

TRANSFORMED LIVES AT ESPERANZA!

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, s/he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold! The new has come!" II Corinthians 5:17

Lives are being transformed by JESUS at Esperanza women's center! Saturday a group of Korean American Christians witnessed a mime created and performed by the girls at Esperanza about the Fruits of the Spirit. Like a Miss Mexico pageant, 9 young women wearing banners across their chests proclaiming "Amor/Love", "Paz/Peace" and the other 7 fruits, were escorted in by a woman with the white banner "Espiritu Santo". Then groups of 2 and 3 acted out situations of greed, conflict, addiction, loneliness, desperation, and so on, each of which were resolved by the Holy Spirit introducing the appropriate "Fruit of the Spirit". It was a foretaste of what was to come as we got to hear some of the real life stories.

Martha (33) started first. She and her husband Arturo (37) came to Esperanza 5 years ago seeking help for their drug addictions. At Martha's "Quincenera" (the milestone 15th birthday party), instead of receiving gifts, she got introduced to hard drugs. A pregnancy followed, then another, and lots more drugs. She and her boyfriend knew they needed help but were not looking for God. Yet He found them and transformed them from desperate, quarreling users who were neglecting their 2 young daughters, to a radiant couple serving God together. Martha goes every week to the Zona Norte (Tijuana's red light district) to teach a Good News Club to children of prostitutes. Their 2nd daughter took her first steps when Martha was in rehab. Her oldest daughter was 7 when she came to Esperanza and was one of the children we prayed for when I started "Madres Unidas Para Orar" 5 years ago there. Martha has asked her daughter's forgiveness for those early years she failed her as a mother and Martita has obviously forgiven her--in fact she is her mother's best helper at the Saturday children's club. Arturo and Martha have a 9 month old son fittingly named "Emmanuel" (God with us).

Danya (17 years old next month, and the creative director, producer and main actor of the mime) shared about how her quest for the love that she didn't find at home led her to the street where she found bad company and dangerous practices. She sought the approval of people who wanted to harm her and was heading fast down a path to destruction but a timely accident diverted her to Esperanza. Realizing that she needed help, she had asked someone to take her to a rehab center, even though using drugs was not her problem. She just knew she needed to get away. But on the way, they got into an accident and had to return home. The next day someone told them about Esperanza and Danya found herself at a different center, Esperanza, under the loving care of Lidia Marquez. She's finding that the love she sought in all the wrong places is GOD! and all that He wanted to give her... Love, acceptance, and so much more....Now Danya is filling her mind and heart with God's word. Hebrews 11:1, Ecc 12:1, I Timothy 4:12 and I Peter 2:9 are among her favorite promises to claim.

Lourdes ("Lulu," 44, who played a toothless old woman mocked by 2 young girls in the drama--until Kindness was introduced) was also starved for love. Twelve years of using crystal meth did their damage. She had given up on herself, but even though she had left her 3 teenaged children to move in with another man, her children urged her to seek help. She came to Esperanza but then returned to the drug lifestyle; however, the love and commitment of Christ, personified in Sheila at Esperanza, drew her back. Having somebody who believed in her and loved her kept her from killing herself. John 16:24 is the promise of answered prayer that she clings to. We are praying for her to get the victory in the battlefield of her mind where she feels like such a failure. Pray that she will apply @ Cor. 10:5 and learn to take every thought captive, making it obedient to Jesus Christ. Praise God for her children who visit her and believe in her.

Sheila first met Lidia when she was 5 years old and a neighbor of the family. Although her home life was rough, she would catch a ride to school with her classmate Enoch--Lidia's son. She liked the peace she felt around Lidia and would hang out at the Marquez home, helping with the dishes or playing with their children. At age 14, when her alcoholic father and hardworking mother (neither of whom had much time for Sheila) split up, Sheila took off too, looking for answers. She found a lot of wrong ones, including a pregnancy that turned her into a single mom; the father of the baby didn't stick around. Despite all her own problems (or maybe because of them?), something inside her made her think that perhaps Lidia needed help at the women's center and she reconnected with Lidia. That's when Sheila discovered that although she had not felt loved growing up, God loved her and was giving her an amazing capacity to love and help others. She has become the assistant that Lidia has been praying for. Pray for Sheila who wants to help Lidia but also wants to be with her child who is now almost 2 years old. Her mother is taking care of the baby during the week and Sheila goes home on Saturday. If she had a stipend to afford diapers and baby supplies, she could perhaps have her baby with her more of the time. Kind of a catch-22, isn't it?

Noemi was in my small prayer group several months ago. She and her boyfriend Cesar entered the rehab at the same time, and like Sheila, she has a son who is almost 2. Noemi's drug of choice was heroin and she shot so much that at times she couldn't find a good vein on her body. You wouldn't know it to look at her, because Noemi is gorgeous. But it was during those years of heavy drug use that she got pregnant and had her baby. Her 3 months of rehab wasn't enough and when she left Esperanza, both her boyfriend and she regressed. Her eyes are opened to the fact that her boyfriend of 5 years has lost interest in getting rehabbed and that if she stays with him, she'll likely go right back into her previous lifestyle. In fact, she just got word that Cesar nearly burned to death when a fire broke out in the house he was shooting up

in. He used to preach to others about Jesus--Pray this will be a wake-up call for him. Noemi's also helping Lidia and sometimes has her little boy with her. They live in a small house just outside the Esperanza fence, but need diapers. Why do diapers have to cost so much?! Makes me appreciate the Chinese system of split pants for their babies. But that's another subject..... Pray for the health of her little boy who had a bad start and is not eating well. But he, along with his mom, has been given a new beginning. Noemi quoted Isaiah 41:9-10 as one of her favorite promises. But like Danya, she could rattle off verse after verse and it's obvious that God's word is changing her from the inside out.

Other women and the promises they are claiming are:

AMALIA Matthew 6:33

GLORIA Psalm 27:10

VERONICA I John 1:9

ANA Psalm 91:1

ALEJANDRA I John 2:15

CYNTHIA Jeremiah 33:3

KARINA Proverbs 23:19