

Friends of Jesus share good news with their parents

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Children gather
outside the
Martínez home
to worship after
Bible class.
(Photos by Russ
Dilday/Buckner)

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By Analiz González

Buckner International

OAXACA, Mexico — In southern Mexico, a group of recent Christian converts meets in a colonia in Oaxaca. And all the new believers are under age 15.

They study the Bible. They worship on the street Fridays and fearlessly invite others to learn about God. They know God changed their lives, and they share their faith with their parents.



Sergio, 9, sits and talks with Marco Antonio Martínez after an Amigos de Jesus meeting. Sergio is an orphan who has bonded with the Martínez family.

“These children come from families of non-converts,” explained Marco Antonio Martínez, who lends his house for the children’s Bible study, called Amigos de Jesus, or Friends of Jesus. “They’ve come here on their own, and they are taking the gospel home with them.

Martínez was hosting a Christian small group for adults in his home, and the children of the members had nothing to do while their parents prayed and talked about God.

So, Noemi García of Iglesia Bautista Esperanza started teaching them Bible stories and worship songs. The children brought friends. Then, those friends brought friends.

“They filled our dining room, bedroom and the hallway and we had nowhere else to put them,” Martínez said. “They started lining up outside the front of the house because there was no more room. We didn’t know what else to do, so we told them to stop coming.”

But they didn’t.

Martínez and his wife were startled when a dozen children knocked on their door the next week at the usual time. “Can you please teach us Bible stories?” one child asked.

Martinez couldn’t turn them away. And the group started growing all over again, with 50 children in faithful attendance. During Bible classes, the children crowd into corners. They sit in tiny plastic chairs or stand in the door frame—wherever there’s room.

“A lot make sacrifices so they can come,” Martínez said. “One time, 7-year-old Rosita came in with sores in her hands. It was because her mom said she could only go to Amigos de Jesus if she finished her chores early, so she hustled to make it. She’s always here at 5 p.m. sharp.”



Rosita, 7, chats with Amigos de Jesus leader Noemi García. Rosita is always punctual for class, Martínez said, even when she has to rush to finish her chores at home.

Sergio, age 9, is one of children who has benefited from this ministry. He lives alone in an aluminum shack across the street from the Martínez home. Women at church donated the clothes he wears.

“My parents died of cancer,” Sergio said calmly. “I like coming here to learn about Jesus. It’s my favorite thing.”

Sergio and the other children also enjoy a snack during Bible study as part of the ministry. They distribute anything they can afford—one tostada each on good days. Usually, the children each get a cookie. When times are rough, the women get together to boil apples to make them tea.

Their funds are low sometimes, and the number of children is growing back to the original number, which was about 70, but Martínez is glad for the help they are able to offer.

“They’ll take whatever we offer them,” Martínez said. “And they’re always grateful.”

Buckner mission opportunities to Oaxaca are being planned so volunteer missionaries can provide Vacation Bible School and activities for children and discipleship classes for adults. For more information, call (877) 7ORPHAN or visit www.ItsYourMission.com.

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