

In His Time

By Christine Cerna

We got the phone call on a hot afternoon. Some situations in life make you wonder “Why?” This was one of them. Anybody who knows anything about El Salvador knows it is a country laden with crime. From robberies to kidnappings, it seemed that most of the crime stemmed from gang activity, and those who were somehow entangled with gang members experienced the crimes. But this phone call changed those perceptions. The pastor of the church where we worked for two years called us to share the news. A brother in Christ was shot and killed in front of his house, coming from his car after work. We were shaken, unable to find any sense in this horrid crime. Why?

This man was a soul winner. His zeal for the Lord was the main topic at his funeral. Many spoke of his desire to tell others of God’s love. Stories were shared about how he lost clients at work because he witnessed to them. But he said he would rather lose work than have someone die without Jesus. Why would God choose to call him home, someone who witnessed at every opportunity?

After the funeral the family decided to move to our city (Santa Ana) to flee from the criminals that not only had killed the husband but also

had threatened the family. They came to church a few months after the father’s death. The four-year-old son’s first time in my Sunday school class broke my heart. While we were studying our Bible lesson, this little guy raised his hand. I called on him and he began to tell what had happened to his dad. It was something he did not understand but completely impacted his life. “My daddy is dead. The man came and shot him with a gun.” I instantly found a way to tell him we could talk after class, but he had already shared this with the whole class. I looked over at his older brother (seven years old). He had his head covered with his hands, doing his best to hold back the tears. On a Wednesday night, I clearly remember looking over at this young widow with her shoulders shaking and tears running down her cheeks. Why? Why did this have to happen? Why does this family have to suffer?

We understand that many times in life we will not get the answer to that constantly asked question, “Why?” Many times we will not see the big picture until eternity with our Creator. However, I am happy to share, as painful as it was for many people, we see part of God’s purpose unfolding. It has been about three years since this man was shot and killed. Since that time so many things have happened in regards to this dear family.

The widow became a Sunday school teacher at our church. She has witnessed to a number of the children, and they have asked Jesus into their hearts as their Savior. She has brought more visitors to church than probably any other member.

**Steve & Christine
Cerna & family**



A young, unwed mother named Veranice began attending our church. The widow witnessed to her, and she was saved. The widow became good friends with a backslidden mother of four and encouraged this mother to start coming to church. She came and rededicated her life to the Lord. This mother, Jenny, now serves in the children’s ministry and is very faithful to the Women’s Ministry at our church.

At a recent ladies meeting, we were discussing that sometimes we do not know what God is doing, but we need to be patient and in His time we will have the answers we need. Jenny seemed to have a light turn on and said, “If my friend’s husband had not been shot and killed, she would not have moved to Santa Ana. I never would have met her. I may have never gotten right with the Lord. I would probably still be miserable.” Then she thought for a moment and added, “And if Hermano Cesar (Steve) and Hermana Christine would not have obeyed God and come to El Salvador, none of us would have ever met. None of us would be here like this today!” This was a special moment for all of us, to realize how God orchestrates our lives according to His plan, sometimes using painful experiences to bring about His purposes. The widow was crying as Jenny was sharing these thoughts. These are just a few of the ways God has used this precious family for His glory. Pages more could easily be written, telling of others impacted by a

family who lives in this city because of an unexpected tragedy.

While we have learned much from this tragedy, we also know that many Salvadorans have been affected by similar situations and still cannot make sense of what happened. There are many hurting people, trying to make sense of life, asking “why?” everyday with no hope of finding an answer. When we are out soul winning, our main method of beginning our talk with individuals is to ask them a question. “If you were to die today, are you sure you would go to heaven and be with God?” In a country like El Salvador, this question holds much more weight because many people are wondering if they have a tomorrow. Death is a cold reality here, hitting so many people because of crime. What a motivation to share the Gospel with them! We have the hope for which they are looking. We have access to the great Comforter; we have access to a God who forgives and gives new life. But they will not know if we do not go tell them. Pray for El Salvador, and pray for more missionaries to come to a hurting country, searching for answers to the question “why?” [W](#)

