



the poor

BY BECKY ABEL

Jesus had a special sense of mission to poor and oppressed people. His example should lead us to see our responsibility. We must use the wealth God has entrusted to us to glorify Him by sharing with the poor. This truth was taught by Jesus Himself in Matthew 25:40, “Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto Me.”

In our life on the mission field we have often used opportunities of caring for the needs of the poor as a means of transmitting the message of the One who can satisfy man’s deepest longings and bring lasting change. Over the years we have shared the love of Jesus with many as we have helped with food, medicine, employment, housing and other needs. Our little community here at the ARCA is a snapshot of a group of people who have received the grace of God as a result of an outreach to the needy.

Marcia and her two little girls, Amanda and Gleiciele, lived in an abusive situation. The girls lived in fear. Even after Marcia became a Christian we heard weekly sagas of what happened in their home — daddy taking after mommy with a knife, lack of basic provisions, constant profanities, inappropriate music and TV shows. But their situation is different today. They live with us in the security of a loving family and with the joy of knowing Jesus. Mom and daughters have been baptized and are an integral part of our lives and ministry.

José and Irany were in a desperate situation in a different city. The two are somewhat mentally handicapped and have several health problems, as well. José tried to make a living collecting recyclable garbage. But they lived in squalor. In response to the need we helped build them a small house at the ARCA several years ago. Others help with assistance for food and medicine. José continues to collect recyclables, pushing his little cart all over town. They both

love the Lord and reach out to others in the community, visiting and praying with people.

Evaldo and Lourdes have suffered some unfortunate business setbacks. Having lost everything they had, Evaldo fell into depression. Seeing their struggle as an older couple trying to find meaningful employment, we offered them a place to live and work at the ARCA. They have fully recuperated and have grown closer to the Lord. Today they have their own home where they graciously minister to many through counseling and prayer.

A place to sleep, a plate of food, a job, the warmth of caring people, a sense of belonging—all these means of caring for the poor prepare the way for them to open their hearts to the gospel, to realize that Jesus is real, to discover that God has a special plan for each life for now and for eternity. Caring for the poor goes beyond providing physical solutions. It’s just the first step in gaining the right to share the gospel. The goal is that all men might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

With so many needs and desperate situations we need wisdom to know how and when to help meet physical needs. We have at times been criticized for helping someone who “doesn’t deserve” to be helped. We respond with another question, “Where would any of us be today if it depended upon us deserving or being worthy of God’s love and salvation?” Perhaps we have erred at times in obeying the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, but we would rather err on the side of generosity and love than on neglecting someone for whom Christ died. After all, “He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17).

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