll be taking this house,” I was confident. With excitement, he showed us the remainder of the house.

When we finished our tour and rounded up the kids, I had one more thing to say, “There’s just one little problem I should tell you about,” I confided.

“What’s that?” he looked at me quizzically and asked.

“Well we don’t have any money,” I stated matter of factly, wondering what would be his response.

“Really funny you should say that, because as I was leaving the office this morning one of the other Realtors called me over and said she and her husband would be willing to help a young couple get into a house. Let me get back to her,” he said with a smile on his face.

“O.K.” I replied, “Sounds promising.” Now I really didn’t have a lot of faith in Realtors, I had put them in a category somewhere close to used car salesmen, but I did have faith in God and I was sure He had some kind of “deal” all worked out.

The agent went back to his office and we went back home. He called us later with the good news, “Joyce, the senior Realtor and her husband will lend you a second mortgage, you can assume the first mortgage, and you only have to come up with a little more than \$1000 in cash,” he said excitedly!

The house would be ours. It was the best deal this side of heaven. We paid \$25,000 for the house (that was back in 1971) and five years later we sold it for double that when we moved out to Lake Elsinore. That gave us a great down payment on a house that was more suited for us as our family grew up. When we began giving to God, He opened up heaven’s floodgates and showered us with blessings that we never could have

imagined. He gave back to us much more than we could ever hope to give. Receiving from God, always starts with giving.

GOD IN OUR BUDGET

At one of the times when money was really scarce for us we went to the mail and opened a letter from Denmark. It had come from one of Suzi's great-Aunts. It was for \$100. We went to the store and bought the groceries we needed for our family, giving thanks to God all the way. And when we blessed that food, we were especially thankful for God's provision. We meant it with all our hearts.

It's important to budget God into your finances. We learned that lesson. We found that it is more blessed to give than receive. More than likely, as we struggled with financial issues ourselves, we were becoming more sensitive to other young couple's financial situations. Giving to others as well as tithing became a part of our lives. People had helped us when we needed it and we came to enjoy the blessings of giving back in His name.

When someone says, "Hey, I'll pay you back" many times we tell them, "Rather than that, someday when you come across someone in the same situation you're in now, pass it on. Just remember that someone, in Jesus' name, gave to you. Pass it on and tell them the same thing I'm telling you right now" I just know that if everyone would be more generous to the needy who are in circumstances often beyond their control, it would improve the society we live in today, and bring glory to God's kingdom at the same time.

Proverb 19:17 says, *“He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.”*

LEARNING TO LIVE BY FAITH

When we moved to the orphanage, it was in the middle of a financial crisis. We had personally gone from a fairly large salary to \$100 a month. We were to learn a new meaning of living by faith. You can really learn a lot about faith, when you have no other options.

I remember asking my Grandfather one time, who was an elder at a Baptist church in Arkansas, what they did when they were sick. His family lived in a very poor, but Godly farming community. There were no doctors for miles around. He looked me straight in the eye and with his thick Arkansas twang answered, “Well, son, we do just like the Good Book says, call for the elders and lay hands on the folk. Then let God do the rest.” They learned to live by faith because they had no other option.

Sometimes in our affluent America we miss out on what it really means to live by faith. I can remember praying for my children when they were sick, but still at times in the back of my mind I would probably think something like: well I can always take them to a doctor if this doesn't work. That was not really living by faith.

Our first three or four years at Colina were filled with struggles. The true “thorn in our flesh” was always the electric bill. The Lord would send people from all over the U.S. who would come to our rescue, sometimes at the midnight hour, and if the electricity was ever turned off, it was only for a day or so and we could use the generator

which could at least be used to meet 30% of our needs, so we were never really destitute. Even though things were really tight, God took care of the necessities. It gets a little tiresome after you live on the edge like that for a while. It was right after that October when we had the attacks and the overwhelming financial stresses that we met with our board . . .

MINISTRY TITHING

I was trying to understand why we were in such financial straits. Sometimes a nice donation would be given, and we would have some money for a couple of weeks, but only now and then. There was never much consistency. Why was this such a problem? I learned to look for answers.

I never gave much thought to tithing as an orphanage before, assuming that this would be the place where the buck stopped. People tithe to their churches, and their churches donate to ministries such as ours. In my thoughts that was the end of giving, sort of the end of the line. Then it came to me that there were no teachings that God had a desire for anything in His Kingdom to be a lake. He wanted everything to be a river. He wants it to flow, like the Holy Spirit. It comes in and needs to go out of us also. What God gives us, He intends for us to pass on to others. And were guilty of putting up a dam! I was convicted, and when we met with our board I shared with them how I felt. I felt it would be to God's glory to tithe.

“Even though we really don't have the money at this time,” I said to the five pastors on our board, “I feel like we need to do this as an act of faith.”

Everyone was in agreement saying, “Amen.” We made a decision to tithe anything that came into the general fund.

That meeting was in October and Colina continued to suffer financially until one day in mid to late December our home church paid a visit. With one of the families from our church was a couple from Virginia. The Lord had spoken to them the night before about helping out Colina financially. They were asking God to show them a ministry where He wanted them to sow seed. I took them and the rest in the group who were interested, on a tour. I always include some of the blessings we have experienced here and I sometimes try to share the needs, without pressuring people. (That’s always difficult for me. I never want to beg or pressure, so some would say I usually don’t say enough about the needs). Well, if we ever had needs, we had them now. On this particular tour I did not share any needs that we had. I only shared the blessings, such as a couch that had been given for the girls’ dorm. At the end of the tour the couple from Virginia handed me a check. It was more than enough to pay all the bills we owed, catch us up on our car insurance, and pay the workers. We were able to end the year and go into the next with money in the bank. God opened the windows of heaven and poured us out a blessing as He says He will in Malachi 3:10 when we tithe.

We had only been tithing for about six weeks before the couple from Virginia came with their donation. That was in 1993. From time to time, as the Lord blesses, the same generous donors have sent more finances to Colina. We have not had a financial crisis since then.

When we began sowing into other ministries, we started reaping a harvest of our own. We were able to pay our bills on time and sometimes even go beyond ten percent

as the Lord would lead, to help financially hurting churches. We are able to assist some of our outreaches financially as well as with construction projects, Vacation Bible Schools, and also help in meeting the needs of those in their congregations. We are able to reach poor families and buy gas, water and other necessities that they have. God has really been teaching us a lot in this area. His Word says in Hebrews 13:16, *“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”*

It is my feeling God has blessed us because we started living more by faith in our finances. It took faith to start giving from our ministry because it has so many needs of its own. Now Colina’s needs are better met and we can give more than we ever have. God touches the hearts, of those who are open to Him, to meet ministry needs every day. They need only faithfully respond. We will continue to give to other ministries knowing that God will supply all our needs according to His riches.

SEED BEARS AFTER ITS OWN KIND

Because of our clothing and food situation, I have come to the conclusion that we really do reap what we sow. We don’t usually have problems with clothing because we give away about 80% of what comes in to the poor. More clothing is brought to us than we can use. We sort through and keep what is suited for the children and staff and the rest gets passed on. Several years ago we started a volunteer program for the poor. They can come up in the morning, have devotions with us, and then they work until it’s time for lunch at 1:15 P.M. After they have lunch with us we normally give them a large 30 gallon trash bag and they can go into our excess clothing room and pick out the clothes they

need for their family. Our clothing room looks like a well maintained store. All our clothing is folded and neatly stacked on shelves.

It used to bother us when we knew people would take things and sell them, but the Lord showed us that we could provide the clothes, that would provide the money, that would provide for the needs of their family. It doesn't bother us anymore. We also give each volunteer a bag of food. We generally put in things that we have in excess. It's enough to last them a couple of days. Since we started this program, we have seen our food area blessed.

Luke 6:38 says, *“Give, and it will be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will it be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”* We can see God's faithfulness when we give, and we hope those who have so generously given to us can see it too. He always gives back. When we tithe, we are giving because it really belongs to the Lord, and when we venture out beyond that tithe it is because of His love that is shed abroad in our hearts to help other people, His people.

A LITTLE CAN BE ENOUGH WHEN YOU ARE TITHING

Even some of our staff have learned lessons about God's way in finances. Some were complaining about not earning enough money. We considered what they were saying, but really felt like the wages we were paying were fair. Our workers don't receive a lot of money, but they get free room and board for themselves and their family along with schooling and expenses for their children and numerous other benefits. American

missionaries are supported by their church or others outside Colina. When it is all put together we believe it is fair and sufficient to meet their needs. I started sharing about giving with the staff. I said, “If you don’t have enough money, then you probably aren’t giving enough.” That was a foreign thought for most of our staff, but they considered what I said and some acted on it. In recent years many of our staff have been able to purchase a piece of property that they can call their own. God is blessing them in many ways.

WE WILL REAP IF WE FAINT NOT

Sometimes trials come when we first start to step out and give. It is really important not to give up, but to hang in there. When my wife, Suzi and I first came to Colina, with our \$100 per month support, it was difficult. Since we’ve “hung in there” God has been opening the windows of heaven and has really blessed our financial situation. We now are living on a bigger budget. When we speak in churches, it is always for the benefit of the ministry, never for our personal gain.

We know that where God guides, He provides. He will take care of us and our ministry, which is really His after all, if we are faithful to Him. Many of our personal needs and even wants have been met.

THE GREAT GETAWAY

Some years ago the Lord provided a special need that my wife and I had. We were working very long hours trying to get things running right. Time off just wasn't happening. If we did take a day off and stay at the orphanage, it didn't really work. People knew we were in our mobile home and when they had a question or problem it was easy for them to think they were the only ones disrupting us. And then there was that rooster. We heard him crow every morning. It was really kind of quaint, but on Tuesday morning (on our day off) he got right under our bedroom window and really let it rip. Suzi used to joke with one of our workers, Delfino, and asked him if he got up early, caught the rooster and tortured it right under our window. I knew if my wife ever got her hands on it we would be having rooster soup . . . again.

At any rate, the phone would ring on Tuesdays just as much as any other day, and visitors didn't have any idea that this was our day off. What could I tell them? But it was hard to relax and get rejuvenated with so many interruptions. Occasionally we went to a Motel 6, but even a Motel 6 gets expensive on a small budget.

In my prayers I used to say jokingly that I would take a trailer in the Mojave Desert. We felt like we needed a place to get away, a place where we could enjoy each other's company, and focus on each other, and our family. We're both what could be called "romantics." The kids always love it when I hug Suzi in the dining room and give her a big kiss. We really do love each other more and more as the years pass.

I was invited to go to a mission's conference in Minnesota. I would be there for about a week. I arrived in Minnesota and was with the missions board of the church that invited me. Next to me was a man named Wes Ostrom. Wes asked me if he could take me out to lunch and talk to me privately.

“Tomorrow’s good for me, how ‘bout you?” I said.

We met for lunch the following day. He asked me a lot of questions. Wes is a careful man, I felt like maybe he was burned before by people who took advantage of his generosity. We talked about the orphanage for some time and then he stopped to insert, “Oh, by the way, my wife and I have a condominium in Rancho Bernardo, California.” Rancho Bernardo is a community about an hour or so from the border. It is one of the nicest cities in Southern California.

Wes continued, “Our condominium is right on the golf course. We keep it leased out most of the time, but for those times in between we’d like to offer it to you and your wife.” This was definitely not the Mojave Desert! It is a beautiful three bedroom, two bath, retreat!

When the condo was vacant on our days off, we would go and stay there. We were able to use it for a vacation on a couple of occasions also. It was a very quiet place, and served as a place of rest and healing during some hard times.

When Wes and his wife Lois come to California we usually have dinner with them. We consider them to be some very special people that God brought into our lives to bless us personally, and to bless the orphanage as well. Our God is so good and faithful.

When I was in Minnesota, I had not yet met the Kerssens, Keith and Sharon, an energetic retired couple. Some of their friends at church had shared the ministry with them and they visited us soon after that. Sharon says that she really just came to check out the place. But the Lord had been preparing Sharon for a ministry since He laid missions on her heart as a young girl. After their first visit the Kerssens made a commitment to come back in January of the coming year. That was over five years ago

and they have been with us every January since. They usually stay until sometime after Easter. Sharon teaches our kids and some of the staff sewing and typing and use of the computers. Keith is an all-around type guy and helps us out tremendously while he's here. I always have a long "to do" list for Keith by each January.

Keith and Sharon have become our right-hand people while they are at Colina. They are great advisors and give us many good suggestions while they are here. They have taken on the all important job of writing, printing and mailing our newsletter. This has been one of the major ways we have of letting people know what is going on at the orphanage and sharing the needs as they arise. And when the Kerssens are home in Minnesota (which we lovingly call "Colina North"), they are constantly working for the good of the ministry here. From that one visit to Minnesota, God has blessed us with people that we wonder how we ever did without.

There was yet another time when one of the pastors on our board, Gary Nelson, called me wanting to be of help. I talked to him earlier in the week and he knew that Suzi and I were going through a hard time. The pressure was on, and we did not have much time to talk or be together. My wife was having a difficult time with it all, and I was nearing that point. He told me he thought we needed to get away so he took the liberty of arranging our next few days. He rented a hotel room in San Diego right on the bay. Gary told me they had room service and he added, "If you don't take advantage of it, and put it on my tab, you'll lose your salvation!" Of course I knew he was joking about the last part, but I also knew he wanted to help us out and give us some time to communicate and relax. The Lord has used Gary on numerous occasions to minister to us as a couple. We thank Him for that.

We have a little travel trailer that we moved to the orphanage about a year or so before we moved there ourselves. We looked for a space to move it to in Rosarito Beach, just a few short miles from Colina. On our days off we could go and stay there. We both love the beach, to walk on it and hear the waves pounding. But the only secure space we could find was \$350 per month. It was in a run down trailer park, and was more than we felt it was worth. Moving our trailer would also mean one less place for staff to stay in or for visitors when they came. With both those things in mind, we said, “Forget it; we don’t need it that bad.”

We still kept looking because we did need somewhere to get away. Over the years the Lord raised our support and we were able to get away to the Motel 6 more often. But it just wasn’t like home, you feel sort of closed in and there’s no where to cook so that adds another expense. We both miss and enjoy barbecuing some good old American food now and then. The lines at the border were another deterrent. The wait had become extensive, so we kept praying.

One day I was reading one of those Mexican tourist papers and I saw a small mobile advertised right on the beach. The paper said it also had a small fenced in yard. Sounded too good to be true because the rent was \$350, the same as the space rent for a trailer. We decided to check it out. Maybe this was God being good to us again. We drove down to the beach to see it. It was a single wide, dirty but cleanable, older mobile right on the beach. We signed a six-month lease. That was a year and a half ago.

Our retreat has been just that, a place where we can go to refresh ourselves and get ready for the busy times we have. It is sometimes difficult to live on one spot of ground with more than one hundred people every day. This gives us a great break.

After we rented the mobile, the Lord reminded us of Wes and Lois Ostrom's generosity. They are the ones who let us use their condo. We decided to do the same for our staff. We allow them, especially married couples, to use the mobile on their days off. Every other Sunday in the summer months we take the whole orphanage down to the beach, have church service out in front of our mobile, and then play in the water and have a barbecue. We feel extremely blessed to have found such a great place and thank the Lord regularly for allowing us our heart's desire.

SERVE THE LORD

I'm constantly reminded how God loves us more than the fowl of the air. He feeds and houses them. They are safe and blessed and that is what He has done for us. He has cared for and blessed us also.

There is a story about two men who were in Bible school. They were both having a difficult time financially, and life was really rough. Survival was a struggle. One man gave up and decided to quit, saying, "I can't handle this anymore. I'm going to take the job I was offered as a car salesman. I'm going to drop out of school."

The other Bible student said, "I'm committed to what I'm doing, and I'm going to continue. The Lord will take care of me however He chooses to take care of me, and I'll accept whatever kind of life He wants me to have."

The second man finished Bible school and has become an author, who has written several books. His travels have taken him all around the world and he has hundreds of friends. The other man is still limited to where he began years ago as a car salesman. The

lesson to be learned from this story is that we need to hang in there with the Lord. We may go through some trials and tribulations but God is always faithful to take care of us. We need to be whatever He has called us to be and trust in Him to take care of the rest.

ASK IN MY NAME . . . CHAPTER EIGHT

In the little community of Los Ponchos, where we went to minister to people by sharing the Gospel and distributing food and clothes, we saw one of the greatest miracles. We were making one of our regular trips. The people had great needs and were living in little shacks, some built out of pallets. They were hungry for the gospel, but they were in need of help materially also. The verse in I John 3:17, had come to live in our hearts. We knew that if we could see these people in such need and just walk away, it would be hard to claim that the love of God was abiding in us. We were compelled by that love to collect all the food we could to share with these people. Many of us had dug deep into our pockets and then dug some more, as we tried to help meet their overwhelming needs.

Our system was this: the night before our trip we packed into the vehicles all the food that didn't need to be refrigerated. Suzi organized the packing of the vehicles. In the morning we threw in the last few things and got an early start. We knew more or less how many families had been coming so we thought we knew what to expect.

When we got to Los Ponchos people were already waiting for us, lots of people. They started lining up. Somehow the word had spread in this little community. What were we going to do? We had not brought enough food! We crowded around the truck and van with the food in it and prayed, knowing that our Lord had been in the business of multiplying food before. If He can multiply loaves and fishes, He can make this food be all that we need because He's the same yesterday, today and forever. We remembered the verse in John 14:12-14, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to*

My Father. And whatever you ask in My name that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

“Lord,” we prayed, “In Your Son’s name, please multiply this food.”

We decided to bag up the food just as planned, not cutting the amount per family to make up for the rest of the people. We distributed bag after bag of food. Each bag had a lot of the staples, rice, beans, and flour. We also had, from a chain bakery, delicious pastries, and we purchased some coffee and chocolate for each family. We really wanted to bless them all. The food never seemed to be going down. There was even a time when we ran out of something and we found another bag of it in the other car. This was impossible. But not with God!

We saw a great miracle on that day. Food came out of that truck that we **knew** had not been packed, things we never even saw before. We just kept watching as we handed out bag after bag in total awe of what the Lord was doing as we trusted Him. There was a lady named Teresa and her family of eight kids who was always at our outreaches. Her husband and several of her sons are hemophiliacs. They are sick quite often. She always came to where we were, pushing her children around in a wheel barrel. She never got in line, not wanting to be aggressive, I guess. She just stayed in the background and watched. When we were all through that day and everyone had food, we pulled out one last bag. The Lord had saved that one for Teresa and her family.

There is nothing too hard for God when we put our trust in Him.

GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD, LET US THANK HIM FOR OUR FOOD

Once when our food supply at Colina was very low, my wife walked into the kitchen to see how lunch was going. Two American missionary girls were boiling some chickens. When Suzi came in, she looked into the pot on the stove. The chickens resembled something you might buy at a joke shop. They took the chickens out of the pot and held them up. They were long and skinny and looked like they had been stopped in a full running stride. They were tough as leather, and lunch was to be served in about an hour! Suzi asked the girls where they got these “birds” and was told that a big box of them had been donated the day before.

Looking back, we decided they must have been roosters or something else. Later we figured that for the many hours of gas it took to cook them tender we could have bought a real chicken. But at that moment they needed to find something else for lunch. It’s not like we can run to McDonald’s or something. We couldn’t even make a sandwich unless we were blessed with bread that week. So the girls set out to the storage area to hunt for an alternative to put in the pot.

In the meantime someone came in the back door of the kitchen. He was a pastor from a church up in the mountains of Big Bear, California. He and some of the people from his church had come for a visit. They wanted to see what was happening with the “new people in charge.” He said, “I have a box of fresh chickens here, where would you like me to put it?”

The missionaries who were cooking and Suzi just looked at each other and started laughing, and said, “Put them in the pot on the stove, the water is already boiling.” They

explained about the “joke chickens” and the pastor and his group rejoiced that they had come at just the right time. Lunch was served. Thanks be to God.

**BY HIS HANDS WE ARE FED, LET US THANK HIM FOR OUR DAILY
BREAD**

Paula, who was our cook at the time, came to me one day and suggested that I go to some bread companies here in Mexico and ask them if they would donate some bread to the orphanage. Our supply of bread had been very inconsistent, and way down from what we’d been used to. Bread was a filler for the majority of our meals.

I answered Paula, “You know I don’t feel comfortable going around to these, or any, companies asking them for things. You need to pray about this, Paula. This will have to come about by some means other than my asking them to give us bread.”

Paula agreed saying she would pray for the bread, and left my office. Shortly, within the next hour or so, there was a knock at my door. A man came in, introduced himself and asked me if I knew James Gamboa who attends Good Shepherd Church in Los Angeles.

“Yes, I know him,” I replied. He said James had told him a long time ago that he should come up and talk to me. “What about,” I asked him.

“Well I’m a salesman for Dolly Madison, just a few miles from here. We have an abundance of ‘day old’ bread we want to donate to the orphanage,” he told me.

He just happened to be down in La Gloria when he remembered that he had been meaning to come up to Colina de Luz. I asked him if he had a minute and told him I

wanted him to see just why he'd come that day. He said, "Sure," and we headed up to the kitchen.

We found Paula working in the kitchen and I asked her if she prayed for the bread. "Yes I did," she told us.

"Well, here's the answer to your prayer then." And I explained to her about this man's offer of bread. Again God had taken care of us. It is very rare when someone from a business in Mexico gives us something, but this particular day within about an hour of Paula's prayer this perfect stranger came up and wanted to give us the very thing she prayed for. It was another miracle, an incredible method God chose to again meet the needs of His precious children.

I WILL BLESS THY BREAD . . . AND WATER

For as long as I can remember, the water for the orphanage has been stored in a 7,500 gallon tank. Over the years there have been various sources for filling that tank, or at least trying to. Several years after our first visit, and before we moved to the orphanage, we learned that the local government, which was supplying the water at that time, had a pump that was burned out. It was quite a problem for the community. They were down to just two pumps. Through the director of the orphanage we asked if we could take the broken pump to see if we could repair it. Mack could repair just about anything. But he didn't have the schematics needed to target the problem so he decided to call the manufacturer.

Mack made the call to the pump manufacturer and explained the whole situation of why we had the pump and told him about the poor community it came from. The man on the phone was touched by Mack's story. So touched that he decided to send us a new pump free of charge. We were so blessed. Then we found that the motor that drives the pump was in disrepair also. We really didn't want to call back and say, "Hey, can you send us a motor too?"

Mack got out his phone book and started thumbing through the pages. He came across a man who worked on pumps. As it turned out he was a Christian. He suggested Mack contact another company, and he gave him the name of that company.

"Tell them everything you told me," He said, "And I'll just bet they'll offer to give you a motor for your pump."

He was right, and now we had our motor. Mack assembled it and Vivian, his wife, took red nail polish and wrote a praise to God on the side of it. This solved the community's and the orphanage's water supply problem for years.

One day, this is before we moved to Colina, we got a call at home in Lake Elsinore. The orphanage was completely out of water. It had been three years or so since the Lord furnished the Ejido with the new pump, and motor. I concluded that the line was broken. I asked Poncho, the director at the time, to check things out and do the best he could to get some water, and I would be there as soon as I could.

When I got to the orphanage Poncho reported that someone had cut our water line. They went down the hill dug up the pipe and cut us off. A couple of new men had come into office at the Ejido and they decided they could supply a lot of the local families with the water we had been using.

It has always been our policy not to waste water. We use what we need and no more. It is not and never has been our intention to take anything from the people of the Ejido. We were hooked up to the water years ago and were instrumental in increasing the water supply when we brought them the new pump and motor. But now we were completely cut off.

Not really knowing what to do, I called Maggie, who was on our Mexican board. Maybe she knew where we could get some water. Her immediate response was to have the Ejido President arrested. In fact, she got some Federal Police and set out looking for him. When she stopped at the orphanage, I couldn't believe what she was planning. We were definitely not out to arrest the President. Actually I didn't even feel comfortable taking any more water from the community, now that the severity of the need was brought to my attention. But I knew we needed to get water somewhere, and fast.

Maggie brought the emergency up at her home Bible study group that was meeting that day. When she shared what was happening at Colina, ten miles away, one of the ladies asked her where the orphanage was located.

"It's in La Gloria," Maggie answered.

"Is that anywhere near the PVC ABS pipe factory?" the lady went on.

"Yes, it's right up the hill from the factory," replied Maggie.

"That's my brother, Walter's, factory. He has a productive well. Let me ask him if he can help." And she went to call her brother.

Walter agreed to give us water if we brought down a pump and put it in his holding tank. Then they could send us up water as we needed it. What an incredible miracle it was for the Lord to have Walter's sister in Maggie's Bible study that day.

A neat brother I met years before, Bill Ash has a ministry, Life Waters, that works around the world drilling wells and bringing water to people in need. I called him to see if he could help us out with a pump. He graciously offered to donate the pump we needed, but I had to send someone to pick it up.

I felt led to call Brother Juarez, who was on our board at the time. When I got him on the phone I told him about the situation saying, “What we really need, Brother Juarez is someone who can pick up the pump in Los Angeles and get it down to us.” He said he would do his best to find someone to bring it the following Saturday.

This was on Monday and we were already desperate for water. I told him, “Brother Juarez, we need to put this pump in tomorrow morning! We’re out of water here. We can’t wait until Saturday.”

Brother Juarez answered me with, “Man, I don’t think I’ll be able to get anybody that fast.”

I answered back, “Make some calls, brother I really feel like the Lord wants us to have water now. He takes care of all our needs, and this is definitely one of them. There’s got to be someone out there who is available tomorrow to come and connect it.”

Brother Juarez said he would try, and we hung up. He called a friend who was head of maintenance at Queen of the Valley Hospital in Los Angeles to get the number of someone he thought might connect the pump.

While he was telling the friend about the situation his friend said, “Would it be O.K. if I went and fixed it? I just happen to have tomorrow off.” Of course Brother Juarez agreed.

Then I was called to give this guy Bill Ash's number so he could pick up the pump. And through a series of miracles the next day our pump was picked up and the whole system installed. We had water again.

In later years we dug our own well. Over the years many people have donated to make sure that we have a consistent water supply. We thought the well would be the source of that supply. But what we were sure was going to be the "Great Baja Gusher," turned out to be a two gallon a minute flow, or approximately 25% of our needs. It did, however, supplement our supply until the Lord gave us our own water.

OUR OWN WATER

We were privileged to have Senor Rulfo, the governor of Baja, visit us in December of 1994. Included in his trip to the Tijuana area was a visit to an orphanage. The DIF recommended Colina de Luz, and we were most honored. One of our founders, a distinguished and godly gentleman and pastor, Dr. Abel Mellado came to be the Governor's host for us. Also representing Colina was Sergio Gomez, who is President of our Mexican Board and another quality brother in the Lord.

While our distinguished visitor was at Colina, the children did a program for him. He said he was impressed with the facilities and with the way the orphanage was run. He wanted to do something to help, and asked what that might be. We explained the water situation, and what a problem it was at times. We knew the Colorado River water line was just a block away from us. But it was on the "wrong" side of the road, in La Gloria

(the community) and we, on the other side of the road, were in Lazaro Cardenas (the Ejido).

Within about an hour of the Governor's departure the water department showed up. They began setting up our water line and within approximately three months we were connected to the Colorado River water line. Governor Rulfo took care of every bit of the expense.

We had another visitor when the water line hook up was nearing completion. He was a Congressman. I asked him of the possibility of hooking up the sewer line. Normally it's done at the same time as the water hookup. The ground here is clay, and septic systems don't work as they should, and eventually we would need to be hooked up to the sewer. Now might be the best time.

We explained we were most grateful to the Governor and did not desire for him to pay for anything more, but with the tractor and crews there, the sewer could be hooked up much easier now. His response was that he would get right on it Monday. And sure enough he did. Both connections were made at about the same time. There was no charge for any of the work. The Governor wanted to have it done.

To this day they have not put a meter on our water supply. It could be expensive. For this reason we are most grateful for the free water and sewer. We have not had any serious problems since hooking up. Sometimes when all six washers are going in the daytime our big tank goes down, but it goes right back up again. We are careful to not abuse this blessing. When we lived in the U.S., we took running water for granted, but living in Mexico we have learned to appreciate the water God has provided. May we

always give God the glory due Him for getting us over another hurdle, and opening the “floodgates of heaven.”

GIVE AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN UNTO YOU

Several winters ago we had some major flooding in the Northern Baja area. Countless people lost their homes, and some even their lives. The flood waters careened into canyons where the very poor live and took them by surprise. We saw reports of women who were clinging to their children’s hands as the water was pulling them away. It was a heart wrenching time for many people in the Tijuana area.

In the small community of Tecolote, just over the hills from us, numerous families had been totally or partially washed out. They had banded together, and made a community outdoor cooking area. They were sharing all they had. That really touched us when we found out. Despite everything, they had a wonderful community spirit.

Many of the people who live in Tecolote have been to Colina to work in our volunteer program our clinics or our Christmas outreach ministry. So it was natural for one of the families to come up the hill when the disaster hit. They asked us for any food we could spare and some blankets. Paula, who was cooking at the time, went to our director to see what she should do. We had enough food for this family, but also realized that the word would be out and we would be besieged with requests for help, so we decided a plan was in order.

I met with Suzi and Maria, our director, to figure out exactly how we should respond. Even though we had a responsibility to provide for the children at Colina de Luz, we all agreed not to turn anyone down.

Paula started making up bags and within a very short time we had a line of flood victims who needed help. Sometime in the afternoon she started getting a little nervous and came to me, “Jim, we’ve given out a tremendous amount of food, should I continue?”

“Are there still people in line?” I asked. “Do we still have food?”

“Yes,” she responded.

“Then I think the Lord would have us keep giving. He has never cursed us for being generous and I don’t think He’ll start now. God always takes care of us.”

Everyone in line got a bag of food, some got blankets and some clothing, until the sun began to set, and the last people started walking down the hill from the orphanage. As they walked down the hill they passed some trucks coming up. It was the Mexico Christian Children's Aide trucks. They have been coming every month for somewhere close to twenty-five years. And now they were here unexpectedly in response to the overwhelming need. They had thirteen places on their schedule that day, but the roads were so bad they were only able to make it to four of them. We were fifth on their list and they felt like the Lord was telling them to leave the balance of the food with us, before returning home.

The cook sighed a big sigh of relief as she watched them unload those trucks. When it was all shelved and put away it was easy to see we now had five times the amount of food we gave away that day. The Lord showed our cook, our children and us

all how faithful He is and how He used ordinary people to perform yet another miracle at Colina de Luz.

YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION . . . CHAPTER NINE

While a group from Calvary Chapel West Covina was visiting Colina, we had devotions which included a Bible study on tribulation. Anyone seeking to do the will of the Lord, whether it is in a full or part-time ministry, will go through tribulation. It's a promise; "*In this world you shall have tribulation.*" After we did the study, the Lord put us through a test to see what exactly we had learned. I suppose to see if we were paying attention that day.

We made arrangements to detour from our usual plan of working at Colina. This time we had in mind to let the "Hill of Light" shine a little brighter in our community. Our plan was to help out at the elementary school. We arranged with the officials to paint and do some cleaning up, and we were to hook them up to the main water line buried deep in the ground. We would have to make a huge hole to make the connection, but we were ready.

While some in the group were painting, a horrible wind came up. It was perhaps the wildest day I have ever seen here, hot and very, very windy. We were definitely experiencing the tribulation we learned about that morning. At long last we got the hole dug to hook up to the water.

We had a clamp that connected to the water line so that it didn't have to be cut. Then a hole needed to be drilled. It would have to be done just right. The young man from the group had not seen anything like it before and neither had I. We sat there trying to figure out how to do it logically. We both had a different approach, but since he was in charge, and I wasn't too sure anyway, I let him do it his way, which unfortunately

turned out to be the wrong way. The hole started filling with water. We couldn't even see the pipe to make the connection.

I had to run to the house of the water district official and tell him what had happened. His response was to curse at us for being so stupid, not a very gracious reaction. He had to turn off the water for the whole community. The day was progressing to be an absolute disaster. We did, however, finally get the hole cleared of the water, and the connection made. The school got painted, with a little blown sand mixed in. It was one of those days that you wouldn't want to relive.

After we got back to the orphanage and cleaned the grit from our bodies, we went over the day's events. We had a time of devotion and reflection and I asked everyone, "Well, what did we learn today? Did we keep our cool in the midst of it all? Were we praising the Lord in our time of trials and tribulations?" Some felt like they may have missed the mark, while others claimed the victory. And then there were those who knew they **totally** blew it.

In the ministry here we have seen our fair share of trials and tribulations. There even has been persecutions. The Bible tells us that we will suffer persecution if we live Godly. In the process of trying to walk with the Lord, we need to know that, these things **will** happen.

HOLY SPIRIT GUIDE ME

This incident happened before we moved to Colina. It is a good example of how the Holy Spirit guides our lives when we are in His will.

Our van was packed with supplies, it was late at night and we were going from our home in Lake Elsinore to the orphanage. Somewhere between the towns of Temecula and Escondido there is a long deserted stretch of freeway, probably about twenty-five miles long. About halfway along that stretch we felt the van start bumping, as though it had a flat tire on the right side or something. We were in the fast lane, and we needed to get over to the right shoulder, where it would be safer to change the tire. The lanes were clear so I crossed over the other lanes and pulled off onto the shoulder.

With us was our youngest son Matthew. We got out together and looked for a flat. We couldn't see any problem. Everything looked fine at first glance. But then Matthew took a closer look,

“Oh, my gosh Dad, look at this,” he said excitedly, pointing to the rear tire.

I ran back to see what had happened. Four of the five lug bolts that held the wheel onto the van had sheered completely off!

There was only one lug bolt left holding everything together. If I'd known that, I wouldn't have crossed the lanes on the freeway to stop. We were parked there on the side of the freeway and I was quietly talking to the Lord, “Oh Lord, I'm really tired, and I just want to get down to Mexico, what can I do? And where in the world will I ever find lug bolts in this area and at this hour?”

It seemed as though the Lord was speaking to me and giving me an idea. Why not take two of the lug bolts off the wheel on the left side and put them in place of the ones that were sheered off on this wheel. Matthew and I agreed that was what we should do. Of course the tools were buried somewhere under all the stuff we were hauling. There was no choice but to look until we found them. We removed and replaced the lug

bolts and drove all the way to Mexico like that, not going over thirty-five miles an hour, just to be on the safe side. The next day we went down to the auto parts place and changed all the bolts on both of the rear wheels.

We may set out to do God's will and know we are in His will, but He never told us it would be an easy road. It's a narrow road that God wants us to walk on, sometimes it may seem a little deserted like the one we were on, and we might have a few "breakdowns." It sometimes would be easier to go down the wide road where there is lots of company, but the true blessings come from walking the way He intends us to go, difficult or not.

SHEPHERD OF THE FLOCK

As a shepherd of the children entrusted to us, I must protect our flock from "wolves." A number of years ago we had an incident with the father of two of the children here. I call him "father" but I use that term loosely in this case. He was really only a biological father; he had nothing to do with their lives. He had conceived them with their mother, and that was his contribution. Both of his children were in the baby room at the time. He occasionally came around to say, "Hi" and then leave again.

This "father" had been incarcerated in three different prisons. He previously worked as a professional fighter and a bouncer in a bar. He was a well built, tough and hardened man. This particular day when he came to visit it was apparent, he was high on drugs. He was acting strange, and said he just wanted to get the kids and take them to the store.

I said, “No way, you’re not going to do that! You’re high, I can tell, and I really don’t even want you around the kids like this.”

He just laughed at me, as if to say, yeah, and what are *you* going to do about it? I told him calmly, “Look, I’m not looking for any trouble with you or anything, but I can’t let you take the kids.”

With that he laughed again and began walking to the baby room. I told our director she better call the police, now! Then I ran to catch up to him, and tried to reason with him, “I kept saying “Please, don’t go in there.” But it was evident he could care less what I had to say as he just kept laughing and walking till he got to the door. I felt compelled by the Lord to grab him as he entered and pull him back outside. Surprisingly, I had no fear, even though I’m not, nor ever have been, much of what you call a fighter. I was doing what any good shepherd needed to do to protect his sheep. I had no idea what his reaction would be. I only knew his nature was that of a violent man. I was not going to let him get near those kids. So I pulled him outside and tried to reason with him again. It seemed to me that he was calming down.

We started walking back toward the office. I remember being relieved, and then all of a sudden, the next thing I knew I was opening my eyes. I saw myself laying across from the office in the planter with a bunch of pine trees. Some of the staff were standing over me, and I asked one of them, “Why am I lying here?”

“That guy was really quick,” someone answered, “he gave you a left and then a right.” I realized then he hit me hard enough to send me several feet into the planter. I could feel my lip was quite swollen. It had been cut about an inch long all the way through and I could see it sticking out below my nose. I had actually been knocked out

and laying near the trees for somewhere around six minutes. My eyes were open and my attacker thought I was dead, as did some of the staff. Someone ran to tell my wife, Suzi, what had happened. She flew out of the house and down to the office with a broom in her hand, ready to run the guy off. By the grace of God she and some of the other women were able to convince him to leave. But he threatened to come back and do away with the other men on staff who had witnessed the whole thing.

The police finally came long after the intruder was gone, although the station is only about a mile away. Fortunately the Red Cross responded and rushed me to the Buen Samaritano Hospital. The blow to my head had caused a concussion and I needed numerous stitches both inside and outside of my mouth. My good friend, and director of the hospital, Dr. Tamez fixed me up. "This one's on me," he said as we left the hospital to go to the police station. All I really wanted to do was go home. It had been quite an ordeal, but if I didn't personally press charges, my attacker was not going to be arrested and he would be free to carry out his threats. I had no choice.

Later the children's father was arrested, and put back into prison for violation of parole. He remained there for several years, and received Jesus Christ as his Savior right there in prison. After his release he stayed with a group called Victory Outreach for several months. He did some real growing in the Lord there. He said he couldn't get out of his mind what he did to me, and returned to talk to me and repent for what he did. I praise God for his abundant mercy. He loves the world and will forgive anyone who will put their trust in Him. 2 Peter 3:9, John 3:16, and 1 Timothy 2:3-6 testifies to this.

Yes, we go through trials and tribulations, but through it all we need to do what we feel is right in the eyes of the Lord. If the situation presented itself again, I would do

the same thing. I know this is the position God has put me in. If as a shepherd I'm not willing to lay down my life for the sheep, then I probably shouldn't be a shepherd. The Bible also tells us that a friend would lay down his life for his friends. There will be all kinds of situations that will come up, trials and tribulations that arise. If we stick to doing God's will, He'll work out the rest . . .

Sometimes on the mission field you feel alone, like nobody loves you, nobody really cares. Maybe being spiritual means you are not supposed to admit to getting depressed, but since I don't consider myself really spiritual, I can say I do get "down" sometimes. I do the best I can, but occasionally when the going gets really, really rough, I find myself pleading, "Lord, take me home. I just want to go home to be with You."

One day before we got our sewer hook-up when I was feeling exceptionally "down" we were having a problem with our septic tank. We called the company to pump it out, and when they came they couldn't pump it. The sludge has solidified because we waited too long. When the staff cleaned, they used pine sol and bleach which had killed the bacteria that make a septic system function properly. We had but one choice, tear out the now existing system and build a new one (totally out of the question) or dig the sludge out of the old one.

I never liked to ask the men working at Colina to do something I wouldn't do myself. I didn't feel I could tell them to dig that stuff out. I really felt like I needed to do the job myself. Besides, in the back of my mind I was thinking that it would be a great opportunity for the Lord to take me home.

As I dug, I kept talking to the Lord, "This is your chance, I could just drop down and die right here in this stuff." I'm thankful, however, that He didn't listen to my suggestion. I do want to be with Him, but I know there's a lot to be done, and I hope to be able to do my portion, "while it's still day." If the Lord decides to take me this very minute, He has no argument from me, but if I'm allowed to stay and work for Him, I'm even happier about that.

I found throughout those low times that the Lord is still right beside me, I need only to seek Him in prayer, be patient, and He will always pull me out. I believe he wants to do the same for anyone who faithfully seeks His direction.

THE WOLF COMES

Over the years, we learned we need to be wise shepherds. There are those who will come and seek to harm the sheep. Most people think an orphanage is a place where only good people are interested in coming, but we have found out otherwise. The devil sends out his own "ministers of light" to "kill, steal and destroy." A shepherd who seeks wisdom needs to pray for discernment, and be open to those around him who have the gift of discernment. Suzi, my wife, Karen and Maria have this gift. There have been numerous occasions when they or others on staff will come to me with a warning about

someone. Sometimes it's about a visitor, but there have been times they wanted to tell me to watch a particular worker. When I have confidence in the person who comes to me, I need to heed their warning. Often times I find that the suspected person's intentions are not in the best interests of the children. If I just shrugged my shoulders and ignored the warning, the children could be in jeopardy. Many of them have been molested before they came to us. It's my job to see that nothing similar happens to them while they are in our care.

Not long before we moved to Colina, we hired a young woman, "Nora", to sort clothes in the bodega. Her husband would drop her off several times a week, and she was to spend her time sorting and shelving clothing. They both worked at Colina on various projects in the past, so we felt comfortable about hiring her.

Several people on staff, as well as my wife and our friend Vivian, had confided in me they didn't feel good about this girl. None of them had anything specific, just that we should watch her.

It was evident she was building a relationship with a couple of the older girls. I had occasion one day to walk into a room off the big girl's dorm (something I rarely do) and found her and one of the girls laying on the bed. She said she didn't feel good and was resting. I reminded her of our rules, and suggested she take the rest of the day off. I wanted to make sure she knew the dorms were off limits except to those who worked or lived in them.

After that time I gave her another warning. I tolerated more in those beginning years than I do today. Then one day as I passed by the front office one afternoon, I felt as though the Lord was telling me to go into the front house that was under construction. It

was where the former directors had their trailer and we had begun a new building, but had only gone as far as the walls and floor. In obedience to the Lord, I walked over to the house and looked in. What I saw was Nora, and one of our older girls on the floor hugging in what looked to be a very compromising situation.

I immediately asked the young girl to leave. I told Nora to leave and not come back and that I was sorry, reminding her she was warned on other occasions. I could not risk her being around the children any longer at that point. Later we found some very disturbing “love letters” she’d written to several of the girls. We asked her to stop communicating, but despite our effort she continued to send some of the girls letters through school mates.

Some time later I got a call from my pastor, Brian. “Jim, do you know these people, Larry and Nora?”

“Yeah I know 'em,” I replied.

Then he asked me what was our connection and what I knew about them. I told him about the incidents with Nora and the older girls. I did not have much dealing with her husband. I shared with Brian I no longer felt comfortable with her at Colina, and that was reason enough to let her go.

Brian listened to all I had to tell him and then said, “They sent us a letter and they sent copies to several other churches that have been involved with Colina, according to the notation at the bottom.”

Absolutely in shock I answered, “You’re kidding what could the letter possibly say?” Then he recounted the contents, “It says they tried to adopt one of the older girls, but you wouldn’t permit it.”

“Wait a minute,” I responded, “They did ask me one night if one of the girls just several years younger than Nora could come and live with them, but there is no way I am going to permit that.”

“It goes on,” Brian continued, “It says they took you to court in Tijuana and while you were there you got really angry with the judge and because of your conduct he finally threw you out.”

This was the most ridiculous thing I ever heard. “Brian,” I said, “I’ve never been to a Mexican court in my life.” I was dumbfounded.

He went on, “And it also says they got custody of the girl and when they sent their lawyer to Colina to pick her up, you sent two strong armed men out to threaten them that if they didn’t leave, they would be beaten up!”

I paused to take the whole thing in for a minute and then I told my pastor, “Brian, let’s find out who they say this lawyer is because there is no truth in this letter except that my name is Jim and theirs are what they say they are. They are really foolish to write such a thing, because it’s very easy to disprove it. Let’s go to court and ask for any documentation, you’ll see that none of this story is true”

These people were seeking to destroy the reputation of the ministry here, a quite drastic thing to do to a struggling orphanage. I asked Brian what we should do. He was my pastor and I needed his advice.

Brian surprised me with his answer, “Jim, I think you should leave it up to the Lord. He will vindicate you.”

Truthfully that is not what I wanted to hear, but I said, “O.K. Brian, it’s going to be very hard, but I’ll do it.” I had in mind to really get involved. I wanted to clear my

name. But I did what Brian had suggested, praying that the Lord would help me. I certainly didn't want the churches who had received a copy of the letter to think that this was the kind of person directing this ministry.

Months passed and I was in my house fixing some coffee after lunch when a truck pulled up. I walked out to greet the visitors and invited them in for some coffee. I knew one of them and the other introduced himself as the mission's pastor of a church near San Diego and the employer of the man who had sent the damaging letter. He told me that Larry had recently been really "running me into the ground." He also knew about the letter, but felt like there are always two sides to every story, and that the Lord would have him hear the other side. His church was involved here and he felt the responsibility to investigate.

I was thrilled they had taken the time to come and see us. I told them all that had transpired and ended with, "Look, if I was capable of doing all these things, then I also would be capable of lying to you. Do me a favor, go and check the court records. Find out from Larry what court we supposedly went to and check with them. You will see there are no records because the whole thing is nothing but a fabrication."

The mission's pastor thanked me for telling him everything. He said the Spirit of God bore witness to him I was, in fact, telling the truth. He was going back to Larry, his employee, and they would talk about all the accusations that had been made, both in the letter and to him personally.

A short time later Larry and his wife, Nora, paid us a visit. I wasn't comfortable with them being there because Nora continued to defy our requests to not communicate

with “our” kids. She had even gone as far as meeting them at school. But I did ask them to come up to my house because they said they wanted to talk.

They started with how sorry they were for what had happened, and for their letter and accusations, all the time making up excuses for the things they said. I wondered why they wanted my forgiveness.

I told them, “You know what, I can forgive you, if you’re really repentant, but could it be that your major concern is your employer’s involvement?” They kept on making excuses, all the time insisting they were truly sorry. I didn’t believe sincerity entered into their apology. Finally I said, “There is no way that you can ever totally undo the damage you’ve done. But if you are truly repentant then write the churches back and admit that you were not truthful in what you told them.”

They sat there in my living room and compiled a letter. When we read it, I thought, give me a break! It sounded just like what they’d been saying, one excuse after another. All I could say was, “This just isn’t the truth. If you are repentant, as you say, then your letter’s going to reflect that. And this one is a joke.”

The day ended with them writing another letter to the original churches. In the end, they admitted lying, and asked for forgiveness. They wrote that Colina de Luz was a good ministry and we had done nothing wrong. A copy was sent to each church. The Lord had vindicated us in His way and in His time. Unfortunately this couple divorced in the next few years, and Nora has taken in several different young girls, some who formally lived at Colina. We pray for those girls’s protection. Wolves come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and sexes. We need to be ready as they seek to prey on “our” children.

JUDGE NOT LEST YE SHALL BE JUDGED

While we live as Christians we are constantly learning life's lessons. There are so many things that transpire, both good and bad. Sometimes the bad things that happen turn out to be for the good when we continue to seek to do what is right. We will forever be under attack as we strive to be in the will of the Lord. Since the Bible says, "All who live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," we need to be expecting that problems, trials and tribulations will be coming our way.

As I try to live a good Christian life, I truly want to do everything right, never to hinder the work God wants to do through me. I thought I was succeeding quite well at being a Godly man. But pride got in my way. I had more lessons to learn.

I can remember judging pastors or church leaders I would hear about. Some had left their wives and beautiful families, snared by another woman, maybe even the church secretary. I also harshly judged people who would molest children. How could they cause such damage for their own gratification? I could feel the hatred build in my heart when I heard of how these people had fallen into such horrible sin.

Then something happened in my life, something that was to change my way of thinking for ever. When we were still living in the States, we were having home fellowships at alternating houses on Friday nights. A lot of people attended and were being blessed. At the time I didn't realize what was happening in my heart, but self-pride was building, and destruction was only a step away. Looking back, I am so ashamed. I tell the story now in hopes that others can learn from what was to be my mistake.

There was a young, divorced woman, about my age that came to our fellowships. She had two girls, one around thirteen and the other just two. I'll call her "Veronica." John, my pastor at that time, said he thought she was the most virtuous woman he had ever known. She was teaching some women's studies at church. She had a dynamic personality, and I was attracted to all that I thought she was. I didn't know too much about her and I really didn't ask. She called me often for advice or to help her make a decision, or to repair something around her house. I wasn't much of a repairman but I found various excuses to spend time with her, not usually alone, but time just the same. I had no business having the feelings I started having for her. I was a happily married man, and dedicated to my family and to the Lord.

My wife told me on several occasions that she felt Veronica was not whom she said she was. I choose to ignore my wife's warnings then, and in the days that were to come, when she confronted me with our "friendship" and how it made her feel uncomfortable. I was young in the Lord, and truthfully blinded by the devil through this "virtuous woman." If the devil tempted me with a beautiful unsaved co-worker who flaunted her sexuality, it probably would not have worked. I would have seen the trap. But the devil uses so called "Christians" to snare Christians. He sends his "ministers of righteousness" to do his dirty work, 2 Corinthians 11:15. I thank God that it never went into a physical relationship.

But it had become a serious problem. We went to a small church, and people there had begun to talk. My pastor had noticed we had become close, too close, and he came to me to confront me. He did not mince words, getting straight to the point. "You're in sin, Jim. I want

you to step down from the ministry you're involved in right now. You need to repent, and take some time to reflect on how you got to this point.”

He really made me angry, but I didn't tell him that. I didn't stop seeing Veronica right away either. My wife was so embarrassed and seemed devastated. Friends of hers who knew Veronica and supported her made it even harder. I could see how much sorrow I caused her, but I didn't want to let go.

Slowly, over the next few months my wife, Suzi and I began to strengthen and rebuild our own relationship. With each day it got easier and easier to let go of, and forget about, Veronica. We sought a counselor to help us through what was a hard time for my wife. He advised us that if we needed to go to another church where we would be away from Veronica, then that is what we needed to do. We took his advice. Our new pastor knew from the very beginning what had transpired in the previous months. We began to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and our marriage was restored.

I went back to my former pastor, John, the one who had the courage to confront me. I repented to him, and thanked him for having the strength to do what he knew was right.

It wasn't too long before Veronica met someone at work, a married man, and the whole scenario began again. The man she met ended up leaving his wife for Veronica. But for the grace of God, I knew that could have been me.

God was preparing me for the ministry I am in today. In my heart I had committed adultery, the very thing I had judged and hated so much. It showed me that if I was capable of adultery, then I was also capable of any other horrid sin imaginable to man. I learned that I need to be at the feet of Jesus every day. We all do, no matter what

kind of ministry we are in. Satan is just waiting to devour and destroy all those who seek to serve the Lord. Only by clinging to the feet of Jesus can we be safe from the devil's throngs.

I learned an expensive and valuable lesson, not to get close to the fire. I am reminded of David, who when he looked down on Bathsheba, as she was bathing, left an opening for one of the biggest disasters of his life; adultery, lies and finally murder. Better to follow the leading of Joseph who had the wisdom to run away from temptation when he first recognized it. Only then can God make us vessels of honor for His name.

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN . . . CHAPTER TEN

In the last several years we have been developing a program that is meant to encourage our older children to get a higher education. In Spanish a young adult is called a Joven, so we call it the Jovenes Program.

When we first came to Colina, the oldest child was around twelve years old. Most orphanages do not keep older children for several reasons. They are more expensive to educate, usually more expensive to care for, and there are numerous potential problems that go with having teens, especially twenty or more teens together. Most of the children are not ready to leave Colina when they finish secondary school. For most, the years spent with their families caused them to be behind in their development. Like most families, we wanted to offer the older children an education beyond secondary school or after they were eighteen that would better prepare them for their future.

It was quite a project working out all the rules and regulations. With or without a higher education, our kids are like big city lawyers, they can spot a loophole a mile away. After we closed the majority of loopholes, we presented the program like this: When a child graduates from secondary or turns eighteen, they are part of the Jovenes Program. They have to work a specified number of hours each week, depending upon the school they attend, which they are allowed to choose. They must put ten of the dollars they earn each week into a savings plan. At the end of the semester if they have passed all their classes they get half of their money back, the remainder is saved for them. If they do not pass a certain class then they must pay a penalty out of their savings. This money goes into a scholarship fund. We explained that we are willing to invest in them, if they will

invest time and effort in themselves by maintaining good grades. Since the onset of this program no one has failed any classes!

The second part of the Jovenes Program is probably the part the kids like the most. When they meet the criteria of a Jovenes, they are given separate living quarters apart from the dorms. Some have a trailer, others an apartment or they can share an apartment. They attend all staff meetings and are encouraged to offer their input. Complete freedom is saved for the day they leave Colina, but we try to give them our trust until they show us we should treat them differently.

When a Jovenes decides to leave Colina, and it is on good terms, they will be given the balance of their savings, a good start on a promising future.

BLESSED TO BE KNOWN AS “DAD”

Carlos Alfonso was just a little guy when we made our first visit. He has been at this orphanage as long or maybe longer than any other child. He comes from a very poor home. His father is an alcoholic, who has for all intents and purposes abandoned the family. Carlos sees him once a year if his father remembers to come. Sometimes he went to the house just to see if there was any money, and then he took off again. He was never much of a father to any of his thirteen children.

For years Carlos followed me around. If I was sitting in my office doing paper work or studying he sat there with me. He was really interested in prophecies and sometimes we talked about them. He became what we affectionately call a “Chicle” the Spanish word for gum. Wherever I went, there went Carlos Alfonso.

It was a Saturday, and like many Saturdays we had a group of Americans visiting. I finished giving them a tour and they were out in front of the office asking me various questions about the kids and the ministry. One of them turned and began talking to Carlos asking if he had a father. Carlos knew enough English to understand and replied, “Yeah!”

Then the overly inquisitive person asked, “Well, where is he?”

Carlos kind of looked around the crowd, and with all assurance, pointed to *me*. He wasn't trying to be deceptive, or even joke with them . . . to him, I *was* his father. When the group told me later what Carlos had said, it really blessed my heart. That is what we are here for, to be parents to these children. I couldn't help but think of his parents and all the parents who have missed out on so much in their children's lives. Someday they may be old and lonely, with no memories of their precious jewels that had been ignored for most of their lives.

RESCUED

There was a call from the Mayor of Tijuana's office. It was the Mayor's wife on the line and she choked back the tears as she began to tell the story of five children who had been brought to her office from the police. She recounted a horror story of abuse and neglect, one of the saddest we ever encountered. The mother was selling all the children into prostitution. The youngest was just two years old. All the Mayor's wife wanted was a good home for these children.

Our hearts broke for all the turmoil and fear that these kids had been through. We said in the days that preceded this phone call that Colina was full, but everyone that is familiar with the ministry here knows that full is not really FULL. We opened our doors to all five of the kids. We could have agreed to split them up, but in our mind, that was out of the question, they needed each other.

It was hardest for the two-year-old to adjust. She wouldn't allow any adults around her, especially men. At Sunday School she screamed until she saw a familiar face, and then we would go and take her out of the nursery. But time heals all wounds, and she is now completely healed. She recently made the move to the Nina's room (small girls), something every 5 or 6-year-old girl looks forward to. We have been blessed to have her and all her brothers and sisters as part of our family over the last several years. There is a certain sadness I feel for their mother. Her need for money overrode all that was right for her family. She will never know the complete joy it is to be part of her children's lives.

FAINT NOT

Every effort is made to treat each child as an individual, according to his or her special needs. Nene used to live at Colina years ago, and he had a special need. The factory down below us used to illegally burn scrap plastic in a big pit. We could smell the fumes as the wind blew at night, and the kids passed the pit on the way to school. On the way home from school one day, Nene stopped to look into that pit, and got a big whiff of the fumes that burned from it. He got dizzy and passed out, and the staff took him to the

doctor. Then he seemed to be okay. While we were there on the weekend he nearly passed out again several times. But it always seemed a little convenient, only in padded places, and in front of a lot of people. But none the less we were concerned and decided that I would take him to Dr. Tamez for a complete evaluation.

When we got to the doctor's office, Nene fainted again. The doctor checked him out, and after Nene was out of the room he took me aside and gave me his evaluation. It seemed as though Nene was faking. The first event was no doubt real, but the ones that followed were probably nothing less than attention getters, Nene needed attention. I told the doctor that we would try to handle the situation from that point, and we left.

The next time Nene "passed out" I carried him into the pharmacy and laid him down. Some of the kids were with me and I told them that we were going to leave him there to "rest" and then I said I sure hoped that the tarantulas or mice wouldn't get him. The orphanage back in those days had a lot of crawling things that scurried around. Then we shut the door and quietly went to the window to watch. Not seconds after we shut the door, Nene jumped up and was looking all around for the tarantulas and mice, then he saw us standing at the window. We couldn't help but laugh. That was the end of the fainting spells for Nene. Actually as far as I know no one has ever faked anything similar since. We made sure Nene got all the attention he needed, but in a different way.

THE RETURNED CHILD

A fellow from a large church in San Diego was doing some roofing on one of the buildings, and a little boy, Andres, was helping him. They got very close as they worked

together, and a relationship was growing. This fellow decided to bring his family down to meet Andres, and together they decided to adopt him. The proceedings were difficult. Not too much was known about Andres's family, and what was known turned out to be a lie. But the adoption was finalized and he went with his new family to the United States.

Andres had picked up English very fast, and surprised me when I picked up the phone at my house in Lake Elsinore one day. On the other end was Andres, speaking nearly perfect English. He shared with me what had been happening to him in the last year or so. His new parents had left the church in San Diego and joined what sounded like a cult. The father had, on the advice of his pastor, taken some severe steps to correct a bed wetting problem that Andres had. He had gone as far as putting him in diapers and making him go to church that way. He was made to sleep on the patio with nothing more than a banana lounge chair for a bed. A mother of one of Andres's friends had turned in the family for child abuse.

After we moved to Colina, the family got fed up with Andres altogether. They brought him back to the orphanage saying if we didn't take him back he would end up on the streets of Mexico. We told the father that we would take him on a temporary basis. It was going to be a problem to school this child who had been in the U.S. for several years. But we would do our best.

Andres gave us hassles, like only Andres could. Although he went through some rebellious times, the good times always outnumbered the bad. He spoke at a mission's conference with me in Minnesota and made quite an impression. The youth in the visiting groups were always blessed by Andre's personality.

He left Colina when he was eighteen. He could live in the U.S. because of his adoption, and that is where he chose to go. The Lord put him through the fire in the coming years. He has a lot of trials come his way, but I always hear that Andres is hanging in. On his visits he always tells the kids what a good home they have. One day in particular the Lord touched Andres in a church service in Los Angeles. He poured his heart out, telling everyone that the orphanage would always be his one true home. He shared how he made some big mistakes in his life, but that the Lord had changed him through the ministry at Colina de Luz.

He still calls us from time to time each year. One day he asked if he could bring a cake to Colina from the restaurant he was working in. He got on the bus in Los Angeles with a big cake and rode for several hours all the way to the border. He carried the cake across the border, then got a taxi and brought it all the way here. He could only stay a couple of minutes because he needed to get back, but he wanted to show us he loved and appreciated us by bringing that cake.

This past Easter vacation he spent several days with us. I told him that as long as he is a positive testimony to the other children he would be welcome to come and stay for a day or two. It is the testimony of the older children that can encourage the younger ones to stay at Colina and in school. I thank God for returning Andres to the Hill of Light. His life's testimony has been a blessing to us all.

COLINA'S FIRST "GRANDCHILD"

Miriam came to Colina years ago from the child welfare services. She and her sister and brothers were taken out of the family. Miriam's stepfather has been abusing her for years, and someone had the courage to report what was going on.

When one of the girls in the Muchacha room was sick, Miriam wrote a song for her and sang it, she has a beautiful voice, and truly loves the Lord. She is a sweet, precious girl who can not understand why she was put in such jeopardy by her mother, who knew what had been happening. When it was reported that the stepfather moved out, (which wasn't true) Miriam and her siblings were returned to the family. But she had already met and given her heart to a young boy who lived at Colina, Jorge.

Some years later, I had the responsibility, but also privilege, of being with her when she confronted her stepfather. Miriam's life was in total turmoil and she could not let things go on as before. I only wish I had a tape of what transpired. Every man who ever thought about touching a child in an improper way would think again if he could hear what Miriam had to say that day.

Tears streamed from her face as she sat there before him. I could see she was speaking directly from her heart, as she told him how she loved and trusted him. She looked up to him as the father she never had. She shared with him how he made her feel dirty inside, and unworthy to even live. Her life had been ruined by the times he crawled into her bed. She asked him how he could do such a thing, and he began to cry. My heart was absolutely wrenching for this sweet innocent victim. Her stepfather never responded, but his face showed great remorse.

Two years ago when Miriam turned eighteen she was married. She married Jorge. The boy she met at Colina years before.

Jorge was also brought to Colina de Luz from the DIF. He ran away from home in Hermosio because his mother severely abused him. She and her younger boyfriend drank and took drugs. In her anger, over any little thing that happened, she would hit Jorge violently. She used whatever was around, sometimes bottles or pots and pans or whipped him with extension cords, often she hit him on the head. She wanted perfection from Jorge, who was the oldest of three, and the son of another man, not her boyfriend. He tried his best to give her that perfect son, but when he fell the least bit short, the beatings would begin all over again.

It wasn't unusual for this young boy to work after school and late into the night to help support the family, and no doubt his mother's drug habit. He sold candy, cigarettes and gum in the bars. He became quite a businessman, bringing home money and food for the family, but it was never enough for his mother.

One day Jorge had done poorly on a test. His mother had come to school, and when she saw him, she warned him of what was going to happen when he got home that afternoon. That was it for Jorge, he couldn't handle it any more and he planned to make his escape. He jumped a train with another runaway, and somehow made it across the U.S. border. It wasn't long before he was picked up and returned to Mexico. The only place with any room to house him was a jail in Tijuana. There were many older men there and they molested him on several different occasions. He begged the counselor who came from child services to take him out of there. He says, although he didn't have a relationship with the Lord, he used to lie in his bed and pray that somehow God would rescue him, and God responded to his cry.

Jorge was removed from that jail and taken to the DIF orphanage, and then brought to Colina. He was probably around twelve at the time. To be assured he would not be returned to his abusive mother, he had changed his name; his name was really Adrian David. It wasn't until years later that he confided his secret to my wife Suzi.

After we made our move to Colina, Jorge attached himself to Suzi. They'd spent a lot of time together before our move because she used to make trips down to Mexico to take him to the doctor. He started having seizures. They were diagnosed as epilepsy. We took him to a doctor in Tijuana but my wife felt strongly that he wasn't getting good medical care. A friend of ours hooked us up with a doctor in San Diego who agreed to see Jorge. This doctor was one of very few who could do brain mapping to make an exact diagnosis.

Jorge had epilepsy, all right. There was no doubt it had been caused by the continual blows to his head inflicted by the mother he tried so hard to please. He was given a new medication, which controlled the seizures. Then several years later he told my wife the Lord had healed him and he was going to stop taking the medicine, which he did. He has not had a problem since. The Lord healed his epilepsy.

Jorge spent a lot of his time with Suzi. She was his new mother. He helped her wherever she was working, and they spent a lot of time talking while they worked together. Among other things he shared with her his love for Miriam, and his frustration that Miriam's family would not allow him to visit her after she left Colina. He waited years for this girl, and she waited for him.

One day when Jorge was going to Tijuana he and his friend stopped by a place Jorge remembered visiting as a young boy. It was his stepfather's mother's house. He

had not been there in years, afraid that a family member might see him and make him return to his abusive mother.

Jorge and his friend decided to walk by the door, and then go on. But as they passed the front door, a young boy walked out, it was Jorge's cousin. He looked at them both. Then Jorge questioned him, "Hey do you know who lives in this house?"

The boy answered with the names of Jorge's step grandparents. Having their answer, Jorge and his friend started to leave, not wanting any attention from inside the house.

"Hey wait, wait, I know you," the young boy said loudly and excited, "You're Adrian." Jorge panicked, denying that he was Adrian. Just then a younger boy walked out from inside the house. He heard his brother Adrian's name and came out to see who was talking. Eduardo, Jorge's younger brother was now standing on the porch and he too recognized his brother Adrian. Jorge turned and started to walk faster, yearning to be reunited with his little brother, but not wanting to risk being discovered.

Eduardo, his brother was running after him calling and insisting, "Adrian, Adrian, I know it's you, don't go, where are you going, Adrian?"

Jorge and his friend ran faster and faster trying to get away from the young boy who was crying as he tried to stop Jorge from vanishing out of his life once again with his pleas. They got a block or two away and around the corner and out of sight, they thought. Then Jorge's brother appeared. He finally caught up with them. It was too much for Jorge, he finally broke. He missed his brother and his sister so much, he confessed who he was and he and his brother hugged and cried together. What an emotional reunion it must have been.

Jorge made plans to go back to his step grandmother's house where his brother and sister were visiting the next day. His mother was not with them, so he felt safe to make the visit. His first questions were of concern for his brother and sister. He always worried and often prayed for them. They assured him that his mother was different now. When he asked them if she hit them they answered, that she did not.

When Jorge shared everything that transpired with Suzi and me we offered to pay for his mother to come to Tijuana. He wanted so badly to see her and for everything to be okay, but it was not to be. When his mother visited, she started to pressure him to come home and work to care for her and the family. He did go to see her that Christmas, wanting to do what he felt was right, but it was obvious things were no different now, and his mother began again where she left off.

Jorge returned to Colina and finished school and then moved to Tijuana where he had a job stuccoing. It was one of the trades he learned while living at Colina. After he and Miriam married, they had an apartment in Playas. Later, when work got slow, they moved in with her family to save money for the baby they were now expecting. That meant going back to the house where she was abused so many times. It was a difficult time for the young couple. They did their best, and baby Elizabeth was born healthy and beautiful with scads of fluffy black hair framing her tiny little face. She had a mouth that made her look just like her father.

We couldn't wait to see their baby for the first time. We wanted to give Miriam some time to recover from what was a hard delivery so we waited a week to pay our visit. We were thinking that her mother had everything under control. But we found that her

mother had moved to a house in Rosarito. Miriam was weak from her ordeal and caring for her first baby alone while Jorge worked long hours.

We invited Miriam and Jorge to come back to Colina with us, for a week or two. All the ladies could help her adjust to caring for Elizabeth. Her mother's house was in the middle of a high crime area in Tijuana, and she was afraid living there. They stayed in our travel trailer. That was nearly two years ago and they are still here with us. Both of them are on staff now and work five days a week. We have the benefit of spending a lot of time with the orphanage's first grandchild, Elizabeth, who is truly blessed by all the attention she gets. God takes care of His children and their children too!

OUR VERY BEST TRANSLATOR

Israel was shifted along with his two other brothers from orphanage to orphanage when he was younger. His mother would entertain different men, and was active in the occult. She really didn't have time to take the responsibility of raising her children. They were all placed at Colina about eight years ago. Israel was nine at the time and was a frustrated young man. He resented being shuffled around like so much baggage and it showed. He had a horrid temper, and sometimes the kids, and his older brother, Carlos would pick on him just to see his reaction. He had some of the worst tantrums I ever witnessed. Many times Suzi would run after him and try to calm him down, and he cooled off until the next time.

Six years ago he surrendered his life to Jesus Christ and was baptized. God has certainly done His creative work on Israel. He became a top Administrative Assistant. He oversaw the children's responsibilities, and could translate from English to Spanish or vice versa. He is an A student.

I am confident that when Israel translates for me, nothing he hears will go any farther. That is an important quality when you are a translator. He has also had occasion to counsel his fellow students at school. They can see he has a great deal of wisdom, and respect him for the life he leads before them.

Last year when Israel graduated from secondary and was preparing to move into the Jovenes program he made the decision to move back with his mother. It is our opinion that he really needs his mother's approval. How ironic he needs her approval after all the times she chose to ignore his needs as a child. But Israel's love for his mother is strong, and he continues to try to please her, unfortunately with little success.

Israel works at Colina on Saturdays and school holidays. He helps my wife with paper work, or anything else she needs help with. He has a committed sponsor to help him with school expenses. Recently Suzi had a serious talk with him about his future. She told him that we thought he needed support as he was continuing in his education and that perhaps he made the transition from Colina prematurely. We offered him a place in our Jovenes program. We don't want to see this young intelligent man be defeated by trying to win his mother's approval. Our prayers continue to be that Israel will seek God's will for his life, whether that is living with his mother or not.

OUR MINISTERS OF MUSIC

Iram is Israel's younger brother, and also a wonderful translator. We use him often when groups come, and in our outreaches. He has been a real asset to the ministry here. Iram has a girlfriend, Nena who also lives at Colina. Often I kid her about being a future pastor's wife, because I can see God's calling on her boyfriend, Iram's, life.

Iram has preached on numerous occasions at Colina. His poise and knowledge of the Bible bless me more each time I hear him. He is also the leader of our Praise Team. Iram, Neftali, Jose Reyes and Cesar make up the team. It was all their own doing. They learned how to play guitars, piano, and put together a great group who have surprised us all. The group has gone out to minister in the outreach churches and recently the Lord put on several of their hearts to do street witnessing down in Rosarito.

Neftali, who is also part of the music team, has never really known his mother or father. He was literally given to an older Mexican pastor and his wife when he was about eight years old. He became very rebellious and uncontrollable in the years that followed. In desperation one of our former teachers, who was a friend of the pastor, brought him to us. They had no where to turn.

Sometimes it is hard for the new kids to fit in. Neftali was one who had a difficult time. He was different not only in the way he acted, but his skin color was very dark, and the kids, being kids, teased him about that. But time passed and Neftali found his niche. Now the kids and some of the staff affectionately call him Osito, which means little bear. He is a big brawny guy, with a gorgeous toothy smile, and with his beautiful dark skin looks a lot like a bear. I think he thrives on the attention, in fact there was a time he

shaved his head and came strolling into the dining room late so everyone would notice, just to get that attention.

Neftali is grown now. He was saved when he was fifteen and baptized here at the orphanage. Now he is eighteen and in the Jovenes program. He is gifted in music and the Lord has used him to complete Colina's group. After he finishes his education he plans to marry his girlfriend, Laura, whom he loves and respects.

Cesar, who plays the piano for the group has lived at Colina since the death of his mother when he was just a small baby. He saw many hard times at this orphanage and can appreciate the many miracles that came about to see the Lord's will accomplished. He is quite gifted on the piano. Tom from Santa Monica, who comes with his faithful group twice a month has encouraged and coached him whenever he could.

Cesar excelled in music from the very beginning. The change in his self confidence is very noticeable. God took this young man who was quiet and what might be called unsure of himself, and gave him a wonderful gift to be used for His glory.

IN CONCLUSION

If the Lord should delay His return for another day, or month, or another year, or even more, the ongoing story of the ministry here will hopefully continue. We anticipate with great expectations, the outstretched hand of our Lord in His mercy, touching our lives and leading us over new horizons, to places and with people we never even imagined.

It has always been our vision and our hope that much of our future will be consumed by advancing the Gospel throughout the hills of Baja. Hopefully teams of staff and kids and brothers and sisters from Mexico, and the United States, and other parts of the World will work in unity toward that goal, as the Lord directs.

I remember all too well when I was a wild teenager, thinking there was no way I would ever become a Christian. No way would anyone catch me sitting around leading **that** life of boredom. Little did that young immature mind of mine ever come close to understanding the depth and breadth and glory and joy of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Truly the only greater thing than knowing Him is to grow to the point of both knowing Him and Serving Him. Serving Him with other people, you have grown to love. This is life's ultimate fulfillment.

The apostle Paul said, *"I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the width, and length, and depth and height; to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

The Journey to the Hill of Light that God directed us to so clearly, and has allowed us to serve at, has definitely been a journey of faith. Faith that brought us to the point of wanting to serve Him however, and wherever He directed. And serving the Lord has allowed us countless rewards, some that will only be known long after we leave this

world. I can only encourage those who have felt the Lord tugging on their heart to serve Him, to do so. Take the first step, and He will guide the ones that follow, and you will never, never regret answering His call, to your own personal Journey of Faith

I WANT TO WALK CLOSE AS I CAN

For the truth and the right
Precious Lord have I stood
Have these hands done as much
As they really could
Have these knees bowed down
As oft as they should
I want to walk as close as I possibly can

Guide my feet Precious Lord
When I'm tempted and tried
In Thy sheltering fold
Let me safely hide
For one little step
Is too far from Thy side
I want to walk as close as I possibly can

Lord I want to walk just as close as I can
And do my best for my fellowman
And If I fail let me feel just one touch of Thy hand
I want to walk as close as I possibly can

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