



MEXICO



## NO LONGER LONELY

May 10 | Carlos Alberto Casillas lives in Veracruz, Mexico.

Alberto's life has been difficult and lonely. As an only child in a family that didn't communicate well, he often felt isolated and alone. When he refused the drugs his classmates offered him, he was further isolated. It would have been easy to slip into drug use, but Alberto knew that drugs could not solve his problems. And he realized that if he didn't respect himself, no one else would respect him either. He was right, but he was lonely.

When Alberto was 15 his father left home. Emotionally Alberto was crushed, but his mother could not help him, for she was dealing with her own grief and struggling to provide for Alberto and his grandmother.

Mother worked as a nurse for a family with a severely brain-injured son. Often Alberto stopped by the house after school to wait for his mother to finish work so they could walk home together. The family talked to him about God. They told Alberto that God is love, and Alberto listened as eagerly as a thirsty soul listens for the sound of water.

Alberto wanted to know more about God, wanted to know whether God really cared for a lost and lonely boy. The family invited Alberto to visit their church, and

he went. But he was uncomfortable there among people who did strange things as part of their worship. Then someone at the church told him that if he didn't speak in tongues, he didn't know God and he would go to hell. This frightened Alberto, who decided that his life was too chaotic to deal with a chaotic religion. He would wait until he was older and could understand better. But still, he yearned to know God. He wanted someone he could talk to, someone he could lean on, someone he could trust.

### FAST FACTS

- Of the 107 million people living in Mexico, more than 431,000 are Seventh-day Adventists. This is a ratio of one Adventist for every 250 people.
- Veracruz, where Alberto lives, lies along the Gulf of Mexico. While the area is a popular tourist destination, many who live there are poor and cannot afford to own a home. Building a church is beyond their reach. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build one church in Veracruz State.

## Answer to Prayer

Then an Adventist family visited Alberto's family. They lived nearby and invited Alberto and his mother and grandmother to attend some meetings in their home. Alberto and his mother went to the first meeting, but Mother was still too stressed about losing her husband and supporting the family to continue attending.

Alberto continued attending the meetings, but some things confused him. The people studied the book of Revelation, a book he had never read. They talked about the importance of keeping the Ten Commandments, but Alberto remembered that the other church said the Ten Commandments had been done away with. *Why are these two churches so different?* Alberto wondered. *Which one is right?* He continued attending the meetings, searching for something—or Someone—he could trust to help him find his way.

Then Alberto met Jorge [HOR-heh, or George], a young man Alberto felt he could relate to. Jorge offered to study the Bible with him, and Alberto agreed. Maybe Jorge could help him find out who God is and what He wants.

Mother joined Alberto and Jorge for Bible studies, but Grandmother refused to join them and sat in her room when Jorge visited. Alberto accepted each new truth. But his mother worked on Sabbath and found it difficult to believe that God would want her to quit the job that fed the family.

Alberto began attending the worship services in the neighbor's house. He found peace and calm assurance that fed his soul. But his mother cooked and sold food on Saturdays, and she needed Alberto to deliver the food. Reluctantly Alberto obeyed his mother and delivered food on

Sabbaths. Alberto attended church only when his mother didn't cook on Saturdays.

## A Family United

The family's home life was not peaceful; Alberto's mother and grandmother often fought. One day Mother told Alberto that she yearned for peace in her life. He told her that he had found peace worshipping God with fellow believers and suggested that they worship together on Sabbath. She agreed.

A few weeks later they attended evangelistic meetings together. During one meeting Mother started crying. She whispered that she felt that no one loved her. Alberto told her that God loved her, and at the end of that meeting his mother asked Jesus into her heart.

To Alberto's surprise, his grandmother began studying the Bible. Within a few days she stopped fighting about religion and began attending the Adventist worship. She asked Jesus into her heart, and Alberto, his mother, and his grandmother were baptized.

"I am no longer lonely," Alberto testifies. "Our family is at peace and united in our faith in God."

Alberto's church has just 26 members, but it's growing. They have outgrown the home in which they met, but they have no church. They meet under a tarp in the yard of Alberto's home. They pray that the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help them buy land on which to build a church where they can continue to grow.

"I thank God for giving me a chance to meet Him while I am young," Alberto says. "I want others to have the peace I have found. Thank you for caring enough to give your mission offerings to help me find Christ." 🌍