

High Stakes

February 2024



It came as a message on Facebook... “Hello Paul, I do not know the right way to ask... Last Sunday my brother was killed, I am not sure if you remember him... We are trying to gather money for his funeral...” I had just run into his sister a few weeks ago. We definitely remembered her brother and his family. They regularly attended our outreach in Laguna 20 years ago and often showed up in other neighborhoods where we served. Running with crime gangs can be tempting to the youth we work with. Most fail to see the danger and only dream of riches and glory. This young man is a devastating reminder of the high stakes here in Tijuana. We work with youth who do not need to go far to find themselves connecting with the wrong people. The streets are tough.



Our youth face many challenges

I wish that this man was the only youth I saw lost to the deadly temptations of organized crime. I remember “Curly” well. Years ago, I would swing by Grupo Mexico to pick up him and his brothers and a few of their friends to be part of my VBS staff. They accompanied me all summer to the VBS



The gospel brings hope

programs I was running throughout the city. I knew the boys from our kids club. They had lost their parents and were being raised by their grandmother. “Curly” was shot and killed years later a few blocks away from where I used to pick him up. A young gal we called “Licha” was a regular attendee of our weekly kids club. She learned her memory verses and earned her spot on our kids club outings. We kept in touch over the years. Eventually her daughter started to come to the kids club. But Licha fell into the temptation to run with the gangs. They found her body on the side of a lonely road south of the city. We spent time with the family afterwards. It is always hard to pick up the pieces. The streets are tough.



Food is a blessing

But there were others who came along to Spectrum activities. I remember some boys who lived across the hill from Curly's neighborhood. I would pick them up as well and bring them along as helpers. Throughout the years I saw the ups and downs in their lives. The downs could be harsh. But I saw God step in. Oh, the power of the gospel! It is truly "the power of God that brings salvation." These boys gave their lives to Christ. Both are active in full-time ministry now. To see God transform their lives, and do the same in others as well, is the greatest joy we have. The streets are tough, the stakes are high, but our God is greater. The gospel is the reason we are here.

So now, back to the present day. There is a young man whom staff will bring to Spectrum activities a few times a month. He lives in the red light district, and drugs are dealt from his home. He is literally surrounded by drugs, murder, and prostitution. His father was killed working for the cartels, and his mother now is deeply tied into crime. His life is on the edge, like a blade. Most days, he is surrounded by darkness, but some days staff will swing by his house, pick him up, and take him to the Spectrum outreach as a helper. There he's exposed to a different world, a different life, a different possibility. He gets to hear the gospel, and gets exposed to a world of helping, blessing, and serving. What does his future hold? The stakes are high and so many lives hang in the balance. There is much work to be done!

We appreciate your prayers and support. We thank you for standing with us. All the glory to God!

For all of us at Spectrum Ministries,

Paul Alvarado
Director

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes."

