

A Teacher for the Teacher!

I was hanging out with my parents, Willard and Janice Kelley, this evening in their apartment that they live in while in Quemado during the winter months. There were many topics of conversation we engaged in and a bit of "snacking" going on as we visited.

I was telling them of the writer's block I occasionally get that prevents me from doing some of the necessary writing I need to do to communicate and keep friends and supporters informed about the ministry we are part of in Mexico.

Dad has been a preacher all his adult life so he understands the blockage that can come during the various seasons of life. I asked him, "You preached every Sunday. What did you do when at times you just didn't have it? You couldn't come up with a message or struggled to say something positive?" He told me something I didn't know. He said, "I had a bucket in the back room with something ready for just such times." Knowing dad and his creative visual and audio sermons, that was probably literally the truth of the matter!

I shared with them that sometimes, even though I am supposed to write an e-mail letter to supporters the first of the month, it just seems I haven't a clue what to write. The first of every month I start the mental wrestle for the content of the e-letter as I watch and listen for things to share that will give you, our friends, supporters and partners in this work, an accurate picture of what is happening on this part of the mission field in Mexico. As the middle of the month passes, I begin to pray in earnest for God to show me something or teach me something or GIVE me something I can share. (Can you hear the desperation?)

We visited a bit more about that subject and I then told them good night and headed upstairs to our apartment to find out the results of the Packers game from Brad. Well....let's just say, he wasn't too happy with the outcome.

Brad and I watched a bit of the news and then headed to bed. This new stage of life as "empty nesters" we have found ourselves in for the past year and a half has afforded us some very different activities as our schedule and commitments have settled down some. One thing we frequently do is read to each other from God's word before going to bed. I was already reading when Brad got there but he asked me to read to him as he settled in. I had just finished II Corinthians and so began to read in Galatians.

I read chapters one through five and as I got to chapter six and began to read verse 6 of that chapter, *"Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor."* I paused and I read it again. *"Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor."* Reading that verse brought to mind a story I had just shared with dad and mom while downstairs earlier in the evening.

Recently, while in Mexico preparing a meal for our Appreciation Breakfast, I was overcome with some sadness and negative thinking. My dear friend, Candy Garcia, entered the kitchen about that time as I was working on the meal. She was immediately aware that I was struggling and came very near to me.

She began to speak to me....no.....I think it would be more accurate to say she began to "encourage me quite diligently." As tears rolled down my cheeks, she continued phrase after phrase telling me how good our God is, how He has always been faithful, how He can be trusted, how His word does not come back empty.....on and on she went. I just stood there looking at her. She quoted scriptures to me....at one point I remember making a statement of "doubt" and it was at that moment that she came to me and put her arms around me pulling me to herself and said, "You know this, God is good! You must trust this! He will be faithful! You taught me that! You are my teacher, remember?"

Yes, I did remember that. I remember first meeting Candy Garcia about 9 years ago. She was a young woman, in her early twenties. She had grown up in the United States but had married a Mexican National and was living in Guerrero, Coah. with him. She had seen some Americans in town one day and went to visit them. She discovered they were there, building a building that would some day be the church house for the Church of Christ in Guerrero. She often visited when various ones were there working and when the building was ready and services began she started attending. The preacher at that time, Simon Guerrero and his wife, Dina, often shared God's word with Candy. It was not too many months before she realized that she wanted Jesus to be the Lord of her life and she gave her life to him and was baptized. Shortly after her baptism, we began a friendship. In those early years, she had so many questions about God, the Holy Spirit, God's word...on and on the questions would go. She also had a husband who was not a Christian and now their worlds were very different. That gave this fairly new bride some real challenges. I often invited her to come home with me and when she did, we would stay up till all hours of the night and early morning, visiting, studying God's word and talking about God and her new found faith. Most of you that read this have heard of Candy and have heard her testimony of how she helped bring her husband Epitacio and many others to Christ.

Candy and Epitacio are now the caretaker's at our camp in Rancho San José. They are very involved with especially the young people at the San Carlos church nearby while still maintaining relationships with the youth from the Guerrero Church. They frequently have them to their home. They share words of wisdom and Godly instruction with them. They encourage them to be diligent in living for Christ. They are meeting and becoming part of the lives of many in the San Carlos community. In fact Candy just told us, when she hasn't seen Pitacio for a period of time during the day she will go outside to check on him and "there he is, visiting with this man or that man from San Carlos."

As thoughts of Candy and Pitacio and our journey of life together over the recent years

crossed my mind in the camp kitchen that day, I realized that the circle of life as family in Christ: teaching, sharing, rebuking and encouraging had come to full circle. I as instructor was now the recipient of the good things of God that Candy, as my one time student, was sharing with me.

We know this isn't a typical missionary newsletter this month with reports of mission related activities. It is, however, a real story of the very essence of what we should be about as Christians. Sharing the beautiful gospel of Jesus Christ with others, helping them to see their own sin, separation from God and recognize their need for a Savior. Teaching them about God's grace, his provision for sin and redemption. Encouraging them in commitment to Christ with repentance and baptism. Encouraging them to "hunger and thirst for righteousness" by studying God's word. Standing along beside them teaching and sharing life with them. Praying that they mature and are capable of repeating that process not only for others in their lives, who we many never know or be able to reach, but even into the lives of us, as their teachers.

A Teacher for the Teacher! I'm so glad Candy was mine on that day in San José.

Thank you for allowing us to share our lives and what God is doing here in Mexico and in the lives of people there.

Because of Christ,

The Rio Bravo Christian Ministries Team

Brad and Linda Berg, Todd and Sandra Tate, Epiteacio and Candy Lopez Garcia

Some prayer requests:

The Rio Bravo Christian Board Members will be traveling to Quemado next weekend for our annual board meeting. Tom Bailey, Scott Cruden and Beaver Terry will arrive on Friday. Please pray for wisdom as the board meets and makes decisions concerning the ministry in Mexico.

We also will have two short-term teams present working the week of January 16th to the 22nd. A group from Central Christian in Rockford, IL and another group of men from Crossings Christian in Roanoke, VA will be here working at Rancho San José. Some special things are planned for their time of service and we will share that with you next letter.

Tate's and us (Berg's) enjoyed the blessing of having our college kids home for Christmas break. All three, Kaden, Brenda and Sandy traveled together from their respective schools, Central Christian College of the Bible, Lincoln Christian Univeristy and St. Louis Christian College. It is always a joy to have them home and we praise God for their safe travels coming and returning to school.

A reminder:

Financial contribution statements will be sent out at the end of this month for all contributors to Rio Bravo Christian Ministries by our Financial Administrator, Sara Berg.

An annual report will be compiled of the year 2008/2009 in February and should be available in March 2010.