

—Mexican Trails Along the Way—
Series



MARTHA

A Missionary
Remembers His Wife

Buddy Johnson

Scripture quotations are based on the King James
Version of the Bible.

Copyright 1992
Women's Missionary Association of Texas
Published by Baptist Progress, Waxahachie, Texas

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Acknowledgments

Jean, my sister, for her vision in giving me the idea for the book.

Danny and Dian Pope for their willingness, as always, to help coordinate the printing with the **Baptist Progress**.

WMA of Texas for the initial printing cost of the biography series, **Mexican Trails Along the Way**.

Toni Dooly for taking the recording and transcribing it into manuscript, without whose help, support, and special friendship this book would not have been.

Finally, to our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, who giveth and taketh away according to His infinite wisdom, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Table of Contents

Foreward	9
Introduction	11
Early Life	13
College and Friendship	15
Love, Marriage, Service	19
Children and Changes	23
Call, Commitment	25
The Mission Field	29
Busless Growth	35
Vision and Victory	37
Twins	39
The Explosion	43
First Church	49
Martha's Mission	51
Sara	55
Panic	61
Plans for a School	65
Perfect Victory	73
His Love	79

Dedication



To our grandson, the first, Alan Grady Johnson, born February 3, 1992, the topic of one of my last conversations with Martha. She said, "Buddy, have no regrets!" She added, "I have only one...that I might not have the blessing of raising our children and knowing our grandchildren."

She would have cherished Alan Grady, and with the heritage and love she left him, he will cherish her Lord.

Foreward

MARTHA JOHNSON—just the name of another lady, that is, unless you knew that lady.

Mention the name to Buddy Johnson, and it brings to mind beautiful memories of a loving and devoted wife, a companion in service to the Lord, and his best friend.

Mention the name to Grady, Scott, Eric, Jonathan, Benjamin, or Sara and they will remember a dedicated mother whose love was never in question and whose commitment was always felt.

Mention the name to almost anyone in the Mexican city of Huejutla, and they will recall "*the Gringo's wife*" who

seemed to be everywhere teaching, sharing, giving of herself to make life richer and better for others.

Mention the name to any person with a knowledge of the work and people of the Missions Department of the Baptist Missionary Association of America, and they will remember a missionary's wife who served in humility, strength of character, and loving devotion to her Lord and who, thereby, received honor, made an indelible impact on them and who has received the highest reward—to be in the presence of the Lord she loves and serves.

As I read the manuscript, my emotions went from sorrow to joy, from a sense of great loss to a sense of great gain. I cried, I rejoiced, I gave thanks to God—all because I remembered Martha. She was special to me and so many others because she made others so special.

Whether you read on and remember her or meet her for the first time in the pages of this book, you'll love MARTHA JOHNSON.

Lynn Stephens

Introduction

Two weeks after Martha's funeral I drove from Bullard to Conroe, Texas, to see our son, Eric. My thoughts were constantly centered on recording the audio for a video about Martha with which Bro. Ken Langster had volunteered to help me. Upon leaving Conroe and heading to Ft. Worth to care for some business, I began telling "her" story into a small tape recorder. I became aware of my whereabouts at I-20 after having missed my normal turn at Ennis. I had not stopped the recorder one single time. Unaware of all I had said, I later played the recording for my sister, Jean, who hastened to tell me the contents of that little tape recording would make an impressive book about Martha. I laughed! After having thought and prayed for divine leadership concerning this biography and with the help and encouragement of dozens of people, it became a reality.

As we did with Martha's books, **Pablo** and **Rosas**, I simply place this little volume in the hands of the Master and pray He might touch someone's life with her story.

—Buddy Johnson



Four Years Old



First Grade



JBC 1963



Senior in High School



High School Graduation

1

Early Life

Martha Lee Lucas was born June 20, 1945, to Johnie Lee Lucas and Ruby Lavina Pope Lucas. When Martha was very young, her parents took her to the Boise Street Baptist Church in Ft. Worth, Texas, which later relocated to Hemphill Street. At the age of nine, Martha received Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and was baptized into the fellowship of Hemphill Street Baptist Church. Shortly thereafter, Bro. Gaylan Henry became the pastor of that church, and Martha grew up under his ministry. She shared her frustrations, desires, and her problems

with him. Through the years he counseled with her and guided her; and together with church and family, those godly principles which were to characterize Martha's life were instilled and learned.

Martha began school in Ft. Worth, her family having lived largely on the south side of that city. Before her junior high school years, the family moved to Burleson, Texas, just south of Ft. Worth. A very studious young lady, Martha was a member of the National Honor Society and graduated with honors from Burleson High School in 1963.



*Martha, George, Ruby Lynn,
Ruby, Johnie Lee*

2

College and Friendship

Having been taught the principles of the Word of God and having learned to love Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, Martha chose to attend Jacksonville College, Jacksonville, Texas, which is a junior college supported by the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas. Upon enrolling in JBC in 1963, Martha and I became acquainted. I well remember the first day I saw her. I remember she was wearing a straight, orange dress. She was 5'1" tall, weighed 102 pounds, and had long, wavy blond hair.

I have many memories of that time at JBC, humorous incidences and sad ones I remember from those early days in our education together. I was a sophomore, and Martha was a freshman. Our relationship was very stormy. Just to make a very bold statement, Martha really did not want to have anything to do with me at first. Finally, around Christmas my persistence paid off, and we became friends. The only place she would go with me was to the Travis Street Baptist Church, where she had moved her membership and was serving the Lord with other young people from the College.

Those were tough times for all of us. Economic problems and the Vietnam Conflict were crises that plagued all of our lives as young people. That was also the year President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

All of the young people at JBC made many memories. We attended basketball games, traveled on choir tours, and had Mission Band trips. It also snowed that winter, which really provided a treat. All of those things were precious to us.

In March Martha invited me to the old gym where the Bible Conference

was held. Her interest was not only I attend the services with her, but also I meet the pastor of her home church, Bro. Henry. He was the keynote speaker in the Bible Conference that year. If I remember correctly, it was March 8, 1964, after Bro. Henry's sermon, Martha introduced me to him. I well remember his sermon. He preached from Daniel 3, and I was convinced Martha had told her pastor every bad thing she knew about me, because everything he preached that night seemed to be directed to Buddy Johnson.

After that sermon I struggled all night with my relationship with the Lord. I felt He was calling me to do His work. It was in the wee hours of the next morning I surrendered the rest of my life to serve Him wherever He should lead.



*First House
1964*



*First Church
Etoile, Texas*



Wedding 1964

3

Love, Marriage, Service

A month or so later, Martha and I began to talk about marriage. I was to preach my first sermon, and I invited her to go with me to the little church out in the community of Corine (near Jacksonville, Texas). Martha had not really wanted to marry a preacher; I was one of the few guys in school who was not a preacher at that time. Martha had expressed to me her desire to serve the Lord, but she really did not want to be a preacher's wife. I said, "Well, Martha, I'm going to preach the Word of the Lord, and I want you to go

listen to me. Then you can decide afterward whether or not you still would consider marrying me." So, we went; driving back that night she was very quiet. I remember asking her as we arrived back at the JBC dorm, "Well, what do you think? Do you think that you can tolerate my preaching for the rest of our lives?"

In her sly, subtle way, she said, "Buddy, yeah, I've considered it. I've thought about it, and I've decided you can't preach enough to make any difference anyway."

Plans continued, and on September 12, 1964, she and I were married in the Hemphill Street Baptist Church. My dad, Bro. Grady Johnson, performed the service. We drove immediately to Nacogdoches, Texas, where I enrolled in Stephen F. Austin State University.

While at Nacogdoches, we joined the College Heights Baptist Church, where Bro. E. L. Jones was our faithful pastor. He took us under his wing and sheltered and guided us as best he could in those first few months of our marriage. He was also instrumental in directing me to my first pastorate. The Macedonia Baptist Church in Etoile, Texas, had been without a pastor and had disbanded for about two months.

A couple of godly men from that church came to see Bro. Jones and asked him to send a young man to preach at their church. Incidentally, they had \$100 in their church treasury. They said they could pay the preacher \$20 a week until all of the money was gone, and then they would have to decide what would happen.

Bro. Jones called me and told me to go to Etoile to preach on Sunday morning. I told him, "Bro. Jones, I can't preach. I've never preached that much."

He said, "Well, you and I know that, but those people don't know that. You go, and you preach Jesus. Don't get involved in personalities. You just love those people and preach Jesus."

I remember Martha's response. She said, "Buddy, even though you have no experience preaching, growing up in a preacher's home was something to you. You know what it's all about. Having been in church all your life, you understand what the work is, but God has called you to do the work. The power, the strength and the truth are not of you. Even though we don't know how to do it, let's go try. Let's go work." She calmly added, "You're not alone; the Lord is with you. Besides that, I'll always be with you and help you and

support you; together the three of us will be able to do something."

I was ordained April 4, 1965, and we served in that church three years.



*Ordination Day
1965*

4

Children and Changes

Our lives became more stabilized in Nacogdoches. I was going to school and preaching. Martha and I were both working. The church was growing, and we built a new church building. I graduated from college in 1966, and we moved to Jacksonville, Texas, where I enrolled in the Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary. Martha and I went back to the Corine Baptist Church, where I had preached my first sermon years before, and we pastored there three and one-half years while I attended the Seminary.

The Lord began adding to our

family . Our first son, Grady Lee, was born May 23, 1967. On September 21, 1969, our second son, Scott Alan, was born. God blessed us in Jacksonville, and we learned so much. Martha and I became very involved in the ministry of the church, especially the youth ministry. She was becoming a young, vibrant, energetic, visionary pastor's wife, faithful in every aspect of the Word to her husband, to her family, and to her Lord and His church. We grew together. We learned so much in those early days. God had given us greater goals and visions, and we looked for our field that was "white already to harvest" (John 4:35). The Lord then led us to the Hillcrest Baptist Church in Texarkana, Texas.



Grady Lee



Scott Alan

5

Call, Commitment

In the spring of 1971, I went to Mexico with Bro. Charles McKamy and Bro. Bob Hendley. We flew in a private plane, made several stops and saw our mission work there. It was then God began to "bother" me with the possibility of serving Him in Mexico. I remember my first reaction to seeing the mission field: small churches, struggling pastors, no training program for young people, no training program for young ministers, not much future; and God spoke to me in a very special way about going to Mexico. I fought

with that burden because we were having a very fruitful ministry in Texarkana.

Then, in the summer of 1971, I sponsored a group of young people to the Southwest Arkansas Baptist Youth Encampment in Gary, Texas, where (at that time) Missionary Paul Bearfield was on furlough from Taiwan (Formosa). He preached a simple 15-minute sermon, showed a few slides about a young man named Kevin, and expressed a desire to cultivate that young man's life and guide him into the ministry of the Lord. Standing at the back of the building that night with Scott, our little two-year-old son, I was touched anew by the hand of God. The Lord told me, "Buddy, I want you to go to Mexico and do the work I will show you to do."

I went home and told Martha, and we really wrestled with that decision. She was afraid it was an emotional thing. She knew me very well, and she was afraid it was more emotional than Spirit-led. However, she always assured me, "Buddy, if this is the Spirit of God leading you, and if you're certain in your heart this is what God wants for you, then I am certainly willing to go and, as always, to help you do the work

of God." I assured her it was the Lord's leading. After some wrestling back and forth with the will of God concerning the local ministry there in Texarkana and the ministry God would show us to do in Mexico, I applied for missionary status with the Baptist Missionary Association of America, which was to meet in Houston, Texas, in the spring of 1972. Due to lack of funds, no one was elected that year. We returned to our ministry in Texarkana.

During this time Martha intensified her studies. Beginning in June, 1972, and finishing in August, 1973, she completed two years of university-level studies and graduated with honors from East Texas State University in Texarkana. She graduated one Friday; we were packed and ready to leave for Mexico the next Monday morning. In the spring of 1973 in Sacramento, California, I had been elected as a foreign missionary for the BMA of America.

After graduating from college, Martha had a desire to teach. She was a gifted, very intelligent, quick-minded person. She was also very dedicated to those godly principles that had been instilled in her young heart as a child.

Martha was very careful to guard her mind and her body from the things of the world that could limit her service for the Lord. She was truly a very stabilizing force in our family, in my life, and in our ministry.



Eric Thomas



*Eric's Kindergarten
Graduation 1980*



Martha and Eric at the Market

6

The Mission Field

August, 1973, found our family entering Mexico for the first time. We moved to San Luis Potosi and joined the Calvary Baptist Church (La Iglesia Bautista del Calvario). We moved into the home of Bro. and Mrs. John Ladd. Bro. Ladd was in medical school at that time. He had served some years in Nicaragua and had planned on going back to Nicaragua as a medical missionary. We lived with them for about six weeks, looking for a house of our own all the time. We promptly enrolled Grady in the first grade and Scott in kindergarten in a bilingual elementary school.

Martha had so many deficiencies in the language. I had minored in Spanish in college, and it was rather easy for me to learn. The third week after moving to Mexico I preached my first sermon in Spanish. However, Martha knew nothing; she had to learn everything from scratch. We studied about four or five weeks in the Benjamin Franklin Language Institute in San Luis.

Scott became ill with infectious hepatitis. While caring for him, both Martha and I were infected with the virus and had to return to the United States. We were quarantined for six weeks in the home of her parents in Burleson. Just prior to leaving Mexico, we had learned Martha was expecting another baby. May 27, 1974, Eric Thomas, our third son, was born. As our family grew, so did our faith and our willingness to serve the Lord.

The first two years of our mission endeavor were stormy ones for us because understanding the specifics of the will of God was very difficult. We began to travel all over Mexico to find a place where God would have us break away from everyone else and begin the work of the ministry we felt He had led us to do. We landed in the state of Hidalgo in a little town of about 13,000

people called Huejutla de Reyes, Hidalgo. There were no Bibles in that town. There was not one believer. There was not one Christian who really studied the Word and believed and knew Jesus as personal Savior.

Being the only white people in town with three little cotton-topped boys, the ministry God had given us was relatively simple. As people would come into our home, it was certainly easy for us to share with them a simple message of faith, trust, and love. People would come by the droves; they would come just to see what we were all about. They would come to hear us say a word of English. They would peak through the windows and watch us eat and watch Martha. We had no running water in the house, so they would watch her wash the dishes and the clothes on the scrub board in the little "pila" out back. In a little four-room house, it was an exciting time and, to say the least, a time of adjustment. Martha showed her strengths in very positive ways. She learned to cook everything from scratch—no cans, no frozen foods. We would go to the market every day, carrying the bags and buying the meat, learning the language all the while.

One of the major cultural

differences had to do with religion. A Roman Catholic church in Huejutla had been built in the 1540s, not long after Columbus had discovered America. The roots of Catholicism, witchcraft, and idol worship were deep and strong in that area. To break into a system like that took some strength. It took the wisdom and leadership of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Martha experienced daily the growth that we had to undergo in order not only to survive but to succeed. She kept a folder with written accounts of special incidents. I would like for you to read Martha's own words of some of those necessary adjustments we encountered in our new country.

The American family abroad faces many changes. Culture, diet, schools, housing, language, and customs all change to some degree. The missionary family is especially sensitive to these changes. On the one hand, they want to help their children maintain their American culture. On the other, they feel the need to blend into the culture of their adopted country. Many mistakes are made along the way as we learn to adapt to the people God has sent us to win. Shortly after we arrived in Huejutla, a lady attending the mission became ill. The other ladies decided we would visit her. I had already learned that typically when you visited someone, you carried a small gift, so I suggested we carry some fresh flowers. From the shocked looks I knew I was

about to learn something new. One dear lady very kindly told me, "But, she didn't die; she is just sick." And so I learned you carry fruit or sweet bread to the sick. In Huejutla flowers are for the dead.

Holidays can be different, too. For instance, here Christmas is celebrated December 24th. In place of Santa Claus the Wise Men bring gifts to the children January 6th. Both are according to Catholic tradition. Another holiday that we found to be very different is Halloween. As young parents living in the States, it had been a time of costumes, "trick or treat," and candy for the children. An experience we had a few years after we arrived in Huejutla changed our opinion. It was something like this, "Mama, Papa, come quickly," came the excited cry. Running in response we found a confused child looking out into the dark at a lone woman in the street below our apartment. She walked slowly as if carrying a heavy burden, although she only carried a small bag and a burning candle. Wrapped in a heavy shawl to protect her from the cool night, she knelt in the street below. Placing her bag of fruits and candy with the candle in the street, she knelt to pray to some god or spirit. An inner chill gripped our family as we realized ignorance and pagan superstition brought her there to offer a gift to the spirit of her dead son.

Only a few days before in a tragic accident, her son had fallen from the back of a pickup as his drunken father sped down the street. Now the only comfort this mother had was to lay this offering at the place of the accident. She, like countless others, needed to know the Truth.

It was Halloween. Some think it is costumes, pumpkins, and black cats. That night the roots of this holiday danced before us in mocking reality. To many people in the world, it is not a children's trick or treat night, but the beginning of the Days of the Dead, days when it is believed the dead spirits return to walk the earth again. Elaborate altars are decorated for the dead. On the first day fruit and candy are offered to the spirits of the dead children. The second day food and liquor are offered for the spirits of the dead adults. Each family places pictures of their dead on the altar. Three times each day loud firecrackers are sent up into the air to call the spirits to eat. A flower petal trail is made from the street to guide their steps. They are talked to, and bade to eat and enjoy the things offered to them. The last day many families have a picnic on the grave of their loved one, preparing a plate for the spirit and leaving it on the grave. It is believed the spirits return to partake of the offerings.

Some might say this is a heathen religion. But, sadly, it wears the name of Christianity. Many people are blinded to the truth by their religion. This is the reason the message of salvation must be taught, not necessarily to change their customs, but to open their eyes to the Light that reveals all lies.

Halloween—that's one tradition we've left behind. We just don't seem to have time for games that day. We're too busy telling the Truth to participate in the devil's folly.

7

Busless Growth

Our work saw great progress. The group of people who visited with us became interested in singing songs of praise, learning Scriptures from the Bible, and hearing the message of God's love. This became a very joyous time for us. We learned together with the people. We started meeting in the living room of our home. The group that started out with 14 ragged children grew to 50, 60, 70, and 80. We lived in that little house for three years and then moved to a larger house. Sunday School and preaching

attendance there bumped 100 while still meeting in our home.

During that time Martha began and was instrumental in leading others to carry on a "busless" bus ministry. We divided our neighborhood into different sections and our people into different teams. She taught them how to go and knock on doors on Saturday and invite the children to Sunday School with us on Sunday. Then, at 7:00, 7:30, or 8:00 on Sunday morning, she and the others would meet together, pray and have our little plan of attack, and then go into the neighborhood and round up children to bring them to Sunday School. Many of those children who came and studied the Bible with us in our home those days are now the leaders in our churches in the Huesteca. (The Huesteca is what that area of the country is called— the Huesteca of Hidalgo.)



Thanksgiving 1987

8

Vision and Victory

Martha rapidly learned so much, and one of our goals was to teach other people everything we had learned from God. She not only shared my vision, but many times improved, refined, and strengthened it. One of the first things I remember her noticing was the blank, loveless, hopeless look in the eyes of the children. She did a study; her entire life was a study of the eyes of the people with whom we lived and worked. As time passed, Martha had an increased desire to share the stories of these children and also of the workers of our adopted country. She

wanted to help boys and girls in the United States understand our mission work. She began writing biographical sketches of some of the men whom God had saved from drunkenness and had led into the ministry of His Word. She eventually wrote two books—one about Bro. Pablo Chavez Montano, and another about Bro. Francisco Rosas Vite, two of the leaders of our Aztec Indian work. These books tell about the lives of these men. Even more than that, these books tell about the grace of God—the grace of a God who loves, forgives, changes, and builds the lives of men, women, boys, and girls. Martha had lived those changes herself. She had learned the tenderness and the strength of God.

During this time our ministry continued to escalate. It seemed like the pace of our lives became faster and faster. Our trips to the United States were filled with helping others become aware of the needs of the people in Mexico. As visionaries in the United States became involved in our ministry, Martha's goals and visions grew and grew, as did mine.

9 *Twins*

As our ministry expanded so did our family. I could say so many things about how special our children were to us, but I would like to share Martha's own thoughts.

Children are a blessing to the missionary family. They have many adjustments just as their parents do. Having left behind familiar toys, their rooms, children's classes at church, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, they find themselves thrown into a new life where they don't even understand the language. Usually, though, children adjust and learn the language faster than their parents. Having made the adjustment, they are the best ambassadors the missionary

family has to the strange world that surrounds them.

When our family came to Mexico, we brought two very young boys. Grady was six, and Scott was three. Although they could not speak Spanish, they were soon playing children's games with their new friends. One day I was about to call them to lunch. Thinking hard, I tried to remember what color shirts they were wearing to see them more easily. Looking across the street where they were playing, I had to laugh as I realized the only two cotton tops were mine. A special treat for them in those early days was the ice cream vendor. He came by every afternoon on a bicycle with homemade ice cream. It really doesn't take a lot to make a child happy.

When God sent us another boy, Eric, we were so thrilled. A neighbor called him "Little Angel Eyes" because of his blue-blue eyes. Eric had no adjustments to make. He was born in Mexico. When he could just walk, he visited one neighbor lady in front and one lady to the side of our house. Our little "ambassador" was soon saying things like, "My Mama didn't make tortillas today; those tacos surely look good," or "I wish my Mama knew how to make enchiladas." Well, naturally, each statement was followed by an invitation from the lady to stay and eat. Maybe that's why Eric was always a little bit chubbier than Grady and Scott. The really important thing is both those ladies and their children were saved and baptized. Maybe God used "Little Angel Eyes" to soften their hearts and attitudes about that strange new family in town. After a few years we hoped God would send us a girl. When I bought yellow fabric for the bassinet, I told myself I

wasn't a pessimist, just a realist. One Friday night our double blessing arrived. It wasn't a girl, but who could be disappointed when God had sent us two perfect baby boys? By Saturday morning the big news in Huejutla was the Gringo had twins. I was told it looked like "V for Victory Day" in town as people expressed the surprise of two babies. Jonathan and Benjamin were born in a small clinic where people literally lined up to see the two white babies. Actually, I should say see and touch. There was no sterile nursery with a nice plate glass window to look through. Their little cribs were just set in the open to let people see them. When the doctor came, I asked if that were a good idea being as they might get a germ. He scolded the nurses, who quickly put the cribs in my room, at least until he left. Many times over I learned to ask God to protect those little ones. He did that and more. I still meet strangers who ask about the twins and tell me they went to see them at the hospital.

Missionaries have a special opportunity for closeness. In a very real way they are an island. They minister to each other because there is no one else. That special closeness is just one of the many things God uses to replace the things left behind. None of us would intentionally use our children for ulterior motives, but I feel each missionary couple gives their children to God, just as they give themselves, for Him to use.

Well, needless to say, with five sons, Martha became very busy at home, as she always had been. However, our family never deterred her

from her goal of reaching others for Christ. So, our entire lives, husband, wife, five children, were lost in a desire to bring other people—boys and girls and their mothers and daddies to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.



Jonathan Ruben



Benjamin Newell



Jon and Ben, Six Months



Our Double Blessing

10

The Explosion

Life in a foreign country proved to be very challenging. Our faith was often tested. I remember one such trial occurred on a cold winter day in Huejutla in 1979. Bro. Paul Robinson and his family were at our house. (They were either going or coming from Nicaragua where they were missionaries.) Bro. Paul and I were outside the house in the cold, hunting a ray of sunlight for warmth. I had gone to the street to talk to the "gas" men who had just delivered a tank of gas to our house. (When a tank empties, we send it to be filled, and

the next day it is returned.) I was in the street, and Bro. Paul was near the front door of the house. Martha was in the kitchen preparing the noon meal. She was a very good cook. Her specialties were cakes and pies. On cold winter days she often cooked hot pies and tasty cakes to eat with hot coffee or chocolate.

The butane gas we have is not the best smelling stuff; when the weather is cold, the gas seeks low areas and is almost odorless. The gas is also harder to smell in cold weather. Martha did not smell gas as she was preparing to light the oven. She had been defrosting the refrigerator and had stopped for a while to bake a cake. There was a plastic bucket filled with icy water from the "fridge." All was normal enough.

Bro. Paul had found a "ray" from above and was daydreaming; I was just chatting with the gas men when all of a sudden, B-O-O-M! The whole world shook! I thought the gas truck was exploding, so I ran. I did not know where I was going; I was just running when I heard Martha's voice. "Buddy!" she screamed. "Oh, Buddy!" Both Paul and I hurried trying to get to the kitchen. He went through the house, and I broke for the back door. He won. When I entered the kitchen, he was

hitting Martha in the head. Her face buried in her hands, her hair burning, and Paul trying to beat out the fire—what a sight! Huge amounts of her hair fell to the floor as he repeatedly brushed it from her burning head.

Hair extinguished, I wanted to see her face. Her hands were bleeding. Her sweater was melted to her wrists. The back of her hands had already swollen and were black. Then I saw her face. As she had stooped to light the oven, she had not smelled gas. She had struck the match, opened the door, bent over, and put the lighted match into the oven. Then the explosion came. The blast knocked her back against the wall and then to the floor. Within 20 seconds most of her hair was gone. Her eyelashes, eyebrows, and smile were all gone. I saw a face that had been smacked by a force it had never known. Her lips and ears were already swollen and bleeding. I grabbed her and rushed to the bucket of ice, jammed her hands into the bucket, and with a dishtowel tried to cool the flame she must have felt in her face. I cut the sweater from around her arms and down the back to remove it from her body. Being made of acrylic, the sweater was crisp and hard in front, charred by the blast.

Put to bed, Martha began to worry

about the lunch that was not finished and the cake that was never baked. I called all the children in to see their mother, and each had his own reaction. One said, "Will she always look like this?"

Another asked, "Will she die?"

Someone asked, "What about the baby?" (The twins were on their way.) Martha saw herself in the mirror and wept. Then she said, "Buddy, I will still be in church next Sunday."

People began to arrive to see what had happened. Some wanted to see "Hermana Martha" (Sister Martha). I refused to let them that first day, but she scolded me and then received all visitors. She was in horrible pain. Her worst pain was to be unable to smile because of her swollen, cracked, oozing lips.

I learned to pray in a way I had never prayed before. Many people wept, and many offered remedies and cures. The doctors all did their best, but only God could have healed her face without one single scar. Both wrists and hands were scarred for the remainder of her life, but not a single scar remained on her face. Martha was a "trooper" by nature, but during the weeks of healing she proved to be extraordinarily strong

for her family, her church, and her Lord.



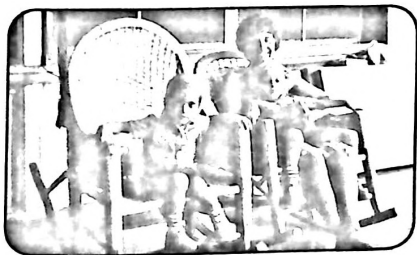
Church Social 1988



Pinata Christmas 1980



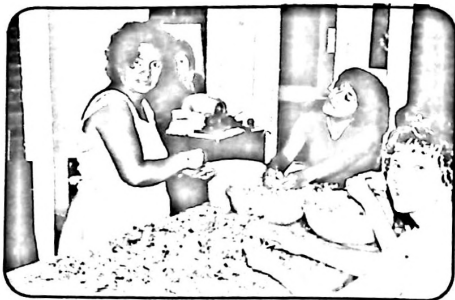
Furlough 1980



Mama and Her "Quates"



Sunday School Picnic



*Preparing Lunch
BMA of Mexico 1981*

11

First Church

The First Baptist Church of Huejutla was formed from the group that had met in our home. The church was organized April 7, 1981. It became the mother church of so many other churches and missions, 21 of which exist today. Over 4,000 souls know the Lord because of that ministry in Huejutla.

Martha was a stabilizing force for many lives in the church and the missions. She taught the women how to evangelize, teach, share, love, give, and do mission work. Although most of these people had nothing physical to

give, they learned to love. We were instrumental in teaching those people that even though others could have more education and more of the world's wealth than we did, no one on earth could love and share that love of God more than we. As Martha gave an example, these people learned. Naturally, I am biased, but I believe we have the most caring and most loving Christian brothers and sisters in Mexico than in any other part of the world today.



*First Baptist Church
Huejutla, Hidalgo Mexico*

12

Martha's Mission

Around 1979 Martha and another lady in our church, Grindelia Nolasco, were instrumental in beginning another important ministry. They would walk outside town, up a mountain, over a hill, through a valley, and up another mountain to a village that was called Rojo Lugo. They began teaching the Bible in a little mud hut to a group of women who had difficulty leaving their family chores to come into town to our church. Every Thursday for 12 years Martha and others would go and teach those women.

Many problems had to be

overcome in that mission endeavor. Our people had rocks thrown at them by some of the opposers. One night some shots were fired as Martha and the rest of the group were returning from Rojo Lugo. Other problems occurred if they drove the jeep up there. People cut the tires and even stoned the vehicle. These were all attempts to scare.

However, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is victory, liberty, and protection. Martha was never really afraid, for she knew the comfort of Romans 8:31 and Romans 8:37 (*"If the Lord be for us, who can be against us?"* and *"In all these things we are more than conquerors."*) We rejoiced as she continued to conquer in the name of Jesus.

It became crisis time one day, though, when she came home, scared and upset. She said, "Buddy, we have a problem. We had three men to visit our Bible study today. What do I do?" She knew the Bible says no lady should teach in a congregation where men are present (I Timothy 2:12).

I told her, "Well, you just keep going, and we'll try to send a man up there to teach the men."

To make a long story short, that group of people has grown into over 60

baptized believers. Some of the very men from that mission are the pastors of it now. That mission in Rojo Lugo will soon be an organized church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Martha Johnson was the catalyst. She was the visionary, the missionary who began and did the work, who won the souls, and who cultivated the faith of those believers in that village.



Martha and Grndelia 1985



Family 1977



*Christmas at
Grandma Johnson's 1985*



*Twins: Ben and Jon
1989*



*Wedding of Grady and Dentse
March 1989*



Ben and Jon; Mother's Day Program

13

Sara

The work continued. The five boys, their mother, and I learned so much of what to do and what not to do. As our ministry increased, so did our family. In March, 1985, our lives were going to be forever changed. Martha's version of this is so sweet.

That Sunday afternoon seemed very normal. Chela (a Mexican girl who had lived with us several years), Toni (our boys' English teacher), and I were hurrying to get lunch on the table. The roast was ready in the slow cooker, and the potatoes were almost ready to be creamed. Buddy was downstairs talking to one of the Aztec men. I expected Buddy to invite him to eat and set an extra plate.

Everything seemed normal, but one of the biggest changes in my life was about to take place. God had given us five sons. Today He was going to give us a daughter.

This man had come with the news his wife had given birth to twins the day before. That made 13 children, and the mother was very sick. Both babies were small, and they expected the girl to die. Would we take her? Committing ourselves only to try to save her life, we agreed to go with him to see both babies. After a hurried lunch, Buddy, the babies' father, and I picked up Alberto Canche, a young doctor working with Buddy in the missions, and drove the hour and a half to their village.

As was custom, the mother had given birth on a straw mat on the floor assisted by a midwife. She was lying with the boy. The girl was on the far side of the mat. She was naked and covered with some old clothes. As Dr. Alberto prepared a table to examine them, he asked me to pick her up. When I touched her, I felt an empty sureness she was dead. The little body was so cold. But she quickly proclaimed her right to live with a loud cry which reassured us all. It was decided both babies had to be carried to the hospital in Huejutla if they were to survive. By this time what had been a cool midday had turned into a cold afternoon. As I held the baby girl on the trip, I really thought she would not survive. Opening my cape, I tucked her inside to try to warm her body with mine. Then I opened her tiny fingers and wrapped them around one of mine, thinking at least I would know if she turned loose in death. Things happened so suddenly. I didn't really take time to

think, but now as I look back, I realize my emotional ties with her started that afternoon as we joined our hands.

Arriving in Huejutla, she weighed two pounds and six ounces. Both babies were placed in the only unoccupied incubator. We were told if they lived a week, they had a chance to survive. Many babies born in the villages die at one week due to tetanus as a result from the use of unclean instruments to cut the umbilical cord. We rejoiced when the week passed. Chela and I took turns caring for both babies in the hospital. The doctor advised us to talk, stroke, cuddle, and give them all the stimulation we could to encourage them to live. I bought a little music box to play to them when we were not there. Two weeks after they came to Huejutla, the parents carried the boy home. The girl was still too small, weighing almost three pounds. Another week went by, and she started losing weight. Every day we were told she had again lost weight. One day as I returned from the high school where I taught English, I knew we had to do something. After talking to Buddy, we told the doctor we wanted to take her home. Over all his objections, we insisted a three-pound baby couldn't lose much weight before she disappeared. He reluctantly agreed if we assumed all responsibility. We did, and that tiny little baby came to our home.

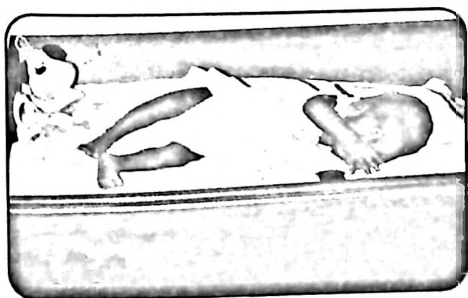
Most people have nine months, to learn to love a baby. We didn't. Having her at home made it more important to decide what her future was to be. Her parents definitely felt it was impossible for them to care for both babies. Although another Christian family had offered to adopt her, our boys were growing to love her and

beginning to call her their little sister. We had to decide. Probably because Buddy knew I had wanted a girl, he mainly left the decision to me. I did want a girl, but I knew in my heart at that time I did not love this child as I loved my boys. And I began to pray. If I were to keep her, I knew I must love her as my own. In those days God spoke to me in a real way, assuring me that He had placed this life in my hands just as surely as He had the boys. As this assurance grew, I found my love changing. I soon held that tiny bundle of life in my arms and thanked God for our daughter. My favorite lullaby for her was "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world." Our little girl was almost a month old when these important decisions were made, so we decided to name her. Over the years we had chosen several girls' names, but now none seemed to fit. We didn't want to forget her Aztec heritage, so we decided she should have one Aztec name. Buddy made the final decision—Sara Xochitl. Sara in the Bible means "princess." Xochitl (pronounced so chitl) is Aztec for "flower." She is truly our little "Princess Flower."

I will never forget my initial response to the Aztec believer who asked us to take his baby girl. I hurriedly told him, "Man, shut your mouth! We don't need any more kids." I knew we did not even have a place for the baby to sleep. However, Martha

cleaned out a drawer in her dresser. She took her clothes from that drawer and put a little pillow for padding in the bottom. That was the baby bed.

That tiny baby began to grow, and from two pounds she grew to four pounds and then on up to five pounds. We saw the hand of God so beautifully in the life of that little girl. In so many ways joy, beauty, peace, serenity, and love were brought into our lives through Sara Xochitl. She became the flower in Martha's life. Martha finally had her little girl in whom to instill those godly principles she had learned. She willingly accepted the task and began her work, and for six years cultivated a love relationship I personally have never seen in anyone's life, before or since.



Sara's First Crib



Sara and Mama



First Birthday



"Princess Flower"



*Sara
Christmas 1990*

14 *Panic*

Our work for the Lord continued to progress in Huejutla and other areas. I was often away from home teaching and checking our missions. I learned to trust the Lord more fully to take care of my family. He was always faithful. The following account remembered by Martha illustrates this divine protection.

Quietly sitting here drinking tea, I look down on Toribio Reyes Street where I live. As the sun streams down, it is so normal. The milkman just went by on his burro. The gas truck is picking up empty butane tanks. Children hurry to school. Women are off to the market. Looking down on such a tranquil place, it is hard to

remember the total panic that ruled here last night.

It was one of those things you see on the evening news that happened some place else and to other people. But this was here, and it happened to us.

The church was filled. The special music had lifted our spirits. Our members anticipated a good service culminating with the observance of the Lord's Supper. The music director announced the last hymn before the sermon. I began playing, faintly realizing someone was approaching the piano. As the young man drew nearer, I assumed he was drunk, and I started searching for the eyes of the pastor or deacons to help. They all seemed to be praying. Finally, as he reached out, one of the deacons rose to come forward. As it turned out, he was not drunk, but scared. He came with the news the house of one of our men was being robbed at gunpoint. Two of his daughters were at home. One had hidden; the other narrowly escaped a gunshot. His family and several men left. We finished the hymn and began the sermon.

The robber, high on drugs, then began a shooting rampage of the neighborhood. Passing in front of the church, he went in the house next door, also to threaten and rob. The daughter there came over our back fence pleading for help for her mother.

Leaving there he went shooting down the alley behind the church. We had our children's worship on the second floor with windows open. Just realizing what was happening, I ran up the stairs. With the teachers we got all the children on the floor and turned out the lights. When the shots stopped, we moved the children downstairs where there were no windows on the street side. Making sure my children were all right, I went back in the church but was shortly called out for some medicine for another man who had an

epileptic seizure and had been carried out of the service.

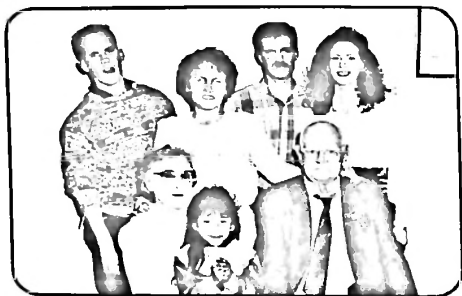
While I was out, the man came back in front of the church again shooting. This time John David (our boys' English teacher), Eric, and I got in the nursery and stayed on the floor with the children until the police captured the gunman. The men had closed the gates and windows, and the church members read Psalms and prayed for God's protection. With all that happening it seemed the demons were loose. But in the midst of it all, I asked John David, "Do you believe the angels of heaven are protecting us?" We agreed they were. I know even more now they were. With all the shots and with the gates and doors open, not one believer was hurt. God is so good. We didn't get to observe the Lord's Supper, which seemed to be a victory for Satan, but God's people called out to Him for protection, and He gave it.



Furlough 1983



Furlough 1988



Grandpa Lucas' 80th Birthday 1989

15

Plans for a School

Martha's vision continued to grow. About 1983-84, we had begun talking and praying about the possibility of reaching another area, another class of people to whom we had never really ministered. For 12 or 13 years in that town, our lives had been directed to the Aztec Indian people in the villages. We had overlooked the people who were the founders of the town—the wealthier people, the homeowners, the teachers, the lawyers, the doctors, the people who lived in town. Oh, we had won some, but we had not made a concerted effort to try to gain their

confidence and win them. One of the Scriptures that had really impressed us years ago was to become all things to all men, so that by all means we might win some (I Corinthians 9:22). We began praying and asking God's direction and leadership to give us a way, a method to win the upper-class people in our town.

Martha began to say, "Buddy, education is so deficient." Our own children had gone to the public schools, and we had made that decision in order to win their little friends and their friends' families. It was the right decision, maybe detrimental to our children in some educational way, but such a blessing in so many spiritual ways.

Martha would always mention the possibility of building a school. In 1983, we had purchased ten acres of land, a fruit orchard, outside of town. Six months after we bought this land, it was invaded and taken from us by an Aztec Indian village of some 300 men. On that land we had planned to build a school and also a rehabilitation area for alcoholic people, just a love center. That was what we wanted to name it, "Center of Love." Another setback, some more problems, some

more frustrations—all of these things seemed to brighten our vision and give us a greater hope, a greater zeal.

Since children always had a special place in Martha's life, we wanted to find a way to really minister to them. This would subsequently allow us to minister to their parents. Through the years the school idea became stronger and stronger. We believed one way to really get next to these people, gain their confidence, witness to them, and win them for the Lord was through the education of their children.

We began to investigate. We traveled all over Mexico looking at other private schools, church-owned and otherwise. Then, land was purchased in Huejutla, just adjacent to the home where we had moved in June 1989. We bought the land in November of that same year and began proceedings to build a bilingual elementary school (English and Spanish). People all over the world want their children to learn English, so why not give our people the opportunity to do that? This was the calling card.

Martha, being trained in elementary education in the English language, had begun teaching in the

high school there in town ten years before, approximately 1981-82. She would teach two or three hours in the morning, then come home and take care of her family and church duties in the afternoons and nights. Well, all of a sudden, the dream of a new school began to develop. The school building was begun.

Classes started in September, 1990. The building was not finished, so Martha offered her home for the work. She was always so willing to give up conveniences for the sake of the work. For years we had moved benches into the house and furniture out of the house in order to have church. Now we moved all of the furniture out of the house and school desks into the house. For almost two months we had a school in our house. We really did not have much of a home in our house. School had begun.

Accreditation processes for the school were to take up to two years; so, we started with only four grades: first, second, third, and fourth. We just could not fathom graduating children without having government certification for the school. Since we figured it would take two years to get fully accredited, we planned to add the fifth

grade in 1991 and the sixth grade in 1992. This would ensure accreditation for our beginning fourth graders by the end of that two years.

We submitted all the papers, and Martha worked endlessly day and night as I have never seen her nor anyone else work to accomplish a goal. She completely gave herself to the task that was before her. She made many trips to the state capital and to Mexico City, wading through the endless red tape. While on furlough in 1990, she made two trips by airplane back to Huejutla to hire teachers and to set things in order to begin school in September 1990.

We had always believed God does all things well and according to His timetable. He continued to show us this. November 11, 1990, the State Education Agency called, and we went to the state capital. We were awarded full accreditation for our school. The school was called Colegio Lincoln, named after Abraham Lincoln. It was completely legal, completely accredited only two months after the papers were finalized and submitted. We rejoiced! She rejoiced most of all because she had worked more than everyone else. However, her rejoicing was not we had

succeeded in getting accreditation; her rejoicing was we had succeeded in finding and completing one area of God's will in our lives.

That was a year of much work. Martha was still teaching in the high school. She would leave the high school at 10:30 in the morning, walk over to our elementary school and teach English—running all of the activities, taking care of all the legal matters. She was the heart, soul, and mind of Colegio Lincoln for that first year. All the parties, all the people, all the activities—extracurricular and curricular activities—they were all her responsibilities, and she gladly accepted them. Martha, however, never neglected her responsibilities to her husband or to her children during all of that work. Twenty-hour days were the norm during that year.

We experienced so many blessings, and God put His stamp of approval on that work. He began to reward our labors, as He always has, with souls. Educational leaders in town became personal friends of ours. As personal friends, we could openly share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them. We had become something else to some other people to win them to Christ. One of the educational leaders in town and

his family were saved and baptized into the fellowship of the First Baptist Church of Huejutla. In the spring of 1991, a civil engineer and his wife and family, whose children were students in our school, accepted Jesus as Savior and were baptized into the fellowship of our church. Dozens of other families began to come to our home and talk to us about our faith. We had known and felt from the very beginning this was the purpose for which God had led us along these educational lines.

State government people became friends of ours. We were able to witness to so many of them. Martha's endless smile and energy made such an impression on most of their lives. She dealt with most of them while I was in the missions. People would come to our home, call on the telephone, or write letters—all of which she would care for very personally, very lovingly, always remembering the purpose for which we had been placed in that little town.

Her ministry grew and grew. The platform from which we had to speak by example and by word expanded tremendously. Word about the school (where children could graduate from the sixth grade reading, writing, and speaking English) became a matter of hope for so many families. This area of

people where we had never really ministered or penetrated with the Gospel, all of a sudden, began to open up because of the school.



Principal's Office 1991



School Emblem



First Grade 1990

16

Perfect Victory

We came to the United States the first of July, 1991. Martha's goal was to ask the churches to help us pray, never asking for money, but always asking for prayer support. She believed so strongly in the power of prayer. She had lived, seen, and been the result of prayer. She was praying 70 children would be enrolled in our school in 1991-92. We only had 35 students that first year, but asking double was not too much for her.

After doing all of the figuring and calculating, she concluded if we had 70 children (charging only \$30 a month

tuition), we could pay all of our teachers in the second year of our school operation. We could become totally self-sufficient financially. That was her goal. Never did she want the school to be a drain on mission money, and the churches of the BMAA were very supportive. (NOTE: When Sara entered the first grade in the Abraham Lincoln School in the fall of 1991, she was the 71st student. God gave us more than we had asked, and He will give us others, many of whose parents will be saved, many of whose lives will be claimed for the Lord Jesus Christ.)

We were preparing to return home after a very busy summer, a very busy furlough. Martha had done the necessary purchasing of clothes for the children, and we were getting ready to return home August 17, 1991. However, the night before we were to leave, Martha became ill with a horrible headache and was carried to the emergency room in East Texas Medical Center in Tyler, Texas. She was immediately diagnosed as having a cerebral hemorrhage, a bleeding in the brain.

For three weeks we were in that hospital trying to get her stabilized enough to face a very delicate, very

detailed brain surgery. During those three weeks she never changed. Her smile, optimism, and love for the Lord and for others were so readily seen. Nurses, doctors, visitors, cleaning ladies—everyone with whom she came into contact learned to pray with her because she invited them to hold hands and pray.

We prayed Martha could get into surgery, and on September 5 she had her operation. She came through surgery fine and was very alert the next day, very open and jovial with the family. She was always in pain and a little disoriented that first day or so but very alert, knowing everything.

However, complications began, and on September 7, 1991, Martha went home to be with the Lord she had learned about as a child, the Savior she had met in her early years, and the Leader of the entire rest of her life. She was buried September 10, after a wonderful tribute service at South Park Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, Texas which had been a part of her early life. She was buried in Laurel Land Cemetery that day in Ft. Worth, Texas. Nevertheless, her life continues to be lived through the memories, testimonies, and witness of thousands

of people who knew her. She will continue to live through the books she had so tediously penned to glorify the Lord, through the family she had loved and into which she had invested her entire life, and through hearts and minds of all those who knew her. Today proceedings are underway to change the name of the school from Colegio Lincoln to the Martha Johnson Elementary School. State leaders from the governor's wife to local leaders—our mayor, doctors, lawyers, and other people who run our town—have all been in touch with the family, telling us how urgent it is Martha's school continue to function. They feel it is vital to our town's history for Martha's legacy to continue to be lived. So, the life, the love, the leadership, and the loyalty of Martha Lee Johnson shall continue to be. She will continue to live, not only in eternity with her Savior, but in the hearts of all those who knew and loved and remembered her.

Martha was not afraid of dying, for she knew and believed the many biblical promises of eternal life in Jesus Christ. I would like to share one final excerpt written by Martha.

Many things are different in a foreign country. Death is one of the most vividly different. In the United States we are so

protected from the reality of death. We usually don't even see our loved ones until they have been dressed, painted, and placed gently in the satin-lined casket for viewing. That experience did not prepare me for the cold fact when there is no funeral director, the family and friends must do it all. In the area where we live, there is no embalming. By law a body must be buried within 24 hours of death. That is stretched a little sometimes, but our hot climate doesn't permit much leeway.

A Catholic's death here is marked by much wailing and crying. Candles are lit in the belief the dead one will need light to find his way in eternity. For nine days the family prays for the soul of their loved one. This gross ignorance of what the Bible teaches about death and eternal life saddens our hearts.

To demonstrate the assurance we have of eternal life, the believer's death is used as an opportunity to witness to the saving power of Jesus. The believers accompany the family, singing, praying, and giving testimonies, many times all night as neighbors and friends visit the grieving ones. The church family helps buy the casket (often just a wooden box), get permission for burial, dig the grave, and then close it after the service. The actual funeral service is usually in the home, after which the family and friends walk to the cemetery. The casket is carried on the shoulders of the men who take turns as others tire. Walking behind the casket, the believers sing hymns of joy and hope to give witness to the fact there is a better life after this one for those who believe in Christ.

About 11:00 one Friday night recently, Bro. Manuel came to our house with the news their new baby had died. Just the

Sunday before, the proud parents had presented their beautiful, seemingly healthy baby to the church and God. Wednesday the baby was sick. Thursday he was worse. Friday God took him home. Manuel and Debora are not from Huejutla and don't have any family here. Because of the late hour, nothing could really be arranged until the next morning. A few church members were called, and we climbed the hill to the couple's home to find Sister Debora holding her baby, her heart broken. Words failed me as I put my arms around her and her baby. As we held that little body between us, we cried until each of us could pray accepting God's will. As she always did, Debora had her baby cleaned and dressed, making it unnecessary to do such preparation for the burial. When we had wrapped him in a clean blanket, closed his eyes, and tucked his hands inside the blanket, we laid him on the kitchen table, which had been placed in the tiny living area of their home. It was painfully cold, so we put on a big pot of coffee to offer the people who came. Our pastor led us in songs, prayer, and Bible study most of the night. The next day the men of the church took care of the details for burial. That afternoon, just as the brothers carried the casket to the cemetery, all of the church carried the burden of this brother and sister's sadness.

Many years ago I read a book, **THE AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH**. The Mexican way is different. It might seem more difficult to some. However, it is not really important what preparations are done to the body after death. The significance is what awaits those who belong to Jesus Christ at death.

17

His Love

In closing, I would like to share with you these two poems written by our sons, Scott and Eric. The family and I ask your prayers as we continue to serve. May God use your life and my life as He has already used and shall doubtlessly continue to use a life. The continued prayer of Martha Johnson, my wife, the mother of our children, my sister in Christ, would be God might richly bless you and draw you together as never before to do a mighty work for her Master.

The Purpose of Living

A child once asked his father,
"What is the purpose of living?
Is it to love,
To give love to people
and never get it back?
Or is it faith
to believe in something
that you don't know is there?
Or, tell me, is it happiness?
But where do you find happiness?
Tell me, father, tell me,
What is the purpose of living?"

"Is it to give to the needy?
But what happens
when you have no more?
Is it to receive?
Tell me, What is our purpose?
Is it to die?
Are we here only to die?
Father, tell me,
What is the purpose of living?"

The father took the child in his arms,
Scratched his head and smiled,
Then he said,
"Son, the purpose of living is
To love like only One has ever loved
you;
To believe in Him because of this love

He has for you.
It is to give of everything
He has given you,
And it is to die for the same reason
you have lived.
And only then you may receive
Everything He has prepared for you.
That is the purpose of living!"

—Scott Alan Johnson
October 1991



BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
Group Highway Jacksonville, Texas 75766

Why Ask Why?

I ask "Why?" when it seems too hard,
When it's too cold, when it's too hot.
I ask "Why?" when in silent slumber,
I think of the past and begin to wonder.
Not a word, I say, but in my soul,
I'm screaming, "Why, Dear God, Why
can't I let go?"

"Why?" I say again. "Why are we
tempted, why do we sin?
Is it the hurt or the pain I'm feeling
again?
Is it insanity, or madness deep within?"
And, again, I ask "Why?"

"Do you ask why when the birds are
singing,
When the moon is shining and the
ocean gleaming?
Do you ask why when the sky is blue,
When I give you love that is always
true?
Do you question the flowers and the
forest, too?
Do you ask why when your love is true,
Or when the sun is lost in the horizon
And the sky turns orange and turns to
night?
Do you ask why when you have no
fright?"

"You ask, 'Why when you have to pay.'
But never a word when all is gay.
And now I say, 'Why do you ask why?'"
He looked at me and said, "Have you
something to say?"
I hung my head in shame and had no
reply.

"Do you want to know why?" He said
again.

"Because of Love, a love that you can't
understand."

I looked up and all I could say was,
"Forgive me, Dear God!" I said in need.
Then there was silence, with no lust,
no pain, and no greed.
His only answer was "For love did I die,
So that you would have no other need."

And now looking back, all is lovely
memories.

Though remembering back, I want to
cry,

But all I can say is, "Why ask why?"

—Eric T. Johnson
October 1991



Martha's Speciality: Guacomole



Scott and Grady 1972



*Scott and Grady 1973
(Knickerbockers Made by
Mama)*



Johnson's Home where School was Started

Christmas Greetings from the Johnsons



1984



1985



1986



1988