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People are People

Jackie Blackerby Ricks, 1949-

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DiscipleGuide
CHURCH RESOURCES
Texarkana, Arkansas

People Are People

DiscipleGuide Church Resources

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“Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.”

Psalm 115:1 NIV

To Him be all the glory if anyone receives a blessing from this book. I just thank and praise God that He allowed me to be the one to tell this amazing story. Here is how it began.

In February 2010, Janet Widger called to ask me if I would write the next WMA study book. I told her I would need to pray about it, but I also told her I already had a manuscript ready for a study book, one that I had written while teaching it to my local WMA. Then she told me it had to be a biography of a missionary who had been on the field a long time and was still on the field, preferably someone with whom I had a connection. My mind went blank, first with shock that they had asked me and then because almost everyone I could think of either was no longer a missionary on the field or had not been there very long.

However, I told her I would pray about it, and I did. I also began to wrack my brain to think of a missionary. I just couldn't. This was, of course, during the middle of the missions emphasis *Fifty Days of Prayer and Giving*, so I began to flip through my prayer calendar. Just when I thought I would not be able to find a connection with anyone, I prayed, "*Lord, if You really want me to write this book, then You are going to have to show me someone with whom I have a connection.*" Then I turned the next page of the calendar and literally shouted. There was John and Shirley Ladd's photo.

When I was growing up, my father pastored Shady Grove Baptist Church of Purdon, Texas, where Shirley's family attended. She was a senior in high school. I had my connection! Thus began the process for writing this book. All along the way, I have been able to see God's hand. Even when I thought He might not allow me to go to Mexico as I wanted to do, He was in it all. Although

no groups have made trips since I received this project, I did finally get to go with John and Shirley as they returned for a short ten days between the holidays and BMMI trips, just a matter of weeks before my deadline.

From the beginning, I have said that although some may consider the man (in this case, John) to be the missionary, I see the whole family as missionaries. Because of this, I have written about the whole family, with emphasis on John and Shirley. However, I also have not been able to separate them personally from the whole Good Samaritan Clinic story. Therefore, many others have also been mentioned along the way.

I apologize at this time if you have helped with the clinic or John and Shirley's ministry in any way and feel that you should have been mentioned. I did cite many who have been involved throughout the years, but it would be impossible to put all the names in the book. Because records were not always kept of every group, someone would surely be left out even if I tried to get everyone. I couldn't find contact information for some people, and others whom I contacted chose not to answer me. The important thing is not the naming of people, but the fact that anyone can be used of God to help others. God knows who those people are and the reward in heaven will be greater than any acclaim I could give them in this book.

There are two main goals I have had in writing this biography. One is to show that a person does not have to be a preacher to be a missionary. Many of the people mentioned in this book have been nurses, doctors, construction workers, farmers, teachers, housewives, and other lay people. They still were able to follow God's will and help the people in Nicaragua and Mexico, as well as many other countries around the world through BMMI. Thus, each one has been a missionary by being there and helping to spread the gospel.

The second goal I have is to show that even those who have to remain at home can help any missionary through various methods. Although helping through monetary means is one of the first things that might come to most people's minds, that is not the only way. Many mentioned in this book provided food, medicine, equipment, or other things that they may have had on hand or that cost very little. However, the most important way that anyone can help others is by praying. The Ladds' ministry and this book itself would not have been possible without the prayers of many of you.

I would like to thank John and Shirley and all of their family and friends who have helped me in this effort. I want to thank each person who has been willing to talk to me or send me emails or photos or whatever to help in this project. God will surely bless you, not because I am writing the book but because this story needs to be told.

I also want to thank all of the lovely people I met while in Mexico — in Aquismon, at the church, and especially the staff at the clinic. They made me see the country, the people, the clinic, and the Ladds in a way that I could not have done without being there. I really fell in love with all those with whom I briefly worked at the clinic during that short trip. Even the patients made me feel as if I belonged there.

I also need to thank my husband, Thomas, and daughter, Elizabeth (twelve and often needing help with homework or other things), who have put up with my divided attention and had to listen to all of my excited stories of what I found out that could go in the book. They willingly allowed me to go to Mexico and they managed for themselves during that time. In fact all of my family has learned to leave me alone when I have been working.

Thanks to all who have helped me get this job done. My

Macedonia Baptist Church family also had to sing *a cappella* two Sundays while I sang in Spanish in Aquismon. I learned I could sing better than I could speak in the language! Even my local Macedonia/New Hope WMA, my Wood County District WMA, and Texas state WMA have endured my absence in order for me to complete this project. Thank you national WMA for thinking that I might be able to pull this off.

I would also like to thank Jerome Cooper and DiscipleGuide for having faith that I could do this. In fact, they showed confidence in me when I wasn't sure I could do the job several years ago when they graciously permitted me to write Sunday school literature. From that, came this.

Finally, although my parents, Lester and Clytis Blackerby, are no longer living on this earth, I know that they are in heaven watching this whole process. If it hadn't been for my father and mother telling me over and over, "Go ahead and try; all they can do is say no," I never would have begun a writing career or contacted Baptist Publishing House many years ago. They were the Christian examples that I followed as they followed our Lord. The best parts of who I am are thanks to God and to my parents.

I pray that you receive a blessing from reading *People Are People* and that you may consider what you can do to serve others and help spread the gospel *de nuestro Señor Jesucristo* (of our Lord Jesus Christ). I think I've been the one to receive the greatest blessing from being allowed to write this story. Enjoy!

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

John 3:16-17

People Need the Lord

“People are people.” Melanie, Tim, and Steven heard that comment every time they went with their parents, Dr. John and Shirley Ladd, to speak to a congregation about their experiences on the mission field. Invariably, someone would ask the question about what the people were like in Mexico. Sometimes the children thought they could quote the answer word for word. Dr. Ladd did not talk about how different their friends in Mexico are, but rather how similar they are to your friends here in the United States or wherever you happen to live. That’s when the quote would come, “People are people.”

So just what does that mean? Well, it means that people are the same everywhere, no matter what their origin, race, color, or gender. All people everywhere need the same things. Apparently John recognized this at a fairly young age. He grew up in San Antonio, Texas, where many different people live. That’s where it all began.

John Dale Ladd was born to Walter A. and Marion Watts Ladd on January 3, 1941. Walter was the office manager at Rath Packing Company. Marion busied herself raising two sons and taking care of everything around the house, much like many wives of her generation. John’s brother, Leo, is two years older, making John the baby of the family.

One of John’s favorite people was his maternal grandmother, Daisy Hergesel. She had an old pump organ that fascinated him. In fact, he learned to play it by ear when he was

only five years old. He learned to read music before he could even read words. He took piano lessons all through school, which he put to good use as a student years later at Jacksonville Baptist College. He also played the baritone in high school. He continues to use his musical ability to worship the Lord.



John in 1951

Growing up, John attended Riverside Baptist Church in San Antonio. He was saved in June 1950 and baptized two years later. Then in 1954, he joined Meadowbrook Baptist Church. He became the church pianist and later taught the junior Sunday school class and was the Baptist Training Service director. Three pastors — Gene McCann, James Pope, and Lynn Stephens — were his mentors during his youth. They probably helped instill in John a love for missions, especially since Brother McCann later became a missionary to Mexico and Brother Stephens later worked in the missions office of the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

During his years at Meadowbrook John realized that he wanted to do mission work, possibly being a missionary teacher. He was a junior in high school at the time. James Pope was John's pastor then, having come to the church when John was 15. He remembers that John had a heart for missions even at that early age. John organized a paper drive to help buy bricks for a mission building in the Cape Verde Islands. He led the youth to collect enough paper to buy thousands of bricks for the mission.

Later, because of his love of biology and the great need in other countries for good medical help, he decided to become a medical missionary. He did not feel a call to preach as some people do. However, he realized that God calls all of us to spread His gospel, and that is what he wanted to do. John graduated from Sam Houston High School in San Antonio as valedictorian in May 1959.

Meanwhile, in a small farming community over 200 miles as the crow flies northeast of San Antonio...

During the time that John was maturing in the city and feeling God's hand on him, Shirley Annette Dyer was born on October 15, 1941, to Thomas and Juanita Tanner Dyer, who lived on a farm miles away from any large city. Thomas was busy on the farm, and Juanita's day was occupied with the house and children when she wasn't helping Thomas outside. Shirley has a sister, Brenda, and two brothers, Lowell and Ricky.

Being the daughter of a busy farmer didn't bring much chance to travel as a child. However, Shirley had *city* cousins. Whenever possible, the cousins would visit back and forth, each reveling in the new experience of either city or farm. Shirley was well versed in farm life. Mr. Dyer taught her to drive a tractor when she was only six. Being the oldest child, she helped in the field until he was able to afford to hire extra help. It wasn't easy working the black dirt of that part of Texas, especially in extremely wet or extremely dry years. However, Shirley has fond memories of those times working with her father.

Conditions on the farm in those early years helped prepare Shirley for primitive settings later as they lived on the foreign mission field. As a child, she grew up with no running water inside the house. Therefore, they had an outhouse. This probably made it easier for her to adjust to life in Nicaragua and

Mexico years later as they sometimes had similar facilities.

Shirley attended a two-room school at the Union High community through sixth grade. She was there to help her sister when she started to school. Of course, first through third grades were in one room and fourth through sixth in the other. Although they weren't in the same room, they did sometimes have recess together. There was also a connecting door between the two classrooms. Shirley moved on to higher grades at a school in the nearest town before her brothers were old enough for school, but they, also, attended the two-room schoolhouse.



Shirley graduated as valedictorian from Dawson High School in 1959. During all that time, she attended church with her family at Shady Grove Baptist Church in the Shady Grove community several miles outside of Corsicana, Texas. They were very active, attending every time the doors were open. It was nothing for them to invite the pastor and his family home for lunch on Sunday. Also, many of Shirley's aunts, uncles, and cousins attended the same church. Growing up she was surrounded by loving family and friends.

Although Shirley made a profession of faith and was baptized at a young age, she later realized that she did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

All People Need the Lord

No matter where we live or what language we speak, we all need the Lord. Of course, we need Him in our daily lives and as a guide through all of life's struggles. But we can't have that until we first know Him as our personal Savior.

If you don't have that relationship with Jesus, read the following explanation and scriptures. Then prayerfully ask Christ to come into your heart and life as your Savior and Lord. If you have already done that, then don't skip this section. You may use the information to remind yourself how important it is to witness to others and then do it. You don't have to be a preacher to tell others the good news of Jesus' love.

- **God loves you more than any other person ever could.** He wants to give you the greatest gift a person can ever receive, the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23). God gave His only Son to die on the cross for your sins (John 3:16).
- **Everyone sins — even me and even you.** No one, except Christ, meets God's standard because all have sinned (Romans 3:10, 23). That's what separates you from God until you accept His gift.
- **Jesus Christ is God's Son, the perfect sacrifice for your sin.** He died on the cross and rose again that each and every person on earth who is willing to accept His gift might be saved. Even if you had been the only person, Christ would still have died to save you from a burning hell (Romans 5:8).
- **Confess your sin to God.** Yes, He already knows about it. But just as parents want their children to admit their faults, you also have to turn away from your wrongdoing and ask for God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

- **Trust Christ to save you.** There's no other way to get to heaven. The only way is to put all your faith in Him and receive God's grace and His mercy (Romans 10:9-10 and 13; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Many people cannot grasp the idea of faith. You may think that you must *do* something in order to be saved. You must realize that you exercise faith every day. When you ride in a car, you trust the driver to get you to your destination safely. When you eat, you trust the cook not to have poisoned the food. When you walk across the street, you trust the oncoming traffic to stop at the red light and not hit you. Faith is all it takes to receive Christ. *"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"* (John 1:12).

If you haven't already done this, stop right now and ask God to save you. Then you will be able to get to know Him personally and to do His will the rest of your life. The peace that comes with that decision is like no other you have ever known.

If you already know Christ, think about your family, friends, and other acquaintances who may not know Him. Watch for chances to bring up the subject as you visit with them from day to day. Remember that you don't have to be a missionary or even a preacher to talk to people about what God has done in your life. You don't have to preach to them and try to ram it down their throat. You just need to share your experiences and explain how God helps you on a daily basis. Then when you have the right opening, allow the Holy Spirit to help you share the scriptures and the plan of salvation that you have just read, or pick up some tracts that might help you along the way.

John and Shirley Ladd do this very thing through their medical missions ministry. They allow the Lord to use them to

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witness to others, no matter what they look like or where they come from. People are people. They are the same everywhere, with the same needs and desires. All people need the Lord. Learn to share His wealth and wisdom with others as you live your life and help others to see their need of Christ, too.

In John's Own Words

When I was about seven or eight years old, I began to have a fear of dying. I had gone to Sunday school and church all my life and knew John 3:16 by heart, but I still hadn't made a personal decision. One day when I was out in the woods with my mother, she asked me what was bothering me and I told her. She again explained the need of trusting in Jesus and recited John 3:16. It was at that time that I made a decision for Christ and received a calmness and peace that has lasted until today. Needless to say there were no fireworks nor thunder and lightning, but it was very real for a child.

In Shirley's Own Words

From the time I can remember, our family was always at church whenever the doors were open; any activity there was, we were there. My parents were Christians before I was born.

During a very emotional revival service at my home church when I was twelve years old, a friend of mine who was the evangelist's daughter went to me and asked me if I didn't want to go up also. A number of people were going down to the altar. I went along, but no one talked to me, witnessed to me, counseled me personally. A large number of us were baptized at the end of the revival.

During another revival service a few years later when I was a teenager, I didn't feel sure of my salvation, and went down forward to tell the evangelist that I didn't think I was saved. He was highly respected and an outstanding preacher. He assured me that I was saved and not to worry about it.

Years passed and I was active in church youth activities, attended Jacksonville College, got my B.S. degree at Stephen F. Austin State College in Nacogdoches, married John, taught Sunday school classes, and could explain the plan of salvation to others. John and I were living in Texas City, Texas, where we were both public school teachers. Paul Robinson was our interim pastor while he and his family were waiting to go to Nicaragua as missionaries. One Sunday night Paul preached a message on the second coming of Christ; his nine-year-old son, Richard, sang the song "When the Stars Begin to Fall." I was scared to death and clutched the back of the pew in front of us during the invitational song. I knew I was lost, and that if the Lord came back right then, I wasn't ready. However, since I had walked the aisle once before and nothing had happened, I wasn't about to do that again. Church was over, and when we got home, I told John my problem. He asked if I'd like for him to call Paul and ask him to come over. I did. Paul came over and talked and prayed with me for hours. In times past, I had prayed asking Jesus to come into my heart, more than once. I think I was expecting to feel something special. Nothing had happened. It was so hard to know what to do. I knew all the answers; I knew the plan. My problem was that I kept trying to do something. It finally became clear that there was absolutely nothing that I could do. I had to trust the Lord to do it all and just let myself fall into His hands. Finally there came a peace which I have had 'til this day of just turning everything over to Him, saying to Him, "If I am going to be saved, Lord, You are going to have to do it," and knowing that He had taken care of it all. No lightning and thunder experience. No super emotional experience, just a peace. I stopped struggling. I

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realized that I didn't have to feel anything, but just leave everything in God's hands. Because of that, I no longer worry when I think about death, or when I think of the Lord's Second Coming. I am resting in Him and I am safe in Him.

When the Second Coming or the end of the world comes to my mind, I remember that Sunday night (actually in the wee hours of the morning) and that God became the one responsible for my salvation. Jesus is my Savior and I long for Him to become more and more Lord of my Life (email to author, May 14, 2010).

*“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

Proverbs 1:7

People Need Knowledge

Everyone needs knowledge all through life. That doesn't necessarily mean that a person is in formal school for years, but that he or she is open to gaining new knowledge in whatever manner at all times. Of course, school years are included, but one of the most important methods of learning is the spiritual insight received from studying God's Word.

Both John and Shirley learned from Sunday school and worship services throughout their youthful years. John also found out that one of the best ways to learn is to teach a class. A person must gain more knowledge than his students in order to teach them. In fact, at one point Brother James Pope, on the recommendation of deacon R. N. Davis, Jr., assigned John the task of teaching the teachers. Not long after that, John left for Jacksonville College.

Going to Jacksonville College gave John and Shirley a chance to acquire more information about the Bible and the Christian life as well as the necessary courses for their degrees that would eventually lead to their ability to be public school teachers. They also received an education in life, just learning to adjust to others and to situations in which they had never found themselves. That would ultimately prepare them for a lifetime of adjustments to living in foreign environments and to getting along with many different people.

Neither John nor Shirley ever considered any other school for beginning their higher education. Shirley remembered going

to the annual Bible conference that was held at Jacksonville College and to Senior Day. Because Shirley had two uncles who were preachers that attended there, she dreamed of going to JBC. John was influenced by two of his pastors to attend there as well.

From just looking at their backgrounds, there couldn't have been two more different people. John came from a city of approximately a half million in 1959. Shirley had spent most of her life in a community of less than a hundred. However, God meant for them to be together; thus began their college careers. They soon realized that they did have much in common, especially their love of people and their desire to help people learn. Both John and Shirley were planning to become teachers.

John wasn't sure how he would fit in at JBC. After all, most of the young men there were probably preachers. Also, that year was the first year to have scholarship athletes who played basketball. John had never been much into athletics, other than playing tennis at Sam Houston High School in San Antonio. When he got to college, he found that his roommate was a scholarship basketball player, but he was not on the first floor with the other athletes. John and his roommate occupied a corner room on the second floor, where mostly "preacher boys" stayed. Mike Patrick, John's roommate, was very different from John. According to Mike, he graduated in a class of only 16 from Golden, Texas. He was more like Shirley, having been raised on a farm.

However, from the beginning, John and Mike hit it off. Mike to this day says that he cannot imagine how they became such close friends, as different as they were to start with. Mike continues to be great friends with both John and Shirley, saying this of John, "He always was a real, true Christian. He upheld Christian principles at all times, but he was fun to be around."

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Shirley also had many adjustments to make when she arrived at college. Most of the girls that year did not have roommates. Although they lived down the hall from each other, Shirley became best friends with Nancy Stephens (now Burnaman) who came from the city of Lubbock. Again, their backgrounds were very different, but they made friends quickly. In fact, Nancy gave Shirley her alarm clock because Shirley didn't have one and Nancy never woke up when it rang anyway. Shirley would get up to the alarm in her room and go eat breakfast. Then on her way back to get ready for class, Shirley would wake up Nancy. Shirley became Nancy's alarm clock.

Of course, part of education is learning how to socialize and get along with others in life. Both excelled at that in spite of being on the quiet side. During their first year, John and Shirley were voted as freshman class favorites. Then John was elected most handsome and Shirley was the runner-up for campus beauty. Shirley was a cheerleader and John played the piano for the men's quartet. He also played for an impromptu glee club formed by a few of the men who weren't in the choir but wanted to sing.

Mike Patrick brought John home with him occasionally because San Antonio was so far away. In fact, Edna Patrick, Mike's mother, says that it was just as if they adopted John into the family. Of course, John had a car and that made it easier for Mike to get around. John even loaned it to him several times to lead singing at a church or some other activity that Mike needed to get to when he didn't have transportation. That's just the kind of person that John is.

Planning to become teachers, Shirley, John, and Mike were members of TSEA, the Texas State Education Association. They were all actively involved. Since John nominated Mike as the president of the JBC chapter of the TSEA, both of them attended

the state TSEA meeting in San Antonio, staying with John's folks while there.

Laverne Banks taught biology at Jacksonville College and encouraged John to do more. Having received her degrees from Stephen F. Austin State College, Mrs. Banks was instrumental in getting John a job as a botany assistant through that school. As a result, he traveled all over Mexico between his freshman and sophomore years to collect botanical specimens for the head professor at SFA who was doing research. Mike was glad that John had that to do since John had originally asked Mike to hitch hike with him to Peru. Mike thought that was out of the question!

Shirley was quite active while she was in Jacksonville College. Besides being a cheerleader, Shirley was a member of the student council and a staff member of both the *Guiding Light* yearbook and the newspaper *Mirror*. She and Nancy were both dorm officers their sophomore year. Shirley obviously was a friendly person and learned much more than books while she was in college.

John and Shirley were members of the mission band both years at JBC. Many people mistakenly think that the mission band is a musical group. However, it is simply a group of mission-minded young people who have banded together to promote Christ. Sometimes area churches invited them to come be in charge of the services for the day. Other times they visited jails or held special chapel services on campus. All of them were dedicated to personal witnessing. This was a good beginning for a couple of missionaries.

While at JBC, John and Mike raised a small flying squirrel, possibly because of John's biology major. It lived in their room for at least part of a semester. Not knowing the sex of the animal, they named it Himher (pronounced himmer). Himher

became the center of some interesting adventures. It even *signed* everyone's yearbook with its paw print. (I've seen the proof.) Some knowledge is not meant to be serious.

In spite of all the usual lifetime learning and fun times that come with college, John and Shirley did receive a good education from JBC, each graduating with an Associate of Arts degree in May 1961. John was voted best all-around



Mr. and Miss JBC

and Shirley was named the campus beauty. They also received the honor in their final year of being voted Mr. and Miss JBC. Then they were off in search of more knowledge.

When John transferred to Stephen F. Austin State College, he rented a small house in Nacogdoches with Ed Williams and Vernon Hedge. Coy Quesenbury also took classes there and would sometimes drop by for a meal or to spend the night. During the summer, the four guys decided to take a trip to Mexico. Since John's car was the best car out of the bunch, they took it to San Antonio. John's parents bought new tires for the car while the guys spent a couple of nights there. Then they were on their way. They crossed the border at Laredo without incident and continued.

The eager young men drove to Monterrey. They visited the church where Pablo Valero Herrera was pastor. After the adventurous travelers visited and ate with Brother Valero and his family, he offered to let them sleep on the church benches. Then on Sunday the three who were preachers (all but John) preached

at the church. All the people were great hosts!

John and his friends did some sightseeing while there as well. They rode a funicular (a sort of cable car) to the top of the mountain at Monterrey. Then they drove to the beautiful town of Saltillo. They rode donkeys, saw a magnificent waterfall, and had a great time. After spending the night, they began the long ride home. It was an uneventful trip according to today's standards. There were no gangs or shootings as the modern Mexico sometimes has.

However, the summer of 1961 also brought love into the picture. It was then that John and Shirley became engaged. John and Shirley had dated during their two years at JBC, and it became evident to them both that they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. In August before returning to the schoolbooks, they attended some friends' wedding in Lubbock. John surprised Shirley with a ring and a proposal after the wedding. Shirley agreed to get married the following year.

Both John and Shirley transferred to Stephen F. Austin State College in Nacogdoches, Texas, in the fall of 1961. John worked as a lab instructor in the biology/botany department, and Shirley was a secretary in the speech department, each making fifty cents an hour. Constant work

and study, combined with few resources, left little time or money for much else during the two years at SFA. They married August 31, 1962, before returning for their senior year in college. John



The Ladds with their parents

says they shopped for inexpensive groceries such as canned beans and cans of sour cherries, all at nineteen cents a can. Shirley apparently became an expert using the cherries in various desserts.

John and Shirley always had time for God. Just as they actively attended Travis Street Baptist Church in Jacksonville, they also became active in College Heights Baptist (now University Baptist) in Nacogdoches. John and Shirley finished their college careers, graduating with Bachelor of Science degrees from SFA in May 1963. That doesn't mean their learning stopped, however. They continually learn about God and about His people in all their daily lives and travels around the world.

All People Need Spiritual Knowledge

Just as a child has to learn many things in many areas of life, so a child of God must learn spiritual matters that cover many areas of life. It begins from the time of birth — the second birth, that is — and continues throughout life. That, too, is just like our physical life. Although we may not go to school or have any other kind of formal education for many years, we continue to learn (or we should) as long as we live.

We do not remain babies for long in the physical world and we should not remain babes in Christ for long. That implies that we should begin our spiritual education immediately so that we may grow. According to 1 Peter 2:2, what is the purpose of studying the Word of God?

God does not intend for Christians to remain immature for long. Hebrews 5:12-14 again compares a new Christian to a

baby. But what does it say about the food as one grows?

What do you think this means?

Paul admonishes Timothy to study the Word in 2 Timothy 2:15 indicating that the Bible is the main textbook for a Christian. Other books may be supplements to aid in our learning, but if they contradict the text of the Bible, then they are useless.

As a youth learns to get along with others and share, so a Christian learns to give and share with those in need. The Bible teaches us to love and that makes it all possible. There are two very important areas of love. Without the first, we cannot do the second. What are those according to Mark 12:28-31?

Learning to have a good attitude and put things in perspective is a necessary part of maturing. Likewise, the right heart attitude is essential to maturity in a Christian's life. The Scripture instructs us about this matter in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. Put that in your own words.

John and Shirley have learned much from their families,

from their Bible study, from their formal education, and from life itself. They see the need for people everywhere to learn. They have devoted their lives to helping others whether through teaching school, working in the medical field, or helping in missions. People are people. No matter where they are, they need to learn and they may need help doing it.

In John's Own Words

Don Justino is showing some improvement of the extended lesions of tuberculosis of the skin on his left leg. The treatment will be long, but he shows signs of perseverance. Then today just out of nowhere Justino asked, "Do you have a cassette of the Psalms?" I'm confused. Why such a question from this very quiet mountain man I thought knew nothing about the world of electronics and cassettes and even less about the Bible and one of my favorite books, the Psalms? I soak in another experience of a good day as Justino clears my confused mind with this explanation: "Since I've been reading the tracts I receive here at the clinic, I have stopped drinking (very high alcohol content aguardiente), and I want to know more about God. I have a cassette player and thought you might have a cassette of the Psalms from which I read in the last tract." More questions and sharing from the Word follow and Don Justino goes home washed clean of his sins with Christ in his life although the ugly skin lesions on his leg accompany him.¹

1. John Ladd, "Do You Have a Cassette of the Psalms?" *The Gleaner* (December 1984): 30.

“Choose you this day whom ye will serve;... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Joshua 24:15

People Need to Serve

People need to serve others. In the Bible, sometimes *serve* means “work” and other times it means “minister.” In either sense, it is necessary for all of us to serve each other and God as well. John and Shirley definitely serve others and, in so doing, they serve God.

People need to work, not only to make a living, but because it is honorable. Most occupations serve others in one way or another. From the beginning when God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, He showed that people would work in this world. The dreariness of work came about because of sin when God pronounced the curse on man and woman for disobeying Him. Nevertheless, work is a natural thing for all. It, therefore, followed that it was time for the Ladds to go to work full-time rather than just part-time since they had finished their college degrees.

After four years, John and Shirley Ladd had completed their formal education. Although married for an entire year already, they were ready to take that leap of faith into the full-time work world. A college friend from John and Shirley's church family graduated the year before they did. She had been employed for a year already in Texas City as a teacher, and she put John and Shirley in contact with the schools there when they were looking for jobs. They immediately applied and were accepted for teaching positions. John taught earth science at Blocker Junior High School. Shirley taught third grade at Northside Elementary School. It didn't hurt that the district was one of the highest

paying in the state, with the exception of some districts in far West Texas.

Beginning the task of teaching children and helping to mold their lives was an awesome responsibility. In spite of earning a degree in elementary education, Shirley was totally lost preparing for the opening of school. Thankfully, God put a mentor in her path. The teacher next door to her at school was Davie McKaskill. Shirley thought of Davie as a lifesaver since she gave Shirley many tips and told her, "Just start with page one." Shirley says, "I *truly* learned by teaching!" Most teachers would agree that is the only way to learn to teach.

As they were accustomed, the Ladds faithfully attended church in Texas City the two years they lived there. They became members of Central Baptist Church. During that time the church lost her pastor, and Paul Robinson came to be the interim pastor. John and Shirley became friends with the Robinsons in the short six months that Brother Paul led the church in Texas City. Brother Paul and John met every morning before school for Bible study and prayer. During that time the two families became very close.

Actually, they had met before when Brother Robinson had preached occasionally at College Heights in Nacogdoches. Shirley later told him that she had felt convicted about her lost condition at the time. However, she said that she made it through because he would leave and the feelings would also go away. But when they moved to Texas City, she sat under Brother Paul's preaching all the time and came under conviction until the night of her salvation.

Brother Paul was preparing to go as a missionary to Nicaragua. That stirred the feelings within John again that he wanted to be a missionary. John was always upfront about his plans to serve on a mission field. Shirley knew from the beginning that she, too, would be going to the mission field

someday if she married John. Both knew that John was not a *called* preacher as the church thinks of it, but that he was called to do the Lord's work wherever that might take him. As John had originally thought, that would be to teach in a foreign country.

At one point in college John had wondered about his feelings and if it was truly a call from God. Then he heard Dr. E. Harold Henderson, an instructor and administrator at Jacksonville College at the time. Dr. Henderson said, "If God gives you a special interest or talent, then gives you the opportunity to develop that interest or talent, and thirdly gives you the opportunity to use that preparation/talent of Him, that's enough for a call." That's exactly how John saw his situation.

The Robinson family encouraged John and Shirley to go with them to Nicaragua. Finally, the day that Brother Paul was leaving, John told him, "Get me a job, and we will join you in Nicaragua." They had no idea how quickly that God would put everything together. When the Robinsons enrolled their children in the American-Nicaraguan School in Managua in December, Paul asked the director if they ever needed more teachers. The director didn't just answer in the affirmative, he handed Paul application forms for teaching positions that would begin in June. Paul promptly sent them to the Ladds.

The mail service was slow between countries at that time. However, John and Shirley did receive the forms and returned them after filling them out. In a month or less, they were assured of having jobs waiting in Managua; Shirley would teach third grade again and John would teach junior high and high school sciences. Their Texas City contracts terminated the end of May 1965, and their new jobs began in June of the same year. At the national meeting of the NABA (North American Baptist Association, now the Baptist Missionary Association of America, BMAA), the Ladds were elected as missionaries to Nicaragua but

with no salary. They would be self-supporting missionaries.

John and Shirley flew out of Houston on Saturday, June 5, 1965, expecting to land in Managua that same evening. The plane stopped for a forty-minute layover in Mexico City. Instead, it became a four-hour stop, and they missed their connection in Guatemala City. However, the Ladds did not let that concern them. Instead, they took advantage and had an overnight visit with the Glenn Stroud missionary family in Guatemala. They also were able to attend Sunday morning services with them.

The Ladds finally arrived in Managua only to find that Paul and Mickey were away. They visited instead with the Robinson children. Of course, Nicaragua had beautiful flowers and sights that John and Shirley had not seen before. There were also other sights they had never seen before. Many ladies cooked on open fires in bamboo, dirt-floored huts. They made tortillas on earthen griddles and beans in clay pots. Those aromas were mouthwatering.

The biggest culture shock to Shirley on the drive from the airport was seeing little boys walking down the streets of Managua wearing hats, shirts, socks, and shoes — no pants! That was how they potty-trained their young children. Another culture shock was seeing men brawling and fighting in the streets, sometimes because they were drunk and sometimes just because they were angry. After Brother Paul and Mickey returned, they were driving over a bridge one day when Shirley looked down at some women washing clothes in the river. All of a sudden, she exclaimed, "John, those women are naked!" Brother Paul said solemnly, "Well, Shirley, don't look." Even Shirley had to laugh at herself then. But that was all life for the people in Nicaragua. If John and Shirley had lived earlier in the history of the United States, they would likely have seen similar things here. Nicaraguan people were just people doing what they had to do to survive.

People Are People

John and Shirley shipped their household goods prior to leaving Texas. They expected everything to arrive on June 20. This was one of their first lessons in patience and the lack of punctuality in their new country. They did locate a four-room house and a car by the grace of God. All of this happened without the benefit of knowing the Spanish language well. Some people might have taken the various problems on the trip and on the arrival to be signs that the Lord was not in their plans, but not John and Shirley. Because of the way God worked everything out so well, they felt that He definitely sanctioned their missionary status.

At the beginning, Brother Paul asked Shirley, "Don't you have another name?" Of course, she mentioned her middle name, but he didn't think Annette would be easy to pronounce in Spanish either. Brother Paul decided that Anita would be the diminutive of Annette. So Shirley became "Anita" in Nicaragua. That stuck with the people she knew there, and, in fact, remains the name that she is most often called even in Mexico.

When John and Shirley began working at the American-Nicaraguan School in Managua, they discovered that the majority of the children were from families of wealthy Nicaraguans, American Consulate personnel, wealthy foreign businessmen, or United States military personnel. Their experience teaching in that school was a real eye-opener. Shirley says that she must have led a very sheltered life prior to that. Both she and John had centered their lives around their churches as they grew up. Life among many of the school families was quite different.

The students' families included all the teachers in their social lives and they began to invite John and Shirley to many parties. After they attended a few, the Ladds quickly learned that the social life of those people was not for them. Shirley commented to Paul Robinson that people would have the

idea that all Americans were heavy drinkers. After feeling so uncomfortable attending a couple of parties that involved so much drinking, they just declined to attend more.

John and Shirley met many interesting people. One family invited them over for dinner. The host was a wealthy tobacco grower from North Carolina living in a house that had belonged to the former American ambassador to Nicaragua. He also was the president of the school board. Before dinner, the hostess offered John and Shirley cocktails. They opted for soft drinks. Then they declined the wine that was served during dinner. After dinner, the host offered demitasse coffee. Since John never drinks coffee unless he is in a mountain village where that is the only beverage available, he refused. Then the host declared, "John, boy, you've got to drink something!" That's just some of the experiences they began to have in their new life. They felt they sometimes had more in common with the native Nicaraguans than with many of the Americans living there.

Of course, not everyone was like that. John and Shirley worked with an American couple who were also parents of some of their students. They were fine Christians. The couple lived in a large house in a large colony up in the hills from Managua.

John and Shirley also moved there and lived in what used to be the gardener's cottage in that same colony.



Sunday school in Nicaragua

Service is not limited to secular work. God also expects

us to serve Him — not *for* salvation, but because of it. John and Shirley have never shunned their responsibility in that area. It didn't take long for Shirley and John both to realize that they had their very own mission field among the students at the school. They began to have a Bible club mainly for junior high and high school students from the school. It was called the New Life Club. They had twenty-eight young people in the first meeting at the colony. Everyone enjoyed games, skits, songs, testimonies, and devotionals. They usually ended with a challenge and then refreshments and fellowship. One young boy told Shirley that he had never been to church and yet he was from the United States. They expected a mission field among the Nicaraguans but didn't really expect one among their students from the USA. But people are people everywhere and they all have the same needs.

Paul Robinson stated about the Ladds, "They are simply a couple who love the Lord and lost souls. They have, in a true sense, given their lives to the Lord."¹ He went on to explain that they obviously made less money in Nicaragua than they would have in the States and did not have any resources coming in from the NABA. He concluded by reporting that all of the Ladds' extra time and money went into the work in Nicaragua. They truly knew what it meant to serve God.

All People Should Serve Others

In the beginning God created the world in six days and then rested on the seventh. He also commanded humans to do the same in Exodus 20:8-11. Of course, we are not bound by the Ten Commandments as the Jews were, but they are generally good guidelines to follow. Even Christ said that He didn't come to destroy them but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). His two commands take care of all ten of the original commandments. Check it out.

What does 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 say about work?

God considered work important enough to say in Proverbs 20:11 that even a _____ is known by his work.

God cares about our work. Service to others is important, but service to God is the most important. What is the point of all of our good works according to Matthew 5:16?

What are you doing that may glorify God?

Many times people fail to serve God as He wants because they think they cannot do what He's asking them to do. In so thinking, they dishonor the omnipotence of God. He is capable of making anyone qualified to do anything in spite of her ability. God isn't as interested in your ability (at least not in what you yourself can offer) as He is in your availability. He will ensure that you are equipped to do what He calls you for.

In fact, that is assured in one of Shirley's favorite scriptures. She doesn't have just one, but this is one of the verses in one of her favorite selections. What does Philippians 4:13 promise?

You may not think that you can serve God because you don't think you can do what someone else is doing. But that's

the beauty of God's plan. Everyone has his or her own form of service, tailor-made just for that person. Read 1 Corinthians 12. God gives each Christian his own gifts and within each church, He provides that every position is taken care of. So, whether you are equipped to be the pastor, teacher, musician, clerk, treasurer, custodian, encourager, or prayer person, God has a place for you. And if you didn't see a job for you in that list, don't worry, God has many more jobs. Is there something in your church or neighborhood that needs doing and no one seems to be doing it right now? Pray about it.

You may not think that you were born to do a particular service for God, but in your second birth, you truly were born to serve Him in whatever way that He calls. He will supply all the education and experience that you need. Not everyone is called to a foreign land as John and Shirley were. However, people helped them in many ways as well. What can you do that might help someone else, possibly even a foreign missionary?

In John's Own Words

In the past few weeks I have been made to realize that we are connected with the school for more reasons than just making a living. We have a desire to see a revival within the school and to see the salvation of faculty members and students alike. Brother Paul has expressed a similar burden, and we know that all things are possible through Christ. The sole purpose must be to bring honor to Jesus.²

1. Paul Robinson, *The Gleaner* (January 1966).

2. John Ladd, "From John and Shirley Ladd, Nicaragua," *The Gleaner* (October 1965):42.

“You must follow the LORD your God and fear Him. You must keep His commands and listen to His voice; you must worship Him and remain faithful to Him.”

Deuteronomy 13:4 HCSB

People Need Commitment

In today's world we hear much about the lack of commitment. Many think of the rising divorce rate when commitment is mentioned or the numerous grandparents who are raising grandchildren because of absentee parents who can't be bothered with their own responsibility. But those are not the only places where commitment is necessary. Indifference is especially noticeable in the Lord's work. However, John and Shirley Ladd never appeared to be afraid of commitment.

February 1966, found John and Shirley returning to the United States from Nicaragua. No, they were not giving up. In fact, they were giving *in* to God's call for further study. John had always been interested in biology. Then after seeing the great need for medical help in Nicaragua, he wanted to be more directly involved in medical missions work. Paul and Mickey Robinson were also interested in establishing medical clinics there in Nicaragua.

The original purpose of the return to the States was for John to attend medical technology school. It was a one-year course, and he thought that would equip him for his place in medical missions. Therefore, they went to San Antonio, Texas, where Shirley began doing volunteer work in a local hospital while John attended classes. Shirley wanted to be able to be as involved as possible, without actually doing the medical end of things. Shirley planned to see the administrative and daily operational side of a medical clinic because she intended to work

in the clinic they would set up when they returned to Nicaragua.

While John and Shirley were in the States, they took every available opportunity to visit churches and build up the clinic fund. In spite of the lack of personal funds, the Ladds traveled mile after mile almost every weekend. Although they enjoyed seeing other states and places, they were not simply sightseeing. They put many miles on their car traveling all over Texas and several other states as their time and money would allow. Along with money for the clinic, John also accepted gifts of equipment, some from hospitals and clinics that were replacing old equipment with new items. Other things came through various churches. Besides the money and equipment, John and Shirley also began to request that people donate towels, sheets, and medicine. The response was great. They were excited to see the response to the need of a medical clinic in Nicaragua.

In the meantime, Paul and Mickey began a makeshift clinic. Paul reported that it was going well, but that they were waiting for John to complete his training and for nurse Ann Fitch to arrive. Mickey began right in her own home, helping as many as they could. They anxiously awaited the trained medical personnel to arrive.

Although the Ladds originally planned to return to Nicaragua in September 1967, they decided to detour into Mexico for eight weeks of language school. They had learned quite a bit of Spanish through living in Nicaragua for almost a year, but they saw the need for more if they intended to work well in the new clinic and deal with the Nicaraguan people on a daily basis. They also had been approved officially by the NABA to change from the status of self-supporting missionaries to serve as fully supported medical missionaries in Nicaragua after John passed the state board exams.

While in Mexico for language school, John was able to re-connect with one of his former pastors. Gene McCann and his wife Ola Mae were there as missionaries. They parked their travel trailer on a lot where the owner of the lot had another very tiny travel trailer. It worked fine for the Ladds' temporary home during language school. However, everything didn't seem fine to Shirley. She began waking up so very sick that she couldn't get out of bed without munching on a few saltine crackers first. On church days, the fumes and movement of the city buses that they rode to the church was nauseating. Shirley was expecting their first child.

While John and Shirley were in Mexico to study the Spanish language, the teachers went on strike. That meant the detour took longer than they had intended for it to take. They tried to wait patiently for the strike to be over, but they finally decided to go on without finishing language school. They later learned that the strike had lasted many more months. In late November 1967, they drove over 2,600 miles to Nicaragua without any car trouble or morning sickness. God truly blessed the trip.

The following month Ann Fitch arrived. The clinic officially began seeing patients on December 28, 1967, in Paul and Mickey's home. Shirley was the receptionist and pharmacist. John did the lab work. Ann and Mickey gave consultations. The clinic became an overnight success with the people because of their great need for medical help. Brother Paul had already begun construction on the clinic building.

Besides having a building, they wanted to be able to travel to some of the more remote villages. Therefore, they decided to get a mobile clinic unit for that purpose. When the mobile unit arrived, John and Paul went to clear it through customs. Usually it would have cost three hundred and fifty dollars plus another sixty-five dollars for the red tape. However, they managed to clear

the unit for only the cost of the red tape. God is so amazing!

In the meantime, John and Shirley found a house in Masaya. The owner wanted twice what they were able to pay. John thanked him and started to walk away. The man called out and told him to return the next day. When John returned, the man again refused to rent it to them. However, a week later, the man stopped John on the street and said that for some reason he had changed his mind and would rent it to them at their price. They were the only Yankees in Masaya. They could see the hand of the Lord and they were anxious to get to know their neighbors and all the people of the town.

Late in Shirley's pregnancy, they all took a trip to an outback sort of place to visit one of the Nicaraguan native missionary's primitive home. People who lived in that area either walked or rode horses everywhere so it wasn't easy to get to in the first place. The missionary lived in a house with a thatched roof and dirt floors. They had no electricity and no running water (except for the running water in the river!). They also had no room for everyone in the house so John and Shirley slept outside under a roof on a burlap cot with no covers. It wasn't easy for any two people on a cot, which was probably only about a yard wide, but it was especially difficult since Shirley was about six months pregnant. She was awakened all night long by the shrill squeals of a dying pig. Of course, they enjoyed the fried pork during the remainder of their visit, along with the coffee boiling on a wood fire and tortillas on the griddle through much smoke. But finally, Shirley was not getting sick!

On April 14, 1968, Shirley gave birth to Melanie Dawne Ladd. Shirley's mother, her sister Brenda, and her youngest brother Ricky came to stay for a short time when the baby arrived. How difficult it must have been to watch her mother and family leave her with a newborn in a foreign country, but Shirley

asked God for the strength to see her through it.

Christmas was especially lonely that year with the Robinsons gone and no family near. However, the good Nicaraguan neighbors took care of everything. Their neighbors lived down a little dirt trail from their house, and so they invited John, Shirley, and Melanie to spend the holiday with them. The Ladds loaded a sleeping Melanie into their van and drove down that trail right to the front of their neighbor's house. Since there was no other traffic (and things were different then), they left Melanie asleep in the van. Two other men from the church had also been invited. Although not all who were present were Christians, the church friends joined the Ladds singing Christmas carols. Then they all enjoyed a tasty Nicaraguan fried chicken meal. Shirley said she had never before felt so cared for and accepted as that night. Telling the story brings tears to her eyes even today.

In spite of that feeling, Shirley needed a close friend as she stayed home raising her baby. God answered Shirley's prayers by sending Karen Smith, a young teacher from Dallas, Texas. She arrived to teach first grade in the American Nicaraguan School. Karen lived with John and Shirley until she could find her own place. While she was with them, someone broke into their house. Several items were stolen, some belonging to the Ladds and some to Karen. Although this was not the first time they had been robbed, it was the first time that they had been in the house during the robbery. The previous time, their house was burglarized while they were out of town, and they returned to find even their little dog had been killed. The most disturbing fact this time, however, was that the thief had been right in the bedroom with Karen, and she never knew it. None of them realized anything until the next morning.

After a few weeks in the house at Masaya, John and

Shirley moved out to the farm where Paul and Mickey lived. The Robinsons were away on furlough. It was about twenty minutes out of town. Karen then moved into an apartment in Managua to be closer to her school. After about a week, she decided that wasn't the life for her. However, she hesitated to say anything for fear that she would be in the way with the Ladd family and their new baby. They also hated to ask her to move that far away from where she was teaching.

When Karen decided that she couldn't stay by herself any longer, she took the bus out to the farm and asked if she could live with the Ladds. Although the bus ride every day to her teaching job was long and tedious, it seemed to be the best arrangement for all. It was years later before Shirley told Karen how happy she had been to see her move to the country. Shirley said it was like, "a little bit of heaven." They grew to be very close. The Lord knew how badly Shirley needed Karen's companionship and friendship. Shirley and John have been very blessed all through the years to have Karen as a close friend. She also says the same about them.

John decided to begin a literacy class to help people learn to read. They began in Catarina with seven people, ranging in age from 7 to 70. John and Shirley truly care about people and their needs. It doesn't matter who they are, what they look like, or how much money they have. Everywhere the Ladds have lived through the years, they have become acquainted with their neighbors and everyone around town to see what needs they might fulfill.

John feels strongly about the purpose of medical missions. He says it is one of the best ways of putting into practice what Christ taught by actions as well as by words. As he reminds others when he speaks about his work, we must have a relationship with a person before we can share the gospel with him. That's what the clinic enabled them to do. They had a devotional every Monday morning. They began to see professions of faith. Still today at the

clinic in Mexico, they make sure that counselors are available to witness to all who come and will listen. However, the Ladds don't leave it up to others. If the opportunity presents itself, they are committed to spread the Good News themselves.

While John and Shirley were in Nicaragua, the Volunteer Summer Missions program began there. They had several young people come to spend time and help with the work in that country. The Ladds opened their home and were gracious hosts to them. The students in turn helped out wherever they were needed and learned valuable lessons about the mission field. Some have even gone on to become missionaries themselves.

Although no money was required from patients, a sign stated one cordoba (equivalent to about fourteen cents at that time) per consult. In 1969, 8,933 patients were seen at the clinic and another 310 consults were given through the mobile unit. A total of \$714.00 came in from the patients. That means a little over half of the people had paid for their consultations.

The natives of Nicaragua held many superstitions that often led to postponement of treatment. They tried many things before they would go to the clinic for help. Most of those things either delayed needed help at best or possibly even caused more serious problems at worst. One of the greatest needs was for medicines, since the people could not really afford to go buy medicine at a pharmacy. Bro. Paul's father, N. M. Robinson, began to receive donations of medications in Houston and then would ship the medicine to the clinic.

On one occasion, a new shipment of four barrels of medicine arrived. The customs inspector planned to open all of the barrels to examine the contents. John thought to himself, *that's what you think*, knowing how well Brother Robinson packed. John replied to the inspector, "We'll see, but I'm sure

we'll be on the road with the medicine in just a little while." Sure enough, the inspector opened each barrel and removed the first layer of medicines. When he couldn't replace it, he approved all the barrels and they were gone immediately.

Ann Fitch began to have health problems and returned to the States. With the Robinsons on furlough for a year, John had it all to do. Although ladies did not usually deliver their babies at the clinic, they did come when they had problems. One night John delivered four babies by himself! That's when he decided that medical technology was not sufficient training for what he needed to do there. The decision was made to begin searching out a medical school for John to attend.

In the meantime, life went on with daily clinics and Paul Robinson signed a contract for a hospital in La Esperanza. They wanted to begin serving the people in the fall of 1970, but they needed equipment and a doctor. In the spring of 1971, John and Shirley opened that clinic. People often traveled as much as seven hours by boat or by horse to get there. Dorothy Shamblin, an RN from Dallas, came to help.

John and Paul, sometimes along with Shirley and Mickey, frequently traveled on a twenty-foot log boat with a twenty-horsepower Mercury motor to provide better medical treatment to those who lived in the jungle areas. It was the best way for them to reach the people who so desperately needed their medical help. Other people sometimes helped as well. Once they had a man helping who had been an alcoholic. After his salvation, he became a good medical worker on the river. However, at one point when Paul and Mickey were on furlough, the man had attended a birthday party of some former friends and began to drink again. He ended up going on a binge. After Paul returned, he and John went down river to find the man. They found him in a canoe on the river, obviously drunk. To prevent them from

seeing him and possibly to sober him up a little, he dove in the river before they reached him. John and Paul worked with him to get him back on the wagon. They did, however, have to let him go as clinic help since he did not have the commitment that was necessary to work with a Christian group.

John and Shirley have, all through the years, tried not to do all the work themselves. They have many times opened up the ministry for others to get involved. As a result, others have received many blessings from serving God and learning to be committed to Him. Also, it has helped John and Shirley to spread their work into many areas, especially as they became more active with Baptist Medical Missions International.



Ladd's house in Nicaragua



Family in 1970



Easter 1970

When Ann Fitch returned to Nicaragua, John and Shirley left for Mexico to check out medical schools there. They stayed with the Gene McCanns, missionaries to Mexico, while in San Luis Potosi to apply to the good medical school there and take the test necessary for admission.



Family with Shirley's parents

All of the Robinsons, as well as the Nicaraguan people, greatly missed the Ladds when they left. After the move to Catarina, Shirley had homeschooled the Robinson children for a while. Mickey says that John and Shirley both had learned the language very quickly even before they went to official language school. That helped them relate to the Nicaraguan people well and the people loved them in return. Mickey also talks of the love she has for them and the desire to get to work with them again. However, God has not worked that out. Brother Paul said that John was closer than a brother to him. Nevertheless, they understood the need for more education. John and Shirley planned to return to Nicaragua whenever he finished medical school. The Ladds were committed to finishing the work that they had begun.



John's parents with Melanie

People Need to Be Committed to God

Jesus Christ committed Himself to do God's will (John 6:38-40) even though it was not pleasant for Him to live that life and then give it for our sin. Nevertheless, He did. It would have been so easy to give up when the Pharisees mocked Him and when the soldiers beat Him. Even on the cross He could have given up on His commitment to God's will and stopped everything. But He didn't. We should be as committed to Him.

Many people talk a good talk, but they don't know how to walk the walk. They lack the commitment and think that no one will be any wiser since they constantly say the appropriate words. Even if the world never knows, God does. Most of the time, the world finds out quickly enough as well. So, how do you become committed?

First of all, it is important to be committed to the right person or thing, not just whatever happens to be the current fad. The first and only person fully worthy of our commitment is God. We should put Him first in our lives. Check out Matthew 22:37-38. Jesus calls for complete commitment in Matthew 16:24-26. Commitment doesn't mean just for a day or a year, but for a lifetime. What does this mean to you?

What does Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 say about making a commitment and then failing to keep it?

Commitment is the basis of any relationship. We have to be willing to step out and commit to someone without knowing what the future holds. That's why many people find it difficult to commit to anyone. However, if the love and trust is there, it is not hard. God is the main One whom we can trust for everything in our lives. He is committed to doing everything that is best for us. Sometimes it may not be what we think we want, but in the long run, it will be best for us. We have to realize that His best for us is what will always give Him the honor and glory that He deserves.

You may be thinking that you cannot commit your time and leave family to go to a foreign country. But God doesn't ask everyone to do that. If He is calling you to that, then the best thing is to give in to His will and go. But, as you see from this chapter, many people committed themselves to give money, medicine, equipment, or whatever was necessary to carry on the work in the foreign country. And although you may not see the concrete evidence, the people who commit to pray daily for the missionaries are the most important of the commitments as far as the missionaries are concerned. Any Christian is capable of praying and lifting up the missionaries and the Lord's work. Commitment from those people is just as important as the commitment of the ones who are actually on the foreign field.

The important thing no matter who you are or what you do is to commit yourself to God and allow Him to do His work through you. What does Proverbs 16:3 say about this?

In Shirley's Own Words

Medical missions has long been a way of opening doors for the gospel. When a lost person sees genuine active concern shown by another for his sick, feverish child or his own body wracked by disease and suffering, he develops a sympathetic heart which provides fertile soil in which the seed of the Word can be planted.'

In Others' Words

John and Shirley are two of the most dedicated [committed], capable, and humble people I've known in my life. They not only are dedicated, but they are capable to do it all and humbly stay in the background (Paul Robinson, telephone interview with author, September 21, 2011).

1. Shirley Ladd, "Missions Through Medicine," *Focus* (March 1979): 9.

"Porque nada hay imposible para Dios."

Luke 1:37

People Need Faith

Often when people think of faith, they only associate saving faith with the Word. However, as any Christian should know, living faith is a daily necessity, sometimes seemingly more than others. This is what John and Shirley Ladd knew as they stepped out on faith for John to attend medical school in Mexico beginning in 1971. That's why this Bible verse is so fitting as it hangs in one of the bedrooms of John and Shirley's home in Mexico.

The Ladds took a small break before being accepted into the medical school. During that time they visited many churches, again presenting the needs of the Nicaraguan work. Then John was accepted into the medical school at the University of San Luis Potosi College of Medicine located in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. He began in September 1971.

Any medical school is difficult, but John not only had to contend with the usual challenges, he also had to understand it through the filter of a second language. All classes were conducted in Spanish. Therefore, he spent many hours in concentration and study. The typical medical student in Mexico literally memorized the texts. Once when a professor asked for something from a particular page, John told him that he didn't know what page, but if he would simply ask the actual question, he would do his best to answer with the correct information. From then on, the professors understood that John didn't learn the same way that the other students did, but that he knew the material. During that time, the Ladds often had church services

in their home with their neighbors and other friends they had made in the area.

The Baptist Missionary Association of America (BMAA, formerly the NABA) intended to continue with the Ladds as official missionaries. John did not feel it was right. He told them, "I don't feel it is a good precedent to set to support a person during preparation for his missionary service." The association did, however, ask him to continue as advisor and translator in Mexico.

This meant that John and Shirley were indeed stepping out on faith. With John attending medical school on student papers in Mexico, it was against the law for him or Shirley to work during that time. That took a large dose of living faith. They didn't tell a soul or ask anyone for anything. They had no idea where money would come from, but they trusted God. And He supplied their needs through others who also had large doses of living faith. The givers often didn't even know that there was a specific need; they simply answered God's nudge to do what He put on their hearts.

Surprisingly to John and Shirley, their most regular support came from people they had never met or even knew anything about. A senior citizen class from a church in Arkansas sent a support check every month while John was in medical school. That supplied things they had to use money for. Up to that time, they had never met those people, although later they went there to thank them for their support.

Another church sent down a *pounding* of food. Shirley had peanut butter to last for a while! At that time, it was almost impossible to get peanut butter in Mexico. There was so much food that John moved the wardrobe in their bedroom and built shelves behind it to stock the food received in the pounding. They had their own special pantry right there in the bedroom! Other

churches and individuals helped out from time to time so that God supplied everything the Ladds needed.

While John and Shirley were in San Luis Potosi, they attended the mission in which Gene McCann was working. As usual, they helped where they were needed. Then in 1973, Buddy and Martha Johnson moved their family to Mexico to help with the mission work there. Since they had no place to live at first, John and Shirley opened their home to them until they could find a place of their own.

While the Johnsons were staying with the Ladds, someone came to the gate one day. Apparently Shirley was busy with something so Martha opened the gate to a lady who asked for "Hermana Shilly." Martha said, "Chilly? No, I'm not cold, thank you." After more conversation, Martha learned that the local people couldn't pronounce *Shirley* so she became *Shilly* and, of course, *hermana* translates "sister." They all got a chuckle out of that one.

The winter of 1973 was not an easy one. Both Buddy and Martha Johnson, along with their two boys, got hepatitis. John and Shirley urged them to return to the States to get well since they already had plans to return for Christmas. Then Shirley came down with it after they left. Melanie was only in kindergarten, but she would make toast in case Shirley felt like eating anything. A friend also brought food that looked delicious, but as soon as Shirley took one whiff of it, she would not be able to even look at it. At least John and Mela (as the family calls her) got to eat.

Shirley also had not done her Christmas shopping. On Christmas Eve, John went downtown to buy gifts and a small Christmas tree. He put it up in the bedroom so Shirley could participate in the celebration, even though she really didn't feel like it.

Buddy Johnson's *Gleaner* report in January 1974 stated that several Mexican doctors and various medical students had a mobile medical mission for the people there. John and several of his school associates ministered to the medical needs of many people. Thus John was giving others a chance to have a part in the medical work and be blessed while helping. Brother Buddy ministered to the patients' spiritual needs at the same time.

John and Shirley had wanted a second child for some time and finally felt led to investigate adoption. This experience is just one in a list of many of how God had a plan long before the Ladds were tuned in. In early 1974 they learned that twin boys had been born in a town about a two-hour drive from San Luis, and since the mother knew she could not provide enough milk for two hungry mouths, the parents decided that the most loving act on their part would be to give up one twin for adoption. Through a third party the Ladds were put in contact with this family. After more than a year of up-and-down legal procedures, Timothy John Ladd officially became the son who had already won everyone's heart and love.

When they first brought the baby home, the pediatrician thought that baby Tim should be in the hospital. John and Shirley knew that was out of the question. Shirley began the process of feeding Tim with a medicine dropper. It was a rather time-consuming job because it took so long. Just about the time she finished one feeding, it would be time for another. Thankfully, that lasted only two weeks. Shirley



John, Melanie, and Tim

said weekends were heaven because John would be home from medical school and could help with the feedings. She then could try to catch up on sleep or other work.

When Mela first saw the tiny baby, she said, "Oh, isn't he sweet." She had stayed with the Johnsons while John and Shirley went to pick up the new baby. It was hard on Mela a short time later when she got sick and had to stay out of the bedroom for fear of making young Tim sick as well. However, by six months, he was a chubby, healthy baby.

John's attending medical school became a little more difficult for the family with a new baby.

Many times Shirley took Melanie out to the park before Timothy was born. But it was hard to do with a newborn. John often shut himself up in the bedroom to study. Shirley sometimes took the children on a bus downtown to get a hot dog or just to get away so that John could have peace and quiet for a while. Later when John was doing his internship, he sometimes had to work nights. Shirley just put her faith in God as usual and kept doing what she had to do.

Sometimes it wasn't easy being out in the open air of the capital city of San Luis. A glue and fertilizer factory was there where they burned the remains of burros. Sometimes people grow accustomed to unpleasant odors after a period of time. However, Shirley said that they never were able to ignore that stench. She could not even describe the acrid unpleasantness of it. Especially in the early days, there were also open sewers



in certain places when one would walk down the streets. That, too, caused some of the outings to be less than desirable. Shirley learned to pick and choose when and where she and the children would trek.

Years later after moving to Rinconcito, they discovered more pleasing aromas. Coffee blossoms and then the scent of coffee beans roasting on an open fire also were pleasant to smell. Those scents filled the air whenever the factory was not burning. Many blossoms also left lingering fragrances in the air. One was from the limonaria bush, which had beautiful, small, white flowers with small, shiny, dark green leaves. The fragrance was so strong that Shirley said it sometimes left a metallic taste in her mouth.

The Ladds do not remember the exact year that they bought their notorious Volkswagen. They had a car before, but had to sell it since one of the rules while attending school with student papers was that they could not own a *foreign* car. For a long while, they went everywhere on foot, by bus, or with other people. However, they knew that they really needed a vehicle. A friend who was a businessman agreed to loan them the money for a used VW Bug there in Mexico. He and his wife said, "Just pay us back whenever. We aren't worried about it." So John and Shirley bought the Bug. It already had problems, but at least it got them places.

Years later when they had the money, John and Shirley repaid the loan their friends had given them to buy the car. Unusual as it was for the friends, they later told John and Shirley that the money arrived just when they didn't know where the next meal would come from. The Lord provides when His people have faith.

One time when Tim was about two or three, Shirley had taken John to school, and then she and the children were returning home. Their usual route was flooded by a heavy rain.

The water continued to get deeper and deeper until they stopped and Melanie opened the door quickly. When she did, the water gushed in. Not only was the inside flooded, but the engine flooded out as well. They happened to be in a nicer neighborhood and a couple of men came out to help. Shirley walked to a store to use the public phone. She had to borrow money to make the call since she had only two nickels, which were worthless there and cell phones hadn't been invented yet. She called a friend who picked them up and paid for the call. When John came back later to get the car, it started right up.

In 1975, John helped Buddy Johnson at the Bible institute by teaching a class on public health. This was a much-needed course. He even taught the students how to give injections. Brother Johnson said that John and Shirley were "among the most faithful workers for the Lord we know in Mexico."

Finally, John completed medical school and then had to give one year of social service to the state of San Luis Potosi as was required of all graduating medical students. At that point they moved thirty miles away from the Johnsons, to Tempoal, in order for John to do the work he had to do.

During that time, Mike Holcombe made plans to join the work in Mexico. Brother Johnson reported that the medical ministry was off and running on the occasional weekends that John had off. As he said, John could have been practicing in his own office in his spare time, but instead was volunteering with the BMAA. Although John and Shirley never asked for monetary help, Brother Johnson did occasionally write about the Ladds' need for financial support in his *Gleaner* articles. At that time, John and Shirley helped with the Huejutla work. They were a blessing. They also helped personally when Helen Holcombe contracted hepatitis. Shirley cooked and helped out while she was in bed, too sick to tend to things for her family. After the

People Are People

Holcombes got on their feet, they planned to move further south and the Ladds also prepared to leave Tempoal.

John and Shirley had waited faithfully for that year to pass by. For six long years, they had been in Mexico for the necessary schooling and training. Then they had to spend that one more year as Dr. John and Shirley Ladd, serving Mexico. The Ladds were anxious to return to Nicaragua where they and the Robinsons planned to build a hospital. However, God had other plans.

The Robinsons began to report that there was much political unrest in Nicaragua. Finally, by the fall 1978, all BMAA staff had to leave Nicaragua for their own safety. The mission work in Nicaragua continued with the local people, but John and Shirley realized that their dream of returning to work in Nicaragua was not to be. In one of his articles, John reported that he and Shirley had, even before the revolution, begun to feel that it might not be God's will for them to leave Mexico, but that was against all of their own plans. Finally, they admitted, "This change was directly in contrast to *our* plans, desires, and thought patterns," but they decided God wanted them to remain in Tempoal, at least for the time being.

All People Need Faith

The Bible has much to say about faith — not just saving faith, but living faith. Personally, I could not make it without depending on God every day for all of my needs. The same is true of everyone, although some never seem to realize that fact. We also see the faith of many characters in the Bible when circumstances seem to be against them. Yet, God pulled through and blessed them. Just see how many of the stories of faith that you recall from your Bible studies. The theme of the Bible is stated in Habakkuk 2:4 and then repeated in Hebrews 10:38.

What is it?

Of course, the only way that we are justified is through the blood of Jesus Christ. Some may think that the word *live* is referring to eternal life, and I'm sure it is on one hand. But I also like to think that God had a double meaning in that those who are saved also live their daily lives by trusting God to take care of each and every need without them having to worry about anything. One of my favorite passages is from the Sermon on the Mount when Christ encouraged us not to fret about things. What examples did He use in Matthew 6:25-34?

Notice that He specifically referred to that kind of worry as having "little faith."

The Bible tells us to do many things through faith. Check out these scriptures and see what kinds of things should be done by faith:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Acts 14:22 | _____ in the faith |
| Acts 15:9 | _____ their hearts by faith |
| 1 Corinthians 16:13 | _____ in the faith |
| 2 Corinthians 5:7 | _____ by faith |
| Galatians 2:20 | _____ by the faith |
| James 1:6 | _____ in faith |

You may think it unbelievable that the Ladds could step out on faith the years that John was in medical school. However, if you will think back on your own life, it may reveal times that

you also stepped out on faith. Maybe you didn't go without a paycheck or live in a place where you had little contact with your family on a regular basis. But chances are you will see that the Lord took care of you. Possibly you could have had more faith than you did, or maybe you had just the right amount. Take time to consider your own life.

Not only did John and Shirley live by faith, but so did the people who helped supply the financial assistance, the food, and various other things that helped the Ladds make it through those lean, early years in Mexico. Perhaps some of those senior citizens in Arkansas did without a particular item every month in order to give to the offering that went to Mexico. Or maybe the ones who sent the pounding had to give up some of their usual comforts to send what they did to the Ladds. If asked, they would probably admit that they never really missed the item they gave up and that God blessed them immensely from having shared in the Ladds' ministry.

Sacrifice requires faith. In 2 Samuel 24:24, David says that he will not sacrifice something to God that has cost him nothing. That should be true for each of us. When we offer our service or our money or even goods to others in need, it should be the best that we have to offer, not just our leftovers. The only way to do that is by faith because that shows we are trusting God to supply our own needs as well as what we are giving.

Perhaps you have a chance to step out on faith and help someone. What can you do? Maybe you can do without an extra soft drink daily or latte a couple of times weekly or one lunch out with your friends monthly. Then you could use that money to help others. You could give up your free time to keep someone's children who need a sitter occasionally but cannot afford the cost. Perhaps buying an extra bag of sugar or pound of ground meat or a few canned goods or loaves of bread could help support the

local food bank or a needy family in your church community. New towels or clothes for victims of a burned house could mean the difference in someone's seeing God through you or just seeing the selfish world through the eyes of pain. Be observant and step out on faith to help those whom you are able to help. God will reward you, and your faith will increase through the process.

You may think that such a small amount of money as you have to give would not help any mission work. But just think about this. In Mexico, they have an eye clinic, and then the Baptist Medical Missions International often does eye clinics as well. A simple dollar pair of reading glasses purchased from a dollar store can help someone tremendously. Think about how many pairs of glasses you could purchase and send to help with such a work. But more importantly, think about the lives you could help change through such a small action as that. Not only could you help someone see the world, you could also help them to see God at work in the world for them personally. Your faith could produce faith in someone you may never meet in this world, but you will have a chance to meet them in eternity simply because you had the faith to step out and sacrifice a little for someone else.

In Shirley's Own Words

The Lord provided in ways we never even dreamed of
(interview with author, January 31, 2011).

“By obedience to the truth, having purified yourselves for sincere love of the brothers, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God.”

1 Peter 1:22-23 HCSB

People Need Family

Family is one of the most important things we have on this earth. Each of us is born into a unique family — however large it may be. Then if we have been born again, we have an even larger family that is just as important, and sometimes more so, than our family from our first birth. John and Shirley learned the benefit of family early in their lives. They saw it take on a life of its own as they began the ministry that God had planned for them in Mexico.

As 1978 ended, the plans for a clinic in Mexico began to take shape. Buddy Johnson, a missionary serving in Huejutla, Hidalgo, Mexico, learned of a property that seemed ideal for a project that he had in mind. Brother Buddy approached John about serving as medical director of this project that would include a clinic, a Bible institute, and possibly a children's home. John was both interested and excited. He agreed to accompany Buddy to the property in the state of San Luis Potosi, Mexico.

El Rinconcito, as the place is known, is approximately twenty-two acres of subtropical beauty in the foothills of Sierra Madre Oriental Mountains. It was owned by a church in Wisconsin supporting Ray and Kay Larsen, Wycliffe translators, who had made their home at El Rinconcito for a number of years while they translated the New Testament into Tenek, the language of one of the local indigenous groups. They had raised their three sons while living in Mexico. However, it was time for them to retire and return to the States. They had been praying that

the Lord would send someone who would continue to use the property for a Christian ministry.

Brother Buddy learned about Rinconcito through some friends. As John and Buddy walked around the scenic property with an orange grove of over three hundred trees and drove around the lush tropical area surrounded by mountains, they began to earnestly pray for the Lord to make known His will for the project. Of course, they also contacted the missions office in Little Rock about the plan. Before long, everyone involved felt that this was exactly what God wanted. God had wonderfully answered all their prayers, especially since there was a wealthy American businessman prepared to pay twice what the BMAA was able to afford. However, the Larsens encouraged the Wisconsin church to sell to the BMAA.

After checking out the property and the proposed ministry, all parties agreed to the transfer of El Rinconcito to the BMAA. Martha Johnson's home church of South Park Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, provided the funds (\$16,000) for the purchase. Plans began to take shape to build the clinic. The BMAA planned this to be just the beginning of a clinic ministry that would eventually reach into all of Central America under the direction of Dr. John Ladd. In March 1979, *The Gleaner* published plans for the new property.

El Rinconcito already had a large log house on the property. Just as it had served as the Larsens' home, it would also be home for the Ladd family. According to *The Gleaner*, the first planned construction was to be an apartment consisting of two bedrooms and a bath. They intended to use that for storage as well when the construction began on the clinic itself. The apartment unit was expected to cost \$2,500. As soon as it was finished, then someone would go and stay there to begin construction on the clinic building.

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The clinic was expected to cost \$20,000. The BMAA wanted those funds in hand before they began construction. As happens on many mission projects, the labor would be done by volunteers who came to lend a hand as they were able. Many groups are often involved in any one project. The missions office also began to publish lists of equipment that would be needed in the new facility.

God rearranged the plans somewhat. The clinic was actually the first building to be constructed. In 1979, work began on *Clinica El Buen Samaritano* (The Good Samaritan Clinic). People from churches all over Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama came to make the clinic a reality. Many more gathered the needed equipment and supplies to outfit the clinic. Young and old, male and female, all worked diligently to see this dream become a working clinic. One group arrived to clear away some of the beautiful foliage and make the area ready for building. Another prepared the foundation. Then David Reynolds and Randy Boyd and his family arrived on July 12, 1979; Randy was to be the building superintendent for the clinic. It is



impossible to name all who have had a part in the work at the clinic, just as it's often difficult to name all of your own blood relatives. If you had a part in this, then you were definitely blessed and became a part of the clinic family that has grown so large over the years.

The Larsens also were part of that family because of their willingness to be used of God to sell their property only to a group who would also use the place for the honor and glory of the Lord. Over the years, the Larsens became close friends, and, yes, family to John and Shirley because of their Christian dedication. After they retired to Oklahoma, they often returned, as they were able, to visit the clinic once or twice a year. While there, they ministered to the Huasteco indigenous people for whom they had translated the New Testament into their language of Tenek. John would set up consulting rooms for them at the clinic for that purpose.

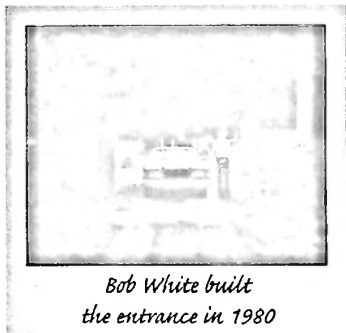
The Larsens stayed with the Ladds when they came back to visit. John and Shirley considered it a privilege to have Ray and Kay in their home and to learn more of the Bible from them. Ray was well educated in the original languages of the Bible. John often called him a "walking amplified New Testament." One of the Larsens' sons has also become like family to John and Shirley. John Larsen has been on the Others, Inc., board that helps the clinic in various ways. He also has a son who is a doctor and has worked at the clinic at different times.

Of course, the Larsens felt right at home when they returned the first time and stayed in the log house on the El Rinconcito property where Ray and Kay had raised their own boys. The log house was roomy enough for the Ladd family and guests who came from time to time. Some of the workers often shared the log house with the Ladd family, sleeping on the floor of the living area in sleeping bags. Then sometime during 1980

and 1981, the apartment was completed.

When the Ladds moved into the log house at Rinconcito, a lady had been working for the Larsens as their housekeeper. She continued to work at the institute doing the cooking and housekeeping. One day, the Ladds asked her if she knew of anyone else who might be able to help out in their home. She said that she had a younger sister named Martina, but that she didn't really know how to keep house because she was just a teen and hadn't done that before.

John and Shirley hired Martina anyway. She learned quickly as Shirley taught her to do things the way she wanted them done. Since many homes in Mexico have dirt floors and do not have some of the things that the log house had, Shirley had to explain things to Martina. She learned quickly. Martina is a very quiet, unassuming lady who does her work and does not bother anyone, no matter how many people may be at the house. She is also very trustworthy. Martina has now worked



for the Ladds over thirty years.

Another couple who became part of the Ladd extended family was Buddy and Gladys Hearn, from De Witt, Arkansas. They were in that first building team that erected the walls on the prepared foundation. Buddy was an Arkansas farmer. One day he asked the Lord if there was something more that He wanted Buddy to do. Then he saw an article about building the clinic in Mexico. Buddy felt that God wanted him to go help with that project. He intended to go alone, but Gladys said she was going, too.

Then came the plans. Neither even had a birth certificate. They made the trip to Little Rock to try to get their birth certificates. When they came home with both certificates on the first try, they knew that the Lord had approved their plans. Buddy and Gladys had a grown son who could take over the farm while they were gone; two weeks was the plan. They crossed the border on July 15, 1979, after meeting more workers in McAllen. At the end of the two weeks, they were not finished so the Hearn's stayed almost another week. Still not being finished, they returned home for a couple of weeks before heading back down to Mexico. They made a total of five trips that first year in spite of saying they would never go back over those rough roads again.

Buddy and Gladys have become part of John and Shirley's family through an average of three trips per year every year until September 2008. By that time, Buddy was 82 and beginning to have a few health problems. They brought their camper on that first trip and on some after that. Eventually, Buddy and Gladys stayed with John and Shirley even when they hauled their own bed with them. There were times through the years when John and Shirley had to leave, and the Hearn's stayed to take care of their sons, Tim and Steven, while the Ladds were gone.

While Buddy worked on the building or did repairs on buildings in more recent years, Gladys cooked. The first trip every person was asked to contribute ten dollars per week to buy groceries. Then Shirley, Gladys, and Barbara Boyd shopped and prepared the meals. On subsequent trips Gladys supervised the food preparation while other ladies helped. All of the work groups ate together with the Ladds and the staff after the



*Construction team eating
in the log house*

clinic began to operate. Gladys also took a nurse's aide class so that she could help out in the clinic taking blood pressure and doing small things when she wasn't cooking.

The Hearn's have been involved in most of the building crews all through the years since that first one in 1979. Buddy would act as supervisor and Gladys was always the chief cook. They brought many items down with them each time, either to aid in the current building project or to help with the preparation of the meals. Their vehicle also served as transport for medications or anything else that needed to get to John and Shirley quickly at the time that the Hearn's were traveling. Of course, some things could be purchased more easily while in Mexico.

Another couple who became a big part of the Ladd's' extended family were Frances and Vernon Haynes. He came on one of the first building trips with a group from Arkansas. They later began going with a group from Prescott, Arkansas, to do eye clinics.

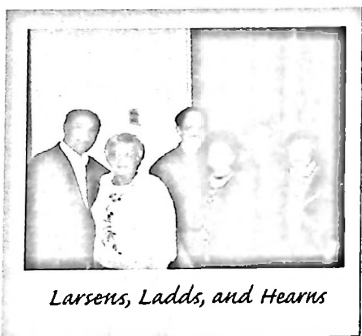
People Are People

In spite of the fact that many of the people who have come to help the Ladds at one time or another don't always speak the native language, they have been able to communicate with the people in the area. Sometimes even the Ladds have trouble speaking to the Huasteco people because some of the Huastecans don't speak Spanish. They have their own language. Nevertheless, through some words, a few hand signals, and much help from the Lord, they all make themselves understood through the language of Christian love.

All of these extended *family* members have become family to more than just the Ladds. They have all become family with each other. Many of them continue to stay in touch with people they met on their building trips. After meeting the

Larsens, the Hearn's and Joyce Gibson (a teacher to be mentioned later) sometimes brought them down to Mexico after Ray and Kay reached the point of not being able to make the trip by themselves.

Steve and Helen Simer are a Christian couple from Oregon. They found out about the clinic from their son-in-law's family. Since they worked half a year at a camp near Portland, Oregon, they had the other half a year available to do other things. They decided to volunteer around the clinic from November to April. They did that for many years and became part of the Ladds' extended family.



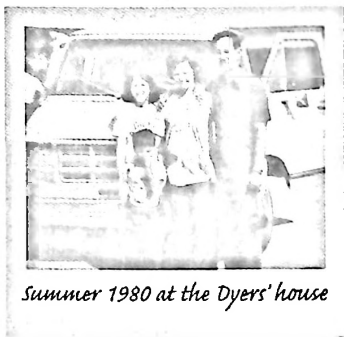
Larsens, Ladds, and Hearn's

Most groups never left Mexico empty-handed. One

favorite stop on the way back was to purchase special furniture and items that were hand-made in Mexico. Of course, the trailers that held supplies going into Mexico had much empty space to accommodate the new items. Often Shirley and John gave each member of the group some small token of remembrance of their trip to the property. They are the kind of host and hostess who don't look for others to bring them gifts, but they expect to give to their guests.

A typical Sunday in 1980 was a very long day involving a long road trip. The Ladds would awake around five in the morning to prepare to go to church in Huejutla, about a three-hour trip of approximately 120 miles. Everything would have been loaded into the van on Saturday night so that the family could begin as soon as possible. They had to travel over many rough roads and on a ferry to reach the Buddy Johnson home.

After arriving at the Johnsons' home, Shirley helped get everything prepared for lunch while Martha finished dressing her twin boys. Dr. Ladd taught the adult Bible study while the children had their own Sunday school classes. Sunday activities also included Shirley and Martha meeting with the Girls' Missionary Auxiliary while Dr. Ladd saw patients in a new office next door and Brother Buddy helped minister to the patients' needs.



Summer 1980 at the Dyers' house

Sunday evening, everyone enjoyed praise and worship at

People Are People

the mission. After a long, blessed day, the Ladd family piled back into their van to return to Rinconcito. Soon they hoped that the Lord would provide a mission closer to them. In the meantime, they were thankful for their missionary family, which included the Johnsons.

Many people through the years have been accepted into the family of John and Shirley Ladd — some because of birth, some marriage, and others just by being Christians willing to be used of God in His work in Mexico. As work began on the clinic and as the Christian family grew, the Ladds' immediate family was also growing. Steven Phillip Ladd was born on November 14, 1980. Steven arrived weighing a little over nine pounds. "Nana" Ladd stayed five weeks to help out. After she returned to the states, the children sometimes helped out with their sibling. Melanie was old enough to care for the newborn. Even Tim could do some things to help his mom and sister with his brother.



During the construction phase of the clinic, new

missionaries visited. Ricky and Priscilla Williams planned to begin work in Mexico. They checked out the area to see if that was where God wanted them to be. They finally determined that they would stay in Aquismon, a nearby town to the El Rinconcito property. Mrs. Williams was also a nurse so she would be able to work at the clinic. By the time they settled in there, they also added to the growing missionary family. Thus, the new baby in the Ladd household would have a close friend in the Williams family.

When the Ladds first moved to the log house at El Rinconcito, they had no electricity except through a generator a couple of hours a day. They also had no telephone. They did, however, have running water in the house. The generator ran on gasoline. They would fill it up during the time that they were up and moving around in the evening. Then at night they would just leave it running until it ran out of fuel. It was an exciting day when they finally got electricity in 1981, although they did not remain in that house much longer.

The Bible institute was starting and the house was needed for classrooms, dining facilities, and offices. John and Shirley moved the

family into a two-room adobe house with a cinder block kitchen outside. They had no running water unless you considered the running across the road to get it. They stored their household goods in the nurse's apartment, which had been constructed



because this was supposed to be a temporary two-month arrangement.

By this time, Girls Missionary Auxiliary groups were coming every year to visit in Mexico. In spite of the small home, Shirley often cooked the meals for the group while they were visiting the clinic and the surrounding area. She made everyone feel like family even when they had never met them before. In the early days of the clinic, Shirley often cooked lunch every day for the whole clinic staff. Steven said that the family and staff (eighteen in all at that time) would sit around the table and discuss the odd cases of the day, often in graphic detail. Shirley would sometimes make faces or get up from the table when the discussion was too detailed. And, of course, John and others sometimes made it that way just to get to her. But the children remember the family meals together as the best times of their day because they would all feel like family, even when guests were present, as they talked and laughed around the table.

The Ladds have seldom been able to go to family reunions because of the distance and their busy lives, but one day they will have the largest family reunion anyone has ever seen. There is no telling how many lives have been touched and changed from going to Mexico or from meeting John and Shirley at the clinic or elsewhere. However, the reunion isn't just for the Ladds and their family/friends; it's for all Christians. As the song says, that will surely be a glad reunion day!

All People Need Family

Much has been said and written through the years about the fact that God created the family unit even before He established the church. I think that's significant, although as you've already surmised, I don't think that family stops at those who are related strictly by our physical DNA. One definition of

family is "all those descended from a common ancestor." That is also true of our spiritual family because as born again believers we all descend from God, who is our Father, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

God puts directions for families in Scripture. The Father's relationship with Jesus, the Son, and that in turn with the church, is the analogy for our earthly families. God should be the foundation of the family. In many marriage ceremonies, the point is made that the home is not just a coming together of two people to make a family, but that it is a triangle with God at the head. Notice that the triangle cannot be a triangle without all three sides. A husband and wife cannot have a proper relationship with each other if they do not have the right relationship with God. Joshua knew this. What does Joshua 24:15 say that Joshua's family needed?

God instructs men to love their wives as Christ loves the church in Ephesians 5:23-31. Name some ways that Christ loves the church.

Wives were created to be helpers for their own husbands. Check out Genesis 2:18. That means that women should complete or complement their own husbands. Many women get upset, but these verses do not mean that men in general or even husbands in particular have the right to dictate to women. Submission is the act of giving all of yourself to another, yielding humbly and lovingly. Of course, the whole relationship is based on Christ's

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relationship with the church. Just as God does not force the church to do anything, but the church makes her own choices, so the husband is not to force the wife to do things that would be harmful to the family. Hopefully in both cases, the decisions are made only with prayer and much reliance on God as the head of the church or the family, whichever is involved. Love is the key.

Children also have a place in the family. First, look at the responsibility of the parents to their children. Some people may think that the instructions in Deuteronomy 6:6-12 apply only to the Israelites, but they are good for parents now as well. Spiritual teachings should not be left up to the church. That should start at home and continue on a regular basis. What can you do at home to help your children, grandchildren, or others to learn about God?

What does Proverbs 22:6 and 15 instruct you to do to help children be all they can be?

Children also have a role to maintain in the family. What instruction does Ephesians 6:1-3 have for them and what promise does it make?

In this chapter, much has been said about the family that we have as a result of our relationship with Jesus Christ. There

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are specific instances in the Bible that show this as well. What relationships are mentioned in these scriptures, in spite of the fact that these people were not actually related by blood in these ways?

Matthew 12:46-50 _____

John 19:26-27 _____

1 Timothy 1:1-2 _____

1 Timothy 5:1-2 _____

Some people treat strangers and others outside their immediate family better than they do their family. They let their hair down with family and don't mind being in grumpy moods and sometimes downright mean to family when they wouldn't dream of doing the same thing to those outside the family. The same sometimes holds true about our Christian family. We often hurt those people, maybe without even realizing it, and just assume they will get over it. John and Shirley don't appear to be like this.

What are some ways that you may have been this way with others?

What could you do to correct the problem if you have been guilty of doing this?

In Shirley's Own Words

Our family spent many happy hours with them [Ray and Kay Larsen] during those visits, at the dining table and elsewhere learning more about the Bible, as well as laughing at Ray and Kay's keen sense of humor. We always felt totally accepted and loved by them from the first time we met, and they (as well as their family members we met and have grown to love) became family. Ray and Kay, John and Diane, Erik and Marc, were all able to attend a ceremony/service years later of dedication of the eye clinic building to the Larsens. Many of their friends/coworkers contributed to the completion of the building and a number were able to attend that day. It was named Edificio Don Ramón y Doña Cata, (Ray never liked the idea, didn't feel worthy of the honor, but he was outnumbered!) in their honor. Ray died a number of years ago; Kay passed away in her 90s in early July of 2010 (email to author, October 1, 2010).

People Are People

*“Si vivimos, para el Señor vivimos, y si morimos,
para el Señor morimos, sea que vivamos o que muramos,
del Señor somos.”*

Romans 14:8

(as inscribed on
a plaque hanging
in the clinic)

People Need Hope

The hope of that scripture is what the patients at *El Buen Samaritano* cling to as they await their appointments with the doctors. A copy of this verse hangs in the waiting area where all patients come for any medical condition. By the very atmosphere of the clinic, everyone is aware that things are different there, and it's because of the hope that Christians have that whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Although the supposed two months in the two-room house continued longer, Shirley never gave up hope that they would move elsewhere. They did, after two years in the two-room house. However, they never let the size of the house stand in the way of their entertaining. In fact, it was not unusual for them to have overnight guests of other missionaries who were either passing through or staying in the area for a while.



Log house at Rinconcito

The little, white two-room house was made of adobe, but the kitchen out back was constructed out of cement blocks. In fact, the kitchen was much nicer than the house where they slept. There was also a bathroom

about forty feet behind the rest of the house. Of course, there was no running water, other than that received by running across the street to the landlord's house. He had a well from which the Ladds were allowed to pump water. The bathroom did have a commode that they flushed by pouring a bucket of water in it. Shirley says it was not "the good old days!"



Joe and Belinda Caudle became

missionaries to Mexico in 1982. Although they were going to an area hours away from the Ladds, they spent a short time in Aquismon. Of course, they stayed with Ricky and Priss Williams most of the time because Ricky and Belinda are brother and sister. However, they were also close to the Ladds. In fact, sometimes the Williams would run out of water where they lived in Aquismon and everyone would have to go to the Ladds' small house to bathe since they had access to well water from their landlord.

Belinda Caudle recalls that Shirley taught her how to take a bath in a bucket. Shirley would heat the water and put it in the bucket. Then she would hand the bucket to the person with instructions on how to take a bath in a bucket! Belinda found this to be very important for her survival skills in Mexico. Of course, Shirley's having grown up on a farm with no electricity or running water when she was very young gave her the experience to know how to do these things. God certainly knows how to prepare a person for his or her future.

When the first clinic building was finished, they decided

to build the two-room apartment that would serve as the nurse's quarters. It was also sometimes used for the English teachers who came to teach the Ladds' and others' children, or for doctors, or whoever needed it at the time. About that same time, work began on the Bible institute, which shared the Rinconcito property with the clinic. Many of the same workers who helped build the clinic also worked on the institute.



Clinic grounds in the early years

The Bible institute opened the latter part of 1981. As the institute students learned more of the gospel and how to share it, they also saw the clinic and its ministry at work. Once when the clinic was closed, three adults came wanting to buy medicine. They asked some of the institute students if they could stay. While the people waited, the students led them to Christ. Later the students visited the village of those people. The clinic and the institute began to combine their efforts to help the people of the area both physically and spiritually. In 1983 the dental office of the clinic also opened, thanks to Texas GMA funds, thus making one more way that the people of the area could get the help they needed.

The Ladds began to look for a larger house and located one above a store. However, after having a verbal agreement before they left for Texas, they returned to find it rented to other people. A year later, the house was again empty, and John and Shirley rented it for a year. At the end of that year the owner decided to sell the house, the store, and the entire property

together. However, the Ladds knew they could not possibly buy the whole property.

One night, Ricky Williams came over with a brainstorm. The mission also needed more room. The store could easily be turned into the building for the church, and John and Shirley could buy the house upstairs. John and Shirley decided to make that their home, and, in fact, it remains their home today. This was not a small white house. It was much larger and they painted it bright orange, gold, green, and blue to match many of the other buildings around Aquismon. Although their living quarters occupy only the second floor, the house is very large. There is a living room, dining room, and kitchen, along with three bedrooms and a very large back patio. There is also a small guest room across the patio from the kitchen.



Shirley in her kitchen



The Ladds' back patio



Shirley decorates with local Huastecan art

They also have three bathrooms altogether! One thing, however, is missing. The Ladds moved into the home in 1983, when Steven was only two years old.

The first thing he said about it was, "There's no dirt." Steven missed the large area he had played in at the little white house. John proceeded to get a tub and fill it with dirt. Then the youngest member of the family could play in the dirt to his heart's content.



The Ladds' house is the upstairs and the mission is downstairs

The house also has a room for a live-in servant across the back patio. However, Martina refused to live there. She preferred to stay with the majority of her family in the area behind Rinconcito. Usually she arrives at the clinic to find out what they need done that day. When they need her, she goes into Aquismon to clean and sometimes cook for the Ladds. Then she returns home. She also comes from time to time when they are in the States so that she can take care of the property and plants while they are away. Thus, the live-in servant's quarters has become a storage room.



View from the Ladds' front porch

People Are People

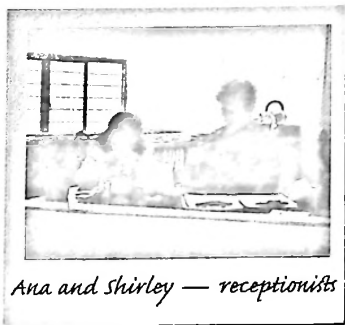
A typical clinic day starts at about 8:45 with patients lined up waiting to see the doctor. If it's raining, as many days are, there may be as many as twenty huddling under the roof in front of the Hearn building. Most of these people have walked or ridden buses for an hour or more to get there. While they wait, the counselor has a brief Bible study/devotional with those who are in line at that time. Then the staff members have their own devotional. Each one takes turns leading the devotional for a week, but it's really more of a discussion of the scripture than it is just one person's ideas.

After the staff devotional, Ana collects the appointment cards for those with scheduled visits, or she gives the patient a number if no visit was

scheduled. Ana (and Shirley when she's there) then has to pull their charts. Next, Javier and a helper check the person's vital signs and do any blood work or urinalysis that the doctors may have ordered for the patient. At that point, the person is sent to the Larsen building where he or she will wait

to be called by the doctor for the consult. Bibles and Christian tracts are available for those who can read while they wait. However, most watch the television that is hooked up to a VCR. Most days a Christian movie is playing, in Spanish, of course. Other times, a nutrition film may be shown.

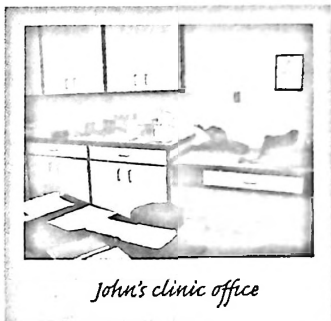
Both Dr. Juan and Dr. Honoria call for their own patients. Most times, Shirley helps John after she finishes with



Ana and Shirley — receptionists

the reception duties. Both doctors also have Christian tracts lying on their desks. After the patient sees the doctor, he may have to return to the nurse for injections or a breathing treatment or something else. He will also usually have to go to the pharmacy for medications. When the doctor feels that there is a need for spiritual counseling, Jorge, the counselor sees the patient. The counselor is also available to talk to any patient who comes to him on his own about his spiritual condition, although anyone in the clinic may also discuss this as well.

As the patients go from the reception building to the doctor's waiting area, they pass through beautifully groomed grounds around all of the clinic buildings. Daily one sees Aurelio doing his work keeping the grounds beautiful. Roses



moon even in January. At the right times of the year oranges cover the trees. Almonds fall from the almond trees, but the squirrels scoop them up almost as fast as they fall. Other brightly colored flowers cover the arroyo over a walk or beside the trail from one area to the next. The patients' families wander the area while they wait. Very few patients come alone to see the doctor. Most bring at least one other member, and many bring the whole family.



About ten thirty or eleven in the morning, Dionicia, the housekeeper of the clinic, has fixed a small snack for the staff. It may be simply fixings for tacos or possibly enchiladas. (By the way, an enchilada is simply a tortilla that has been dipped in sauce.

It may or may not be filled with anything.) Ricardo's daughter Nice sometimes volunteers in the kitchen as well. Sometimes all the staff enjoys their snacks at the same time, with much teasing and laughter.



Other days, they come in one at a time because they are so busy that they don't have time to linger. The patients don't seem to mind this break because Tamar,

Aurelio's wife, sells snacks, such as tacos and juice outside. She seldom has anything left by lunch.

The last stop for the patient is a visit to the pharmacy. Javier takes his place in the pharmacy whenever Ana finishes with the receptionist duties and can take over doing the vital signs and lab work. "Because the clinic is registered with the Mexican government as a non-profit organization, a set fee cannot be charged, but all patients are asked and expected to give a volunteer donation in accordance with their economic possibilities. Sometimes a patient cannot give money, but eggs, fruit, or a live chicken may be left instead."¹ The patients pay at the pharmacy if they are able. While I was in Mexico, I received a sack of greens from one tiny lady. She had a sack for each person who helped her during the day. Martina cooked them for our lunch the next day.

On a normal day the clinic staff will see between thirty and fifty patients. The numbers were greater in the early years, before the government built public health clinics in nearby small towns and villages. Numbers will also be higher when there are visiting specialists. On those days, the clinic may see as many as 250 people in a day, just as BMMI clinics see several hundred patients daily. A normal clinic day does not end until all the patients have been seen. Sometimes it may be as early as 1:30 in the afternoon, or it may be as late as 4:30. As in any health-related situation,



Dentist Arnulfo working

much depends on what kinds of cases the patients bring in on any particular day. Sometimes there are emergency situations, and other times everything seems very routine.

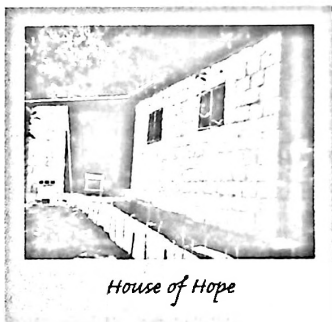
After patients have made a profession of faith, they often return to the counselor for further Bible studies. Sometimes Bible study centers are begun in those patients' homes. From there, missions have been started. Many people have received spiritual healing from the need to get physical healing and from people in the clinic with the desire to heal the whole person and give them hope for eternal life.

The clinic is just that, a clinic for outpatient visits. They do not have a hospital. However, especially in the early days, there was sometimes a need for people to stay for treatments that might last several days. Because the people came from so many areas, often walking for hours or over a day to get to the clinic, it was not feasible for them to go home and have to return the next day or even the day after that. Those who had family nearby sometimes stayed with them. But often the patients had no one close, thus they had no way to remain for treatments. Because of the need of a place for those people to stay so that they could be at the clinic several days in a row, Dr. Ladd and the staff decided they needed to build rooms where patients could remain on the premises for several days.

Buddy Hearn, along with some others, came and did much of the work on the building. It has room for ten patients to stay for daily needs to be met until they can go back home. Sometimes it might be a tuberculosis patient who has to have daily injections. Other times, it could be a diabetic in need of getting his glucose under control before returning home with the proper medication. Some patients might be dehydrated and need more than an hour or two of intravenous replacement of fluids. Whatever the need, this building provided hope for the patients

to get what they needed without so much trouble.

Casa de Esperanza, or House of Hope, was finished in 1986. It truly did provide hope for those who would not have been able to receive the medical treatment they needed if they couldn't stay in the House of Hope. And since a nurse or doctor usually was living in the apartment, then there was a person on call in case of an emergency. This was helpful with John and Shirley living in Aquismon. In recent years, these rooms have



not been used as they were intended. Better transportation and travel conditions, combined with the addition of more clinics and hospitals in some of the remote areas, have eliminated the need to have overnight patients.

Before the House of Hope was finished, a doctor came to work with John. Her name was Melodie Knicely. Her parents had been missionaries in northern Mexico, and she came to do work at the clinic. Since the nurse and the teacher were living in the apartment, Dr. Knicely actually lived in the original clinic building. When John and Shirley had to be gone for a month, he left Dr. Knicely in charge with instructions about various patients and other things. One of those things was the use of the Volkswagen and the house in Aquismon if she needed it. Of course, John told Melodie that the VW was rather odd at times and it had no lights or windshield wipers.

The first weekend, Melodie and a friend dropped by

the Ladd's house after a day of shopping in Aquismon. Before long, a man came looking for the doctor. Although John seldom delivered babies, this man was insistent that his sister-in-law was in need of a doctor. They took the VW up the mountain and brought the woman back to the clinic simply because that was easier than trying to drive back up the mountain (part of the trip was also on foot). Since it was a first baby, the labor dragged on, but it was obvious that the baby was going to be breech and would not turn. Finally, Dr. Knicely had to take the lady to a hospital for a Caesarean section, but she almost had to deliver the baby in the VW!

During the eighties and into the nineties, many GMA groups from the states came to visit Mexico. Whichever GMA group had raised the most money for the annual project won a trip to visit the missionaries. During all that time, they visited the Johnsons as well as the Ladds. When the GMAs came to Rinconcito, Dr. Ladd enjoyed treating them to a day of fun. Shirley, sometimes with the help of others, always prepared a Mexican feast for the girls and their chaperones. Then everyone traveled over winding roads until they arrived at a beautiful, clear river fed by many springs. The girls delighted in swimming and eating paletas, fresh fruit popsicles. They also learned about the mission work and the Huastecan people.

Although they had been having GMA groups in the individual missions for a while, the girls had not organized into a national group. On April 4, 1982, the national Girls' Missionary Auxiliary of Mexico, the *Sociedad Auxiliar Misionera* (SAM) was organized. The GMA of Texas sent t-shirts with the GMA symbol as gifts to the girls in Mexico. Mrs. Priscilla Williams and Melanie Ladd were elected as some of the first officers for the group. There were girls in attendance from all over the country, wherever the BMAA had missions or churches.

In February 1985, on a Sunday, a Huastecan man came to the house to get John. He said that a lady in the country had just had a baby and needed him. When John went into the dirt-floored bamboo hut with a thatched roof, he saw a baby in bed with the lady, but there was another baby just lying there without the umbilical cord cut or anything. Both babies were very cold. John asked if he could take the babies to the clinic to get their temperatures regulated. He was afraid that they might die from hypothermia. He told the mother that she needed to come to the clinic daily to feed the twins. Back at the clinic, the nurse Chayo and Joyce Gibson, the Ladds' current teacher, helped out with the tiny boys. They named them Esau and Jacob. However, the mother did not come to the clinic as she was supposed to. That meant extra duty for anyone willing to help out. Two days stretched into three months. When Chayo had to leave, the twins came to stay with John and Shirley. The Ladd children immediately took to the babies and wanted to adopt them, but the Ladds felt that was not best.

Because the parents already had several children, they just left the twin boys for the clinic to care for. During the day, the babies spent time at the clinic with everyone pitching in to help, and they went home with the Ladds at night. Finally, the parents came to take them home. However, they were back and forth to the clinic many times over the course of the next year. One would get diarrhea or some other ailment. He would stay until he was better, then the other one would get sick. It was a vicious cycle. The babies seemed to thrive and be fine at the clinic, but would immediately be sick again when back at home. When the Ladds were gone, others, such as Dr. Knicely or Mrs. Gibson, would fill in to get the babies well. During this time, the clinic staff did discover that peanut butter was a good treatment for diarrhea. Of course, at that time, it was not easy to get peanut butter in Mexico. Thank goodness Shirley always had a supply from the States.

Finally, when the birth mother was expecting again, it was obvious that the parents were not going to be able to keep the twins healthy. Although the parents wanted John and Shirley to keep the boys, they wanted to be able to come and go in the twins' lives when they pleased. They just didn't want the responsibility. God led John to remember some friends from his time in medical school. The couple had no children of their own, but they were very involved in children's ministry where he pastored in Mexico. At first, no one agreed, but God brought everyone around and the friends adopted the boys. It was a sad day for the Ladds and the whole clinic staff, but it was a day of hope for the twins as they left with their new family.

About the time that the Ladd family moved into the second floor above the mission, they also instituted a family tradition — Friday night as family night. No one in the family was to make any other plans. No one was to come home with them for the night or plan any other activity other than to be together as a family. By this point in time, the Ladds had received their residence papers. With that came the ability to bring household goods into the country. They brought a washer and dryer, a freezer, a television, a VCR, and John's mother's piano.

Some Friday nights, the family would play games or have a special meal. Other times they might go out to eat. They occasionally dressed up or did something else special. They might also enjoy a musical night. Many times they watched videos. They had no television reception, so the point of the television was only to watch videos. A good friend from the states found out what family television programs they might like to see. She would tape the Bill Cosby sitcom or a long series or other things that the Ladds were interested in. Then she shipped the videotapes to John and Shirley. Thus, the family often watched those videos. Although the family made a point of not planning anything else,

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many times a knock at the door or a phone call interrupted family night.

One night when John and Shirley had been visiting Ricky and Priss Williams, Shirley stepped down from the yard to get into the car as they were leaving. When she did, she stepped wrong and heard a crack. She knew immediately that she probably had a broken ankle. Michael Gambill, who was visiting, along with a friend, took her into town to get it checked out. It turned out that she needed surgery to put pins in. What should have been an outpatient surgery, turned out to be much more because the ankle got infected. This happened shortly after the time of the big earthquake in Mexico City. Shirley spent several days in the hospital. God planned it all because it gave her a great opportunity to witness to everyone in the hospital with gospel tracts featuring photos of the earthquake. They were all concerned because of the earthquake, and she gave them hope of what the Lord could do in their lives. Shirley returned home, but the ankle still did not heal correctly until a visiting friend explained what she could do at home for therapy and it finally healed.

People Need Hope

Many people in today's world think of hope as just wishing something would happen. However, the biblical idea of hope is the confidence or assurance that something will happen. I heard one pastor use this acrostic for hope: **H**aving **O**nly **P**ositive **E**xpectations. Christians have a special hope. It is that hope, along with the hope of better physical conditions, which Dr. Ladd and all those at the clinic in Mexico want to bring to the people of the area.

Read Colossians 1:3-6. How does faith in Christ provide hope for people?

People Are People

A Christian's hope is grounded in the past from the day he first accepted Christ as his Savior. Describe the time when your hope first began.

Present hope produces loving actions and fruit for our Lord. What have you done or can you do to show others the hope that you have in Christ?

Our future hope is laid up in _____, waiting for our arrival.

Our hope should only be put in _____ if we follow Psalm 78:7.

According to Psalm 71:14, how should we hope?

Paraphrase Psalm 119:114-116

People Are People

Romans 8:24-26 gives good advice regarding the hope that we Christians have. Then 1 Peter 3:15 talks about always being ready to give an answer to those who want to know about the hope that we have. John and Shirley have done that for years. They are always ready to share the Word of God with anyone who asks, no matter where they are or who may be asking.

In Shirley's Own Words

The patients have more choices now for healthcare — some much closer than the clinic. However, they say they continue to come because something is different about the clinic. That something is God's love that shows through all the staff as they minister to the people (interview with author, January 9, 2012).

In Others' Words

People came into the clinic with cataracts so complete that they were blind. A week later these people could see. One patient when asked if she could see said that she could and what she saw was beautiful.

I saw more than just physical healing while I was there. Dr. Ladd and his wife truly love the people. The lives of the natives are important to them: their personal problems, their concerns and their hardships. So many times Chayo would sit with a patient she was treating and just talk to them. She talked to them about their children, about their family, and the problems that had been resolved since their last visit to the clinic. The clinic in Rinconcito affects so many lives. I saw sickness healed, worry absolved, and eternal life gained through the efforts of these missionaries to the sick.

Jesus said that it is not the well who need a physician, but the sick. Clinica El Buen Samaritano provides that healing and I thank God for the opportunity to see such an amazing work.²

From My Point of View

I enjoyed helping at the clinic during the week that I spent in Aquismon. God timed everything perfectly, in spite of my concern that I was making the trip much later in this writing process than I had wanted to. I also had tried to go with groups. Now I realize that God took me there the best way possible. I got to see everything firsthand through my own eyes, not clouded by others' opinions while I worked with them. Instead, I worked with the staff and feel that I was really getting to know them by the time I left.

Normally Tamar's daughter, Ana Lidia, volunteers at the clinic, but she was on vacation working in Mexico City the week that I was there. That allowed me to do the job that Ana Lidia usually does. I called the patients back and weighed them before turning them over to either Javier or Ana to take the vital signs. Then after the break I went to the pharmacy and counted pills. I also was allowed to observe in all areas. I don't know if the staff thought I helped them or not, but I got a blessing for doing it. I felt so inadequate that I couldn't do more. I speak only a little Spanish. Sometimes the patients would try to talk to me and I would panic and revert to saying "Hablo español muy poquito."

One of the biggest impressions of the clinic was the calm and peaceful atmosphere. It was not the typical doctor's office I am used to where I wait impatiently for thirty minutes or an hour before being seen. The patients waited quietly and patiently, sometimes the whole day. Yet, they remained polite and calm the entire time. I'm sure the hope they receive from the spiritual atmosphere is one reason.

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1. John Ladd, "Welcome to the Good Samaritan Clinic of Mexico," *The Gleaner* (March-April 2003): 10.
 2. Sarah Ross, "The Gift of Life," *The Gleaner* (September 2001): 9.

*“Ye shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free.”*

John 8:32

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth,
and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

John 14:6

People Need Truth

Everyone needs the Truth in life, but many in the world know nothing about Jesus Christ. John and Shirley Ladd hope to change that in Mexico, if only in a small way, through their ministry there. They have already been doing so for over forty years. Although the clinic was not established that long ago, that did not stop the Ladds from ministering every chance they got. They continue to do so today.

“Medical missions has as its purpose to help meet the physical needs of an individual as a means of carrying out Christ’s example of love and compassion. Medical services should not be a bait by which we say ‘in exchange for medical aid you should adhere to my religious teaching.’ Yes, this ministry often results in individuals accepting Christ as Savior, but only as the Spirit moves.”¹

Good Samaritan Clinic sees many patients on a daily basis. At the beginning, most of them were not Christians, and they believed various superstitions about what made them sick and how they could get well. Through much treatment, years of education, many nutrition classes, and last, but certainly not least, coming to know Jesus as their personal Savior, many of those same patients are in much better health, both physically and spiritually.

Dr. Ladd and the staff at *Clinica El Buen Samaritano* do not shove Christ down anyone’s throat. Rather, they love the people and care for them so much that the people can’t help but

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see Christ in their lives and want the same relationship in their own lives. Through the years, this has taken much love and many doses of the Truth to bring about the changes in everyone's lives. Not only have the lives of the patients been changed, but the lives of the staff, including John and Shirley, have been changed as well.

When the clinic first opened, John was the only physician. One nurse, Rebeca Albarran, also doubled as the receptionist. (Shirley has also done the job of receptionist.) John often did the lab work and such himself. As the practice grew, so did the staff. Of course, they saw many patients in the early years as well, but now there are regular patients that they have seen for many years, and it has become more like a family practice. Although the clinic does not charge fees, they do accept donations for services rendered. Sometimes that comes in the form of eggs, fruit, or even a live chicken rather than money.

Not long after the clinic opened, a man walked up to the clinic with a bundle in his hands. He asked, "Do you treat clothes?" John understood his words, but did not understand his meaning. Finally, the question became clear. It seems that a young lady in the family was sick and the man wanted John to *treat* her clothes so that when she put them on she would get well. John explained that he did not do that and offered to see the patient herself if the man would bring her to the clinic. Instead, the man went on his way down the road toward the local witch's house.

As mentioned, John sometimes did his own lab work at the beginning, so he was stumped one day when the specimens he received turned out to be dirt instead of human specimens. The man wanted them to be hexed so that he could toss them onto someone's land and give them bad luck. Again, he was actually looking for the local witch's house down the road.

Sometimes a situation that at first the staff thought might be one of these kinds of cases has turned out to be a real physical ailment. Once a man came to the clinic saying, "There's a stick in my hip." Priscilla Williams, the nurse at that particular time, showed him to the examining room where John could hear all about his problem. The man said that he had been working in his field a few days prior when he fell onto a stick that punctured his hip and that part of it was still there. The man had already seen another doctor who assured him that there was no stick, only an infected wound.



Dr. Juan, as John is often called, has learned that his patients know their body better than anyone else, so he began to probe with forceps. After a half hour or more of probing and being told to move a little more a certain way, the man said, "That's it!" John thought he was probably only feeling a bone, but he pulled out a stick about four inches long with a diameter about like a cigar! They sent the man on his way after flushing out the wound. The man has remained a regular patient for over thirty years!

Many of the Huastecan people did not understand medicine. Instead, they believed in many superstitions, similar to what early settlers in the United States did when they believed in old wives' tales. The clinic staff has worked diligently to overcome these false beliefs and teach the people the truth about sanitary

conditions, good nutrition, and healthy choices in their lives.

However, it has not always been easy to make the patients and their families understand what is best for them. One case is the man with the bleeding stomach ulcer. After two days and nights of constant intravenous medicine and even a blood transfusion, Dr. Ladd asked for the family to come in. He explained in both Spanish and Huastecan, so there would be no mistaking what he had to say. Dr. Juan, as most patients call him, explained that the man would die if they did not move him to the government hospital for surgery. The family said they understood, but they took him home to die instead of going for treatment. Two days later, John and Shirley saw the funeral procession parade in front of their house.

Not all are resistant to the truth, however. One lady walked to the clinic and was unable to explain her condition. She stared blankly as her husband told her history. She had tuberculosis, as many patients do. Usually the clinic does not have much TB medication on hand at one time because the government has a national program for tuberculosis. In a rare situation, the Lord allowed the clinic to have two and a half months of medication on hand at that time. They began to treat the lady at two-week intervals. Each visit, she was slightly improved. After two months, the lady arrived smiling and over eight pounds heavier. She appeared to be cured, although only six months of treatment and subsequent tests would prove for sure.

The best thing about the lady's miracle was that she came from a village that had been closed to the gospel. However, as a result of her cure, the door was opened to the Truth. Others there also began to take note. God heals both physically and spiritually. Occasionally patients will come to the clinic without a physical need, just to see the counselor or talk to someone about the Bible.

Not everyone who comes to the clinic can read. In some cases, the children who are able to read will tell the adults what the tracts and the Bible say. Therefore, one particular way to witness to villages was through Christian films. Caring people from the states donated the projector, generator, and films so that the Ladds and the Williamses would be able to carry the gospel to outlying areas where many had not yet heard about Jesus Christ and were possibly unable to read about Him for themselves. Usually the door would have been opened through one man, one woman, or a family who had attended the clinic. Many have found the Truth after one of these films.

The nutrition program began in 1988 with Carlos Cano as director. At that time, fifty families, each with four to eight members, received supplement foods such as powdered milk, eggs, beans, potatoes, and oil each week because one or more members of the family was malnourished and the head of the family was unable to provide enough food. The program was designed specifically for malnourished people.



Outdoor kitchen

Many were young children or elderly who had no one to help them with supplying food. As families began to have adequate nutrition, they would be taken off the list and new ones added.

The nutrition program also involves a teaching element. They even built a demonstration kitchen just for that. The ladies and even men while they are waiting to see the doctor are taught

how to prepare foods in the most nutritious way. They also learn about sanitary conditions and how unclean food and preparation sites can lead to parasites, which is one of the major problems in the area. Laura Lara has now been the nutritionist for over twenty years. She enjoys teaching the other ladies how best to feed their families.

People arrive at the clinic in all sorts of ways. It is not unusual to see a wheelbarrow ambulance being pushed by neighbors or relatives

to bring a patient to the doctor. Another contraption that is used is a straight chair attached to a friend's back by a strap around the friend's forehead, with the patient sitting in the chair. Many walk or ride donkeys. Some take long bus rides. Depending on where the person comes from, the trip could take several hours or even more than one day to reach the clinic.

Many women complain with aches and pains up and down their spinal columns and in their heads, arms, and legs. This is actually the result of degenerate joint disease caused by their lifestyle. If you carried



a five-gallon bucket of water from the river or local well to your home on a daily basis and cut and hauled the firewood for cooking all the meals, you might have it too. They generally don't carry the bucket or load of wood in their hands. The buckets sit on their heads and the wood on their backs. Not much can be done about the problem without a change in lifestyle.



Dr. Ladd with clinic patient

John and the staff can treat many problems on a regular basis, but they are not equipped to do surgery. At one time, they also were not able to take care of eye or teeth problems. However, those things have changed. Now there is a dentist on staff and regular eye clinics are held each year.

There has now been a dentist for several years. Arnulfo is a full-time dentist. He makes his own appointments and takes care of his patients on his own. They do not come through the regular reception area. His office is in the original clinic building and the patients wait on the porch of that building until he calls for them. I observed him pulling a tooth while I was there. He talks to the patients while he works and jokes with them to keep the tension down for those who need it. But he also can explain the gospel.

Through the years, of course, the clinic has added to the facilities and to the equipment. Many people have donated equipment obtained from closing hospitals or facilities in the United States; in other situations when facilities purchased new

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equipment the older equipment was sent to Mexico. In some instances, new things have been purchased specifically for the Good Samaritan Clinic, such as surgical microscopes and a laser for the eye surgeries.

An organization that has helped tremendously in this area is Others, Inc. This group was founded in 1995 as a result of a vision that the late Lynn Stephens had. He and Coy Quesenbury, along with the late Ted Johnson, got together with John Ladd and discussed the fact that the clinic needed many things that were so expensive it was not feasible for the BMAA to supply them. They tried to think of a way to raise money that would not involve the BMAA directly and yet would allow people to give to a charitable organization to help Dr. Ladd. They knew there were resources outside the BMAA that could be tapped. The sole purpose of Others, Inc., is to provide equipment and medications, to support special projects, to provide scholarship money for indigenous students, and to give bonuses to the staff.

John Larsen, son of the Wycliffe missionaries who occupied Rinconcito before the clinic, is a member of the board. He has also served as president. John Mullin, who assumed the presidency from him, is also on the board. They attend the same church. Both men have sons who became doctors. Marc Larsen and Peter Mullin have each worked with John Ladd in the clinic several times through the years. Nancy Smith Marchant, sister to Karen Smith Gallegos, is also on the board.

Another area where Others, Inc., has helped is through special training. They have enabled some of the staff to go to seminars and to learn new techniques that are aiding patients at the clinic. One example is when Dr. Honoria learned about giving injections to help arthritis patients. Many people have trouble with their joints from carrying heavy loads on their heads, shoulders, or backs for years. These injections give them relief

from constant pain. That wouldn't have been possible without the help of many people who contributed through Others, Inc.

In October 2011, Others, Inc., sponsored several of the staff members to come to Texarkana for a twenty-year reunion of the clinic and people who have worked at Rinconcito through the years. I was privileged to attend and meet some of the most loving and most humble people that day. By the time we ate, there were probably a hundred present, sixteen having come from Mexico. A small presentation had been made prior to the lunch, including the staff members from Mexico singing *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus* in English, Huastecan, and Spanish. They were all glad to have learned the Truth from the Ladds and others in Mexico who have so lovingly shared with them through the years.

All People Need the Truth

Honesty, or the truth, is much admired in everyone. But the Truth, Jesus Christ, is vital to life, eternal life. Then once a person has that Truth in her life, it is so important to maintain a truthful life so that others are able to see the Truth without it being hidden by lies and Satan's trappings.

What does Joshua 24:14 say about serving God?

The only way to serve God that way is to first know His truth by studying the Bible. What term does 2 Timothy 2:15 use to identify the Bible?

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How can we share the Truth with others if we don't know or understand it ourselves? I'm not talking here about salvation. We discussed this earlier. But even after we're saved, we need to be able to share with others and answer the questions that they may have. How can we if we don't know the answers already? Surely, we never know all the answers, but we need to study so that we do understand the basics and can relate those without stumbling. We also should not be ashamed to say, "I don't know, but I'll be glad to try to find out." Then we should continue to look for the truthful answer to the particular question.

Knowing the Truth also means being truthful in all things. This comes not only from the things we say and do, but also from what we don't say or the attitude that we convey. Sometimes we hedge or allow people to think one thing when we know the truth is something else. Even our tone of voice may relay a lie when we are trying to hedge from telling the truth. John tells us repeatedly in his first epistle to obey God if we truly love Him. Then he reiterates how important truth is in all three of his epistles. Read all three short books to glean from them the truths of God's Word.

Many people live by an old saying, "What they don't know can't hurt them." However, that is not true. Many times what people don't know can hurt them greatly. Just as not knowing the truth about the superstitions hurt some of the Huastecan people, not knowing the Truth of Jesus Christ will lead to eternal damnation. It is important that we share God's Truth just as the Ladds have shared it all through the years. You know someone right now who may not know that Truth. Will you share it?

In John's Own Words

Here in Mexico the Lord continues to use the ministry of the Good Samaritan Clinic to help the folks to see the Father. Last

week an older couple from Mexico City (eight-hour bus ride) came for consultation. They were brought by a friend from a village about two hours from the clinic. The friend is a believer and told me he was praying that the couple would have the opportunity to speak with the counselor, as they had never made a decision. After reviewing their list of complaints I asked if they died tomorrow what would be their eternal destiny. Silence. Finally the man said he didn't know. From there they accepted the invitation to spend time with the counselor. The bottom line is they both understood the gospel plan and made personal decisions to accept Jesus.²

In Others' Words

A special memory for me is how God called me to the clinic ministry. In 1983 I was studying in high school. I had already given my life to the Lord and decided that I would study to be a doctor.

Meanwhile, my brother was finishing his studies in the Bible institute (ministry of Ricky Williams) at Rinconcito, the same place where the Good Samaritan Clinic was located.

I attended my brother's graduation and became acquainted with the clinic. I met Dr. Ladd and expressed my desire to study medicine and to serve God. I clearly remember his words: "Every day there is more need for Christian doctors."

His words motivated me to pray to God and make a pact: God, if You permit me to study medicine, I will serve You with my profession. God did allow me to study medicine and when I finished my schooling, I came to see Dr. Ladd. I shared with him my desire to collaborate with him in the clinic ministry. He told me, "Here is your office!" Patiently, he taught me and worked with me and I have learned much from his experience and love for God. I know God used Dr. Ladd to show me this beautiful ministry. I

thank God. To God be the glory!

And I thank Dr. Ladd for his patience and kindness, and for the privilege of collaborating with him in this ministry.

When I began working at the clinic, Sister Shirley wasn't working with us. Since she began helping, she has shown her love and concern for the clinic ministry and for each staff member. Her dedicated service to God and her loyal support to her husband is an example for many women (Honorio Pacheco Martinez, M.D., translated by Priscilla Williams, email to author, November 21, 2011).

1. "Introducing 'Centro Cultural Mibamex, A.C.,'" *The Gleaner* (October 1980): 25.

2. *John Ladd*, *The Gleaner* (May/June 2008): 29.

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“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV

People Need Prayer

John and Shirley Ladd sent their children to the local school for some years, but as in every missionary family, they wanted to assure that their children would have the necessary English studies for further education in the United States. Although they had always done English and Spanish studies with the children, they wanted more. Thus, they began searching for someone to teach their children outside of the public classroom setting. Although Shirley could have done the job, Tim was still young and John was serving his year as a doctor for the state of San Luis Potosi.

The Ladds turned to God in prayer and asked for Him to send them the teacher that He would have for their children. The search was on. Just as with other missionaries, a notice was made in *The Gleaner* of the need. However, John and Shirley also asked many of their family and friends if they knew of a qualified person who might be interested in serving the Lord as their teacher in Mexico. Many prayers were sent forth about the matter, not just from the Ladds themselves, but from many of those who knew about the need.

The position was definitely not a luxury job. At that time, missionary teachers received only a hundred dollars a month with no insurance provision (at least not the first year). However, some people feel a call to teach and to serve the Lord through that means. In those cases, it's not about the money or any other material thing. It's a matter of feeling led by the Lord to teach in

that situation. That's how the Ladd children got teachers through the years.

Carolyn Barnette learned about the Ladds' need of a teacher from her pastor's wife, who was a former college classmate of the Ladds. Carolyn was not teaching full-time right then because of a previous health problem that had since cleared up. Although she contemplated the move for several weeks, Carolyn finally yielded to the Lord's leading. After meeting the Ladds at John's parents' home in San Antonio, she headed to Mexico with them in their big yellow van on October 17, 1978.

Carolyn's first experience in Mexico was rather intimidating when she heard everyone speaking Spanish. However, she quickly recovered when she found out that a college friend of hers was the teacher for the Johnsons. She settled into the house in Tempoal that first night with her friend helping her make bulletin board decorations for the classroom/bedroom that she was to have for the next few months.

By the next year, the Ladds had moved to Rinconcito and Carolyn had her own room at first. Of course, she often gave up hers, as did Mela and Tim, for some of the new clinic construction workers. By the second semester, Rebeca Albarran had arrived as nurse. Not only did she share a room with Carolyn, but they got to keep it even when construction crews came. Mela would come sleep in their room during those times, however.

Carolyn taught Mela fifth and sixth grades. She also helped with Tim in pre-kindergarten, but Shirley taught him regular kindergarten the next year. John and Shirley provided the curriculum, but Carolyn, as all the teachers who followed, occasionally supplemented with other things to enhance the lessons. After two years, Carolyn moved on to teach the Johnsons' children for a while.

That meant the search was on again, with prayers bombarding the throne of God for another teacher. The Ladd children went for a year without a home teacher. That didn't, however, mean that the search had been put aside. God answered in His time with a young man and his wife.

Michael Gambill had arrived with one of the construction teams in February 1981. He fell in love with the area. So Michael and his wife, Karen, arrived in Rinconcito on October 17, 1981, with a 28-foot travel trailer. They signed on to teach for a year: Michael for Melanie and Karen for Tim. They parked under the shade of a grapefruit tree. They realized later that the desire for shade came with a price. They had sporadic bombings, often at night. Once a particularly plump grapefruit smashed right through one of their skylights.

At the time, their trailer was the only air-conditioned place on the whole property. They didn't often turn on the AC unless the temperatures soared. They noticed that on extremely hot days they had more visitors than usual, many times some of the first-year institute students found the luxury intriguing.

Michael did not speak Spanish before arriving in Mexico. Although they planned for Shirley to tutor them, they adopted a son less than a month after arriving. Thus, their lives became busier than they ever imagined. Mela attended Mexican public school in the mornings so Michael watched their son while Karen taught Tim



Sam Parker and Michael Gambill

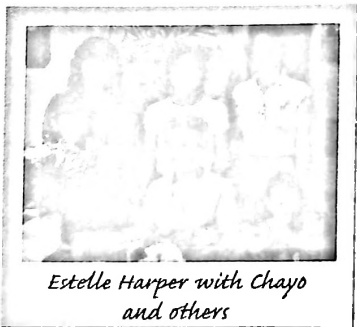
then. Then they traded places in the afternoons for Michael to teach Mela. The Gambills left Mexico the following July.

Again prayers went up for a new teacher. This time, though, the prayers were answered quickly. Glenda Thompson answered the Lord's call to teach in Mexico and arrived in August 1982. At that time, the Ladds were living in the little white house in Aquismon. Glenda said she felt like she had gone back in time to an earlier era in the United States. There was no running water or indoor plumbing and no grass in the yard. When the family moved to their present home above the store where the church meets now, Glenda moved to one of the apartments at Rinconcito.

Glenda helped Mela with her basics in English as well as her GMA steps. Since she was high school age by that time, Miss Thompson also told her about things in a typical high school in the United States and what to expect in college. With Tim being much younger, Glenda had to use her imagination to get Tim's attention and keep him interested. She stayed until April 1984.

So far, the teachers had all been fairly young. Then God sent an older lady to teach. Her name was Estelle Harper. She was very good, but her health caused her to cut her time short. Thus, prayers went up again for a new teacher. The next teacher had retired and was not

really looking for another job. However, Betty Wilson called her and told her about John and Shirley's need for a teacher. That was around Christmas. Joyce Gibson began praying and then left



shortly after that to become the next home teacher for the Ladds.

Melanie taught Mrs. Gibson before Mrs. Gibson taught her. They met at the border. Buddy and Gladys Hearn brought Melanie that far, as she had lingered longer after Christmas vacation than the family. At the border, Mela got in the car with Joyce Gibson and began to give her Spanish lessons. By the time they got to Aquismon several hours later, Mrs. Gibson had learned quite a bit about SSL (Spanish as a second language) from Mela. They had short conversations and sang songs in order to practice the language.

Both Mrs. Harper and Mrs. Gibson lived in one of the apartments at Rinconcito while each was teaching the children. Tim and Melanie would come to work with John and have classes there. At first, the only air conditioning was in Mrs. Gibson's car. She could deal with the other living conditions much better than she could handle the heat.

Although Mrs. Gibson used the Christian home school program that the Ladds had, she also used books and other aids that her friends from Deer Park sent her to use. Many of the teachers with whom she had taught for years wanted to help. After they heard about the twins, the ladies sent many baby items—from clothes to equipment—to make things better for those babies. Joyce Gibson would take care of the babies sometimes from the end of the work day until bedtime and then the nurse Chayo took over from there. That would relieve Shirley when she had them all day, along with Steven and cooking lunch for the whole staff.

By the end of the year, Mrs. Gibson decided that teaching in Mexico was not what she wanted to do during her retirement years. She just couldn't take the heat. Therefore, she headed back to Texas. However, she missed it so much, that she often returned

for visits. Sometimes she gave achievement tests or helped with some other necessary learning activity. Other times, she simply came for visits, especially at Thanksgiving.

Jenifer Thrall Heflin taught the Ladd boys in the 1988-89 school year. Tim and Steven dubbed her *La Nana* (The Nanny) as she lived in the apartment at the back of the patio of the second floor home. Since Steven attended the public Spanish-speaking school in the morning, Jenifer taught Tim at that time in one of the rooms of the mission downstairs. Then she taught Steven in the afternoon.

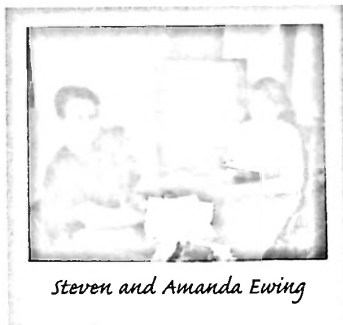
As with several of the teachers, Jenifer helped in the mission work as well. She worked in the OANSA (AWANA) program. She also grew especially close to Shirley, often giggling with her like schoolgirls over something that was said or done. In those days John would come home for lunch, and he would discuss some of the interesting cases of the day. Tim and Steven were especially eager to hear about any gory details, more so because they knew that neither their mother nor their teacher wanted to hear those. John usually refrained from telling too much until everyone finished the meal.

The family prayed for each teacher and for help in finding each teacher. Then as one would leave, it felt like losing a member of the family. Prayer for another and for the life of the previous one always helped to get through until another teacher came.



Jeffrey Gallegos and Steven

The last teacher I heard from was Amanda Ewing Green. She went to Aquismon when Steven was entering seventh grade. After having attended Mexican school through sixth grade, the Ladds decided that he needed to continue with all classes in English to prepare him more thoroughly for college in the states. Therefore, Amanda and the Ladds put together a curriculum for Steven from a variety of sources. They used public school textbooks, home school materials, and some self-created things.



Amanda was there for two years. The first year they met for class in the church downstairs. Then they moved to the clinic the second year. For that reason, they actually took a break from classes when special medical groups came, and she and Steven helped out with whatever needs the group might have.

Years later, Mrs. Gibson returned to help Steven prepare for writing a research paper and college. By that time an air-conditioned operating room had been added to the clinic. Since the heat greatly bothered Mrs. Gibson, she and Steven would have class in the operating room. Then she contributed to help pay the electrical bill. She also encouraged the Ladds to get a computer and Internet service so that Steven could be up to the standards of other students his age when he went to college.

Although Mrs. Gibson taught Steven most subjects, John had to teach him economics. Shirley always taught the children

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Bible. Mrs. Gibson used *A Tale of Two Cities* to teach him much of English literature and composition. They would read it aloud as a play and many times clinic staff or patients would stop to listen. She also had to teach him poetry. When she left Steven said, "I can't say I learned to love poetry, but I don't hate it as much as I used to."

With each child, John and Shirley prayed that their children would have the knowledge they needed to go to college or wherever life would take them. They possibly felt the need for prayer even stronger than most

parents since not only was the child leaving home, but each time, the child was going off to another country to which he or she was unaccustomed. But God was there to take care and to take the anxiety away for both parents and child.



Joyce Gibson at the market

People Need Prayer

Whenever someone asks a missionary what his greatest need is, he will invariably answer prayer. Most people, in asking, are thinking of something material, but the missionaries know that without prayer, they would feel at a complete loss. That is true, in fact, for others as well. Prayer is a vital part of every Christian's life because it is our way of communicating with God.

Many people think that they cannot pray because they think it has to be special words or certain guidelines. No. God is waiting to hear from you. All you have to do is simply talk to Him. He understands your heart, but He wants to hear you talk to

Him anyway. It may be aloud or it may be silent. Either way, He hears the words.

As you read the following, think of something from your own life to fit the appropriate category:

Praise — Psalm 107:31-32

Repent — 1 John 1:9

Ask — Matthew 21:22

Yield — Matthew 26:39-45

Expect — 1 John 5:14-15

Rest — Matthew 11:28¹

What does 1 Thessalonians 5:17 say about prayer?

Prayer is not a set speech that is repeated from memory or just a bunch of words said aloud. Prayer is mainly an attitude of the heart. You do not have to close your eyes or be in a particular physical position. Many people, even as I do, often pray driving down the road; thank goodness that we don't have to close their eyes to do so!

If you don't already have a regular time and place to pray, come up with one. That doesn't mean that the only time you can pray is in your bedroom at seven in the morning, or whatever. It just means that you are making a date with the Lord to meet Him at that time and place every day as is possible to talk to Him. Then continue the conversation during the day as you have need.

People Are People

Every morning, John and Shirley Ladd had a quiet time with God. They walk a couple of miles when the weather cooperates and then they have their devotional time. While I was in Mexico, John sometimes went out on the patio and Shirley sat on her bed. People who have known them through the years have mentioned how they begin their days. It has made a lasting impression on many and actually influenced others to do the same.

What do Matthew 18:19 and James 5:16 have to do with one another?

To me, these indicate the need to share burdens and blessings with others. I have several people who are prayer partners. I consider Shirley Ladd as one of those. She asks me from time to time how different ones of the family are doing or other people whom I've mentioned that were in need of prayer. It helps to share with others even if you don't give all the details. A person does not have to know the name or even the problem when asked to pray. I often have unspoken prayer requests or have prayed for other people's unspoken requests. God knows what they are. That's the important thing.

If you don't have a prayer partner, I suggest that you prayerfully choose someone whom you know is a pray-er. Then ask if he or she would be willing to be your prayer partner. Just remember that being a prayer partner is a two-way proposition. You have to be willing to pray for someone else's requests as well. Take the time today to find someone if you don't already have one. Or maybe you need to add another one to your list. Being prayer partners brings people closer to each other. Just

remember that prayer requests are not opportunities to gossip about problems. God doesn't tell your problems to others and He doesn't want you to do that with anyone's problems either.

You can even be a prayer partner with a missionary family, possibly a silent partner. Every other month, the BMAA publishes missionary reports in *The Gleaner*. Many mention prayer requests. However, you don't have to subscribe to that magazine to pray. The missions department will send you a prayer calendar monthly by email or by snail mail. Just sign up for their Intercessory Prayer Force. It is free. Just write the missions office at BMAA Department of Missions, P. O. Box 30910, Little Rock, AR 72260-0910. Or call them at 501-455-4977. You may also contact the missions department on its website: *bmaamissions.org*.

The important thing is that missionaries need our prayers daily. Whether you use a prayer calendar, pick a particular missionary family, or choose a country every month, decide on some way to pray for missions on a regular basis. Then do it! You may also get a blessing from contacting a mission family and telling them that you have been praying. Many of them have their own newsletters for prayer partners. It's good to see what your prayers have helped do in the lives of others.

In Shirley's Own Words

Yolanda, our next-door neighbor, was a very unhappy young lady: an unhappy marriage and unhappy in her work as an elementary school teacher in a local school in our town of Aquismon, SLP, Mexico. One of her coworkers and a good friend, Concepción, was a member of the Aquismon Baptist Church. Concepción had been talking to Yola about the Lord, and sharing

that He could be the answer to her needs, that she needed to ask Him into her life.

At that time, there was a Monday afternoon ladies' discipleship Bible class for some of the new believers in the church. Concepcion was one of those who attended it. One Monday afternoon Concepcion called and told me that Yola needed to know the Lord, and that she had invited her to the discipleship class so that I could talk to her. At that moment, I wasn't sure just how to handle the situation since the class was designed for Christians, and was not evangelistic. Normally, about five or six attended the class but not surprisingly, on that particular Monday, Concepcion and Yola were the only ones who arrived! Yola was truly ready for help; she and I read through the "4 Spiritual Laws" tract while I'm sure Concepcion was silently praying, and when it came time to pray the sinner's prayer, Yola said that she wanted to, but she would do it silently. Afterward, when asked where Jesus Christ was, she insisted that He was in her heart because she had asked him to forgive her sins and come into her life.

Yola was in church the next Sunday and every service after that. She became convicted of dressing more modestly, and from the beginning, always requested prayer for the salvation of her husband, Ricardo, a heavy drinker who would have a drinking party for his buddies several nights a week with lots of loud talking and loud music in his back yard just a few yards from our bedroom window! She began to take their seven-year-old son, Alberto, to Sunday school and church, but very soon Ricardo insisted that he needed Alberto to help him in his mechanic/welding shop and refused to let him attend.

Ricardo would antagonize Yola at times until she would lose her temper, and then he would ask her if that was what they were teaching her over at the evangelical church. Theirs was a most unhappy situation.

At that point in time, John and the clinic counselor, Carlos, would go visiting and witnessing on Sunday afternoons. One particular afternoon, they noticed Ricardo's car at home and felt they should go talk to him. After he invited them in, they presented the plan of salvation. He made irrelevant comments in defense of his lifestyle and unbelieving condition. However, when asked if he would like to pray to receive Christ as his Savior, surprisingly his answer was si (yes), and he did. Later that afternoon when John went back over to take some gospel tracts and invite him to the evening service, he found him reading the New Testament they had earlier left with him. He didn't attend church that evening, but he began soon after that, and had a hunger to learn more and more about the Bible. Right away, he started witnessing to his drinking buddies of the new life he'd found in Christ, and they decided to no longer be his buddies since they didn't want him to preach to them and he no longer bought them drinks. He and Yola went through discipleship studies and were baptized and became members of the church. Through the years, Ricardo has served in different capacities in the church, one being church treasurer and also as a missionary of the church. At the present, he helps guide and teach in a mission in the mountains. Yola worked in AWANA, VBS, and children's Bible classes.

We lost Yola to cancer four years ago. Ricardo tenderly and faithfully cared for her during the year she suffered so much before dying. They had a new relationship after both became Christians. It was obvious to all who knew them. God has been honored and glorified through their lives (email to author, May 11, 2011).

In Others' Words

I feel that God really used the Ladds (Aunt Shirley and Uncle John as I call them) to help me be a better missionary now

that my husband and I are in Nicaragua. Every morning when I got up, they always were already up, but I remember that Uncle John would be sitting at the head of the table doing his morning devotional and Aunt Shirley would be on the couch, doing hers. This is what sticks in my mind the most after all these years, which still encourages me to put God first every morning. At breakfast, Uncle John would always read "Our Daily Bread" devotional for the day and then we would pray and start our day (Tamy Gallegos Gaitan, email to author, November 28, 2011).

The Ladds took me into their home and treated me like family. They forgave my mistakes and challenged me spiritually; they nursed me when I was sick, and provided for my physical needs. If I were to sum up my impression of them in a word, it would be real. They were authentic Christians who radiated God's love to the world around them. When you live in someone's home for two years, you come to know them very well; the Ladds were at home what they were in public. Words cannot express how much my world grew in my time with them. Not only did I learn a new language (which led me to my career as a teacher and was the means for meeting my husband), but I gained a whole new perspective of life. What price can be put on such a life-enriching experience? (Amanda Green, email to author, December 16, 2011).

1. Jackie Ricks, "Dial P-R-A-Y-E-R," Walk Your Talk, Baptist Publishing House, 1994: Unit 3, 2-3.

People Are People

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:8 NKJV

People Need a Witness

Everyone who has ever trusted Christ has needed a witness. Also, everyone who is a Christian is a witness. You may think you're not because you haven't personally led anyone to the Lord. That doesn't change the fact that you are still a witness, just maybe not a very good one.

When I was in high school, my algebra teacher made the statement, "Everyone is an example." In my know-it-all naivete, I argued with him, reminding him that not everyone behaves properly. He calmly explained that everyone was indeed an example, just not always a good one. He reminded me that there are bad examples as well as good ones. I've never forgotten that lesson from algebra class. The point of this chapter is that we all are examples, i.e., witnesses, so we should strive to be good ones.

John and Shirley Ladd have done their best to witness whenever and wherever they are. So have the staff from Good Samaritan Clinic. For this same reason, the groups that have visited faithfully through the years (until the recent cartel problem) have also witnessed and seen many people come to know Christ as personal Savior.

Sometimes people come to the clinic without having any real physical problems. They just enjoy the fellowship at the clinic and they may read or watch the Christian films. Two such ladies in 1984 often traveled twelve or more hours every month from a mountain village to get there, but they had no major health problems. However, Dr. Ladd saw them make public professions

People Are People

of faith and attend the mission in Aquismon. Surely their visits to the clinic aided in that.

Another man who showed up in a wheelchair one day told John that he did not need his medical advice. The man knew he had AIDS and was dying because there was no medicine to make him well. He said he had heard that someone there could tell him about God. John talked to him for a while and then took him to the counselor, who could spend more time with him while John continued to see the day's patients. Before the day was over, the man had accepted Christ as his Savior.

John and Shirley meet people everywhere and treat them all the same. With Aquismon being a small town, everyone knows where Dr. Juan lives. One late night in 1984 some parents brought their little girl to the Ladds' house. They had been told to take Theresa home to die. However, with the right medicine and proper training to teach her mother how to give the medicine correctly, Theresa lived and got her condition under control. The best news was that her mother made a profession of faith at the mission downstairs.

Many patients come to the clinic with a physical ailment but have a much greater need deep down inside. From the beginning, a counselor has been available to speak to anyone who needs such help. As the Spirit leads, the folks tell their story, whether it is financial, emotional, or spiritual. No matter what the problem is, the Word of God is available to help them through their problems. Many have found help with alcoholism and other needs. But the greatest, of course, is receiving a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord for the witness of those at *El Buen Samaritano!*

In 1985, a young blind woman was brought to the clinic. Stevens-Johnson syndrome had destroyed her corneas.

God works everything out in His timing. A group of specialists were having a ten-day clinic in a town about 175 miles from Aquismon. The Ladds took the young lady and learned that a cornea transplant was a possibility that might be successful later. As a result of that experience, the woman and her husband brought a lady with an extreme case of tuberculosis to the clinic. She began treatment and got better. Those



Typical mountain trail

two families were from the same village, a place where there was no gospel witness. Before long, over twenty people from that remote, mountain village had visited the clinic. The staff then had a standing invitation to go show a Christian film and share the gospel with the people.

As a result of just such situations as this, many new mission projects were started. Ricky Williams directed those projects after John notified him of people from a particular area

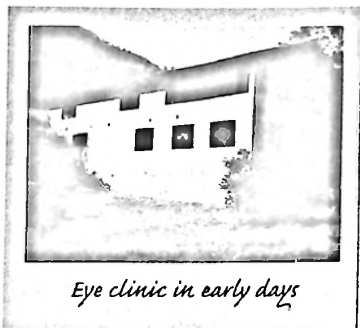


Typical house

having received the gospel. Often the initial contact in the remote areas would be a Christian film. As many as two hundred people might gather waiting for the Ladds and the Williamses to arrive

People Are People

with their generator and projector. After the movie, Brother Ricky would invite anyone interested in knowing more to remain. Then they would share the Word in small groups, broken down by ages. In those early days, the roads were often so bad that traveling at night was virtually impossible. In fact, much of the time one had to go by foot or by donkey the last part of the way. That meant an opportunity to spend the night and talk to people the next day as well. When enough people showed interest for the need of Bible study, someone usually offered his or her home for one to begin. Then as it grew, an actual mission would begin.



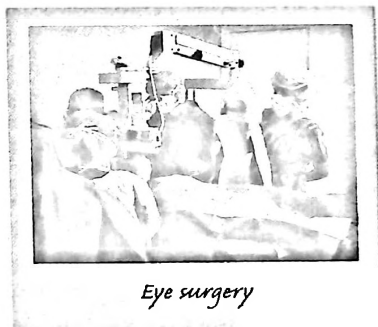
Some of those in the original construction crews witnessed while they worked, but more witnessing seems to have occurred with the eye clinics and other specialty clinics that have been held. In fact, the



need for eye clinics was so great that construction began on the eye care center in 1988. When the building was finished, it was named after Ray and Kay Larsen. The point of the eye care center has been both physical and spiritual sight.

People Are People

The eye clinics began in 1990 as a result of Tom Mitchell's seeing the need. He rounded up a group of doctors and volunteers from around Prescott, Arkansas, to go and do an eye clinic. From that time through the beginning of 2010, about forty-four teams with a total of approximately 350 different people went to help the Mexican people see. They would normally examine about 450 people, performing up to thirty cataract surgeries and fitting about 350 different people with glasses. Many times the glasses were donated by people who had new prescriptions and no longer needed their older pair of lenses. Sometimes the glasses were simply reading glasses purchased from a dollar store.



Eye surgery

The eye clinic trips continued for many years, even after Brother Mitchell was no longer the pastor there. Vernon and Francis Haynes took over the supervision of those trips and continued even after moving to Texarkana.



Making an appointment

Vernon had visited with a group from Central on a building trip for the first clinic building years before.

Since not everyone was able to work on eyes, often a repair/construction crew would accompany the group. And, of course, they needed cooks. Frances Haynes had started making the trips with the Prescott group as the cook, but later she took over as coordinator, along with her husband Vernon, and then Janet Lewis became the main kitchen supervisor. The group from Prescott was not the only one to come to Rinconcito. A group from Palestine, Texas, also came on a regular basis for construction projects.

While at Rinconcito for the eye clinics or construction, some people would stay in the two rooms that were built upstairs in the eye clinic building for just that purpose. Francis Haynes started out being the kitchen supervisor for those groups; Janet Lewis took over when the Haynes became the supervisors for the whole trip. She would cook everything in the upstairs kitchen of the clinic building. At first, it was an open-air kitchen with half-walls. They had to climb a bamboo ladder to reach the second floor. The floor was also rough concrete, not tile, as it is now. In the beginning, the ladies had to sling the dishwasher out the openings. Look out below! Staff, workers, and patients learned to avoid walking near the kitchen area around clean-up time. Stairs have now been added to make things more convenient.

Now the kitchen has windows, complete plumbing, and most of the pans and utensils necessary for cooking a meal. Through the years, the groups had to bring their cooking utensils. However, they began to leave things so that the next trip would be easier and they would not have to bring so many pots and pans. Often the ladies who busily cook all morning relax at the windows in the afternoon to watch the lines of patients. Everyone who has been to Rinconcito comments about how beautiful and peaceful it is there. Nothing like we would expect at a doctor's office in the United States.

Laura Lara also uses the kitchen for her nutrition demonstrations, and then the facilities are available for groups that come. Most groups bring all of their own food because they can find what they want more easily in the United States, but they do pick up some things at the markets in Aquismon, especially if they have forgotten something. However, they have learned not to expect corn bread if they forget the corn meal. There is no such thing in Mexico!

One registered nurse who helped with several of the eye clinics is Becky Crawford from Carthage, Texas. She had been to Rinconcito with youth groups from First Baptist, Carthage, before she started making the eye clinic trips with the Prescott group. Although she did not go with them from the beginning, Becky says that she made at least fifteen or more trips. Becky usually stayed with John and Shirley at the house while others stayed at the Rinconcito property.

Becky's most lasting memory is of the crowds lined up to visit the eye doctors. Not all who needed surgery would be able to have it in any given clinic week. They would have to be left for a future time. One young lady, in particular, Becky remembers. She was a young mother and had not seen her husband for years because of the cataracts. She also could not see her children. Becky remembers the blessing of watching the lady as the bandages were removed and her seeing her family for the first time.

Eye surgeries are not the only kinds of clinics they have at *Clinica El Buen Samaritano*. Laura Evans, a nurse practitioner, has also made several trips for women's health clinics. She usually stayed with Dr. Honoria or whoever was staying in the apartment. She said the most moving thing that she remembers is that the last patient she would see at the end of the week would be a lady who had been waiting in line the whole week, never complaining

but continuing to wait her turn in line for the full five days.

Dermatologists from the medical school in San Luis Potosi have come monthly for over twenty-five years. They also come bi-monthly for general hospital clinics. The people of the area have many problems that can be better treated with the specialists' expertise and up-to-date knowledge in a particular area.

A group of doctors from within Mexico also began to come for various clinics. Some of them had known John in medical school or made acquaintance with him otherwise. When they saw the good work at *Clinica El Buen Samaritano*, they wanted to share in helping the people as much as possible. This group of doctors usually comes at least once a year, depending on their schedules. In 2011, they almost didn't make the trip because of the violence in the region. However, at the last minute they did come for a brief visit.

The clinic staff prepare for these specialists by making the area people aware of the upcoming clinics through signs at the clinic and radio announcements about the upcoming visits. They also schedule specific surgeries for those in need and help them make arrangements if they need places to stay. Considering the limited facilities at the clinic, they see many more than would be expected in the time allotted.

Dr. Ladd reported through *The Gleaner* that The Good Samaritan Clinic had seen over 12,000 people in 1994 either through nutritional programs, counseling, dental work, or medical consultations. Over 5,900 Christian tracts were given out. There had been 113 Bible studies at mission points in the area. But the most important statistic of all is that 154 came to know the Lord as personal Savior. That was a direct result of someone taking the time to witness to others of what God has done for them.

Not all witnessing was a direct result of the clinic. Some, of course, came from the Bible institute students. Other situations were more unusual. Once when Brother Coy Quesenbury had been invited to hold a Bible seminar for some of the men, Shirley asked Pat Quesenbury to come do beauty makeovers for the ladies. At first, Pat resisted. She did sell cosmetics in the States, but she felt that she should be doing something more spiritual in Mexico.

After constant urging from Shirley and much prayer of her own, Mrs. Quesenbury finally agreed to bring her cosmetics and share with the ladies about the best colors for them to wear and about make-up techniques. Uncomfortable and nervous at first, Pat finally settled in and taught her seminar. She said, "I don't think I've ever had so much fun or felt that ladies were more responsive and excited about the topics covered. And they loved the gifts we were able to share. Once again, I was reminded that I should have trusted Shirley who leads only after a lot of time spent in prayer" (Pat Quesenbury, email to author, January 6, 2012).

Some of those ladies gained more self-confidence as a result of that seminar. That helps them in witnessing. It was also a witness just to see Mrs. Quesenbury willing to come to Mexico to share those things with them. Not all witnessing is about salvation. Some of it has to do with living a dedicated Christian life. Shirley and Pat both showed that in following God's leadership in this particular situation.

After a person has accepted Christ as her personal Savior, then she wants to share with others the blessings that she now has. However, some aren't sure how to witness aloud. Instead, at times, people come to hear the gospel without being sick. One older couple from Mexico City (an eight-hour bus ride away) came with a friend from a nearby village. The friend revealed the couple's spiritual need. Dr. Ladd then proceeded to ask them

about their eternal destination after reviewing their physical complaints. They went on from there to speak with the counselor and both accepted Jesus as their Savior.

One of the last Prescott group eye clinics took place in 2008. Four patients received laser treatments with 485 patients getting a full eye exam. Of those, 265 received glasses. With the beautiful weather, the patients enjoyed their newfound physical sight. But even greater was the sight gained by those who accepted Christ that week. Everyone received gospel tracts and had the opportunity to see gospel videos in the waiting areas. Four of the ladies on the team got a quartet together while they traveled to Mexico. They gladly sang inspirational songs for the waiting patients. Hundreds of lives were touched firsthand during the week because a group of Christians from the United States was willing to go to Mexico to witness. One can only imagine how many more may be blessed as a result of that week as those with new sight go forth to witness how they once were blind but now can see, spiritually.

Good Samaritan Clinic also has other specialist clinics as they are able. John tells of one.

“Recently we had a Day of Specialists at the clinic. On these days, a group of eight to twelve different physicians, representing five or six different specialties, come from Cd. Victoria (Mexico) to hold a clinic. Patients start arriving about 5:30 or 6:00 a.m., and we start registration about 7:30. This time was different in that it was raining most of the day, but even so, the group was able to care for 179 needy folks. Dr. Oscar Alvarez, who is a dedicated Christian and lay preacher, has directed this group for over fifteen years. We are able to use the experience to show both physical and spiritual concern to patients and give a Christian witness to the physicians who are

People Are People

not believers. Several have started attending church in Victoria as a result of the witness at the Good Samaritan Clinic.”¹

Beginning in 2010, the drug cartels began to cause so much conflict in all of Mexico — not just along the border — that many groups began to feel it was unsafe to travel to Rinconcito for special clinics. None have come from the United States since that time. Some inside Mexico are still making the trips, but not as many as before. They wait and see what the conditions are like as the time draws near. Plans are not scheduled as far in advance as before.

God, however, is still in control. He still heals, both physically and spiritually. The need remains for a strong witness, not just in Mexico, but everywhere. What kind of a witness are you?

People Need a Witness

Many people have the mistaken belief that the only ones who can and should witness are preachers. They apparently do not know the Scriptures well. God commissioned all of us to be witnesses for Him wherever we are. In fact, many times a lay person is able to get through to someone who has completely blocked out the message from a pastor or other clergyman. Why do you think that might be?

What did Jesus tell His first followers in Mark 1:17?

Then what was His last instruction before He ascended to the Father in Acts 1:8?

Many people claim that they cannot witness aloud for various reasons. Unless you are unable to speak at all, this is not acceptable with God. I thought this same thing for years. I felt that I could not explain things correctly so I would just witness with my life as an example. However, I learned through Evangelism Explosion, a witnessing program that I became part of in the 1970s, that I was wrong. Yes, all Christians are a witness (good or bad) with their lives. However, unless they *tell* the Good News of Jesus Christ, all they witness to is their own ability because no one knows from where they receive their power.

You may have to begin simply. Often, others will remark about your good luck or fortune when things turn out for the best under trying circumstances. Maybe all you are able to say is, "No, it wasn't luck. I was blessed by God." That's simple enough, but it can open the door for further discussion. All you have to do is testify to what God does for you daily.

Why do you think that you are alive? If a Christian was not intended to be a witness for the Lord, then God might as well take you to heaven as soon as you make a profession. That rarely happens. Why? Because you have a responsibility here on earth. What is it?

What do you need to witness? First, you must have a

People Are People

personal experience with Christ to witness about. If you haven't met the Lord as your personal Savior, then it is hard to tell what He has done for you. You must also have good character. You don't want to be telling someone what it's like to be a Christian and have them thinking the whole time that they are better than you are. Finally, you have to let others know that Christ is the reason you are who you are. That also takes you back to having good character. If you don't have that, then you will find it hard to say that God made you who you are.

Witnessing requires much prayer. That doesn't mean long prayers, just constant prayers. First, ask God to lead you to someone who needs and will be open to your witness. Then be observant so you will recognize the situation when God puts you in the middle of it. Also, pray for the Spirit's leading when you talk. It doesn't require seminary language, just your own will do. Finally, leave the results in God's capable hands. You are only a witness, not a bully trying to force someone to say or do something when they are not ready. You plant the seed or water it. Let God give the increase in His own time.

In John's Own Words

After more than ten years of planning, praying, and working the Lord has brought together a staff for the clinic unequalled anywhere. Sometimes I have to pinch myself to make sure I'm not dreaming as I walk down the hall and realize every possible room is in use; the dentist, two physicians, and the nutritionist are consulting patients, the counselor and evangelist are sharing individually with people with emotional spiritual needs, while the receptionist and nurse receive, prepare, and dispense medicines to each patient. Although I hesitate to make reference to statistics, it is a great blessing and encouragement to know that twenty to twenty-

*three people have made professions of faith each month during the past several months. Only God could do this, and what a joy to be part of this dedicated group!*²

Maria Delfina, age fifteen, arrived at the clinic accompanied by her mother, father, and thirteen-year-old brother who drove the ambulance. Her right foot was double in size with a large amount of tissue missing on the top. She had stepped on a rusty wire two weeks previously and had experienced pain, progressive destruction of tissue, and a tetanus shot before arriving at the clinic. With aggressive cleaning and draining a considerable amount of blood and pus, suddenly a two-inch piece of wire shot out of the infected foot. Like many of our Huastecan folks, Maria expressed no pain or discomfort during the procedure.

When Maria returned three days later, her foot was almost normal in size and she walked from the ambulance to the clinic, still not admitting any pain. After sincere congratulations from several of the staff members on a job well done at caring for the lesion, I asked Maria and her family to visit with our counselor. All four family members prayed to accept Christ as Savior, and the father said it would be fine for the counselor to visit them in their home and conduct Bible study, a good sign. Pray for this family as they begin their journey with the Lord. By the way, Maria's ambulance is a wheelbarrow.³

In Others' Words

I knew God had sent me to the clinic not only to work as a nurse/receptionist, but also to share God's message in any way possible with the people there. John and Shirley modeled this, day in day out, and it gave us the freedom to do the same. It's awesome to work with people of the same goals (Becky [Albarran] Levee, email to author, December 10, 2011).

From My Point of View

It's important to win a soul to Christ, but it's even more important to teach a person to win souls. After visiting the clinic earlier this year, I believe that the people there are doing just that. I was inspired to meet people about whom I had read in The Gleaner. Not only are those people still involved in one of the churches in the area, but they are also busy teaching and actively witnessing to others. I was humbled and ashamed of my own witness to see how much they are doing after a few years as a Christian.

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1. John Ladd, *The Gleaner* (July/August, 2008): 30.
 2. John Ladd, "God At Work," *The Gleaner* (May, 1989): 7.
 3. John Ladd, *The Gleaner* (November/December, 2008): 27.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:13 NKJV

People Need to Be Available

It's often been said that God doesn't care about one's ability; He is more interested in one's availability. God is able to give us whatever we need to complete an assignment from Him, but He will not force us to do it. God wants us to be willing and available for whatever He has in mind. That's what John and Shirley Ladd are: available. Not only do they continue to do their clinic work in Mexico, but they also travel with BMMI (Baptist Medical Missions International) as often as possible. So can you.

One of the biggest objections a person has to making herself available is the fear that she might be unable to perform the task that God assigns. Philippians 4:13 is proof that God takes care to prepare us for whatever He has in store for us. That is probably why this is one of Shirley Ladd's favorite verses.

John, Shirley, and Steven Ladd made their first BMMI trip in 1999 to Nicaragua. Since that time, John and Shirley have made many more trips. In fact by 2011 John was a member of almost every BMMI trip. Shirley goes on some of them, but she remains in Texas during the others. With the drug cartel problems in recent years, John will no longer leave Shirley at Aquismon while he travels elsewhere.

The point of a BMMI trip is similar to John's mission at Good Samaritan Clinic. They are treating people for physical ailments at the same time that they are giving them a spiritual witness. Of course, some of the BMMI journeys take the group to

places that no outsiders have been before. The BMMI group that my family traveled with in 2000 went to places in the mountain villages of Honduras where no *gringos* had ever been.

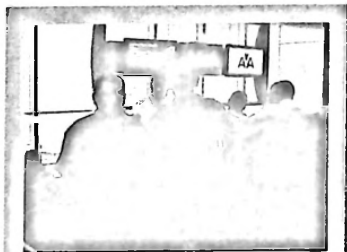
A typical day for a BMMI group will begin early with breakfast at whatever place they happen to be staying. Then they will load the plastic boxes of medications in a bus or van and travel to the designated location.

The distance may be only a few miles, but the trip may take several hours because of terrible road conditions. After arriving at the school, mission, or whatever building they have appointed as their day's headquarters, they will quickly unpack the meds and set up various stations.

The crowds of people waiting to see the doctors will already have formed long lines, some arriving the day before. However, most are very polite and patient while they wait. The children may be running and playing while they wait their mother's turn in line. If they are at a school, the playground is usually available for the children.



*BMMI group
in Dominican Republic*



*John and Javier
in Dominican Republic*

People Are People

Each member of the BMMI group has an assignment. Of course, doctors wait for the patients to explain their ailments. The first person one sees is a nurse. After taking vital signs and listening to the list of physical complaints, they send the person (or family) on the way to one of the doctors. The physician will diagnose and prescribe medications as well as talk to the patient about any medical matters about which they need information.

After seeing a doctor, patients visit with the evangelistic team. Here they will hear a presentation of the gospel before going further to pick up medications. Since most of these groups are in countries where they do not speak the language, an interpreter is often available for this purpose. Of course, Dr. Ladd speaks Spanish so he doesn't need an interpreter in Latin American countries, but he does in the Asian or European countries. Many people accept the Lord after hearing the Word.

The final stop is the pharmacy. Several of the group will have worked counting pills and helping to find the correct medicine when the patient presents the prescription to the pharmacist. That person may not be an actual licensed pharmacist, but it is usually someone who knows at least a little about medicine in order to be able to read the prescription and fill it correctly.

This process continues all day until either the last patient has been seen or the hour has gotten so late that the group must return to their lodging while they can still get supper. They have usually brought their own snacks or something to eat as they don't have time to stop for lunch. Then they get to bed and repeat the process the next day. Most BMMI trips see patients at least five days if possible. Sometimes they cannot because they run out of medications. That is always a big disappointment to the awaiting patients and a feeling of regret for the team members. However, each BMMI trip is different, partly because of the locale

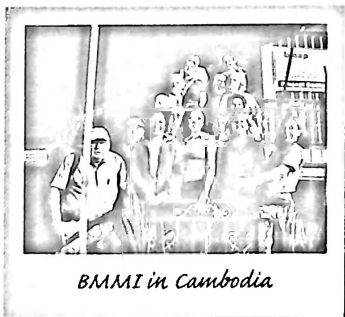
and customs, and partly because of the circumstances at the time.

Roy Tobey, who was the BMMI director at the time, reported that BMMI completed ten projects in 2002. They treated approximately 6,000 individuals, with 2,852 of those receiving Christ as their Savior. John helped when they came to Mexico that year. Then he and Shirley both went to Bolivia with the BMMI team.

Sometimes a group will work on something other than medical needs. One such trip was made to Nicaragua in 2005. Dr. Ladd traveled with a group of fifteen from the church in Catarina to a very remote area. If they had gone any other time, the trip would have taken at least thirty hours by canoe and horseback. Instead, they arrived after only a thirteen-hour car trip. While half of the group made sure that patients received medical attention, the other half built a small park for the community. The children were so thrilled that they woke up extra early to be able to go play in the park. All of the people in Espabel were very appreciative. Although this was not a traditional BMMI trip, they did supply the medicine for Dr. Ladd to distribute while he was there.

Not every country allows the groups to share the gospel message. One such country is Cambodia, where Dr. Ladd went in 2007. They

were not allowed to initiate a conversation or distribute Bibles. However, if someone asked them about God, then they could give an explanation. Thus, they had to be satisfied with their



silent witness. They did get to visit and care for some Buddhist monks while there. Maybe when we get to heaven they may meet someone who came to know the Lord as a result of their silent witness at that time.

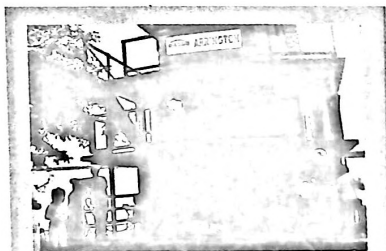
In 2009, the Ladds were excited to have the privilege of a BMMI team visiting them in Mexico instead of them going elsewhere. They went to three rural communities in their area. Because of the clinic's presence, they did not see the volume of patients that a team normally sees, but they did witness a number of people who accepted the Lord and others who welcomed Bible study. Dr. Ladd then traveled with the group on down to Huejutla and ministered in the areas where Grady and Denise Johnson and Eric and Kelly Johnson served as missionaries.

Also in 2009, Dr. Ladd took Javier Zamora Melendez along with him on a BMMI trip to the Dominican Republic. Javier is the assistant director of the Good

Samaritan Clinic. John does not feel it's enough to let the people work at the clinic. He also wants them to be prepared to run it



John in Cambodia



The Arrington

while he and Shirley are absent, but also able to minister to others elsewhere if possible.

In March of 2010, John and Shirley were back in Bolivia aboard the *Arrington*, the sixty-foot riverboat named for a former missionary of the BMAA who served along the Chapare River years ago. The boat contains several areas to use as exam rooms and a pharmacy. Of course, there is a kitchen and dining hall, along with five cabins, but only two small bathrooms besides the sleeping quarters for the pilot and crew and storage tanks for river water to supply the bathrooms.

As the *Arrington* traveled up river usually at night, it would stop at designated places to see patients during the day. Sometimes they would have to dock on the opposite side of the river, thus making a half-mile trip against a very strong current to get to the side with the patients. Of course, when the boat stopped, so did the electricity. That made for occasional uncomfortable nights and days.



BMMI team in Bolivia



John in Bolivia

Since the river is on the border of Bolivia and Brazil,

sometimes they see a mixture of Bolivian and Brazilian patients. The main difference between the two was the language: Spanish or Portuguese. Thankfully, the two are similar enough to make out the gist of most conversations for the Ladds, who speak excellent Spanish.

On some BMMI trips, the team also gives out Christmas shoeboxes. This has been a project for several years. Perhaps your church has helped prepare these boxes. If you do not know about this, please contact the BMAA Department of Missions for details. Each year the destinations are different. Many GMA or WMA groups, as well as whole churches like to wrap these shoeboxes in bright Christmas paper and then fill them with the suggested items, including a Bible. The children, some of whom have never before received a Christmas gift, are delighted to receive the boxes. Shirley, however, sometimes has to explain to the children what some of the items are for, or how to use them.

Leaving Shirley in Tyler, John left for Indonesia, a country with the world's largest population of Muslims, in September 2010. Since Indonesia is made up of 17,508 islands, the BMMI team traveled

from one to another as they treated people during their ten-day trip. For the first day of clinics, they drove an hour from the hotel to get aboard a boat and then take a forty-minute ride through changing shades of blue and green water to reach their destination. Although it was a predominantly Muslim town, they



BMMI team in Indonesia

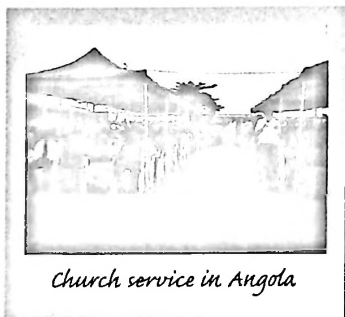
were very friendly to the group in spite of knowing they were Christian. God ended the day with a spectacular, fiery sunset after seeing 129 patients.

The following day the group sailed to the opposite end of the same island to a predominantly Christian town, where they found an even warmer spirit than the previous day. After that day, the team was not allowed to go to the next town, as it was a special



Patients wait in Indonesia

holiday at the end of Ramadan. Instead, they went to a prison for a heartbreaking experience. Most of the young men were between seventeen and thirty. The main reason most were in prison was because some girl's family had arranged for their incarceration to prevent their getting married. Although the Indonesian trip didn't see many converts, the seeds were planted and the doors opened for future contact.



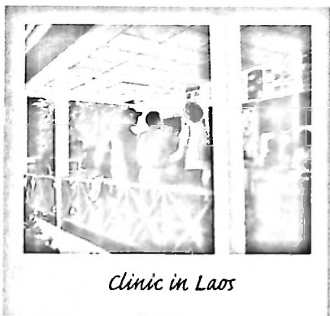
Church service in Angola

Late 2010 found John in Angola on the west coast of Africa meeting with many Christians. There they attended a baptism in the Atlantic prior to a service sponsored by the local WMA with 300 ladies dressed in their wildly-colored

skirts and matching blouses and turbans singing, clapping, and praising the Lord. They presented the ladies of the BMMI team each with similar fabric for their own skirts and shawls.

In February 2011, John's trip to Laos turned out not to be medical in nature at all because the container with all the medications was detained in Vietnam and never arrived while they were in Laos. God, however, had plans for the team. The three young ladies known as the JAM Team (Joy, Alicia, and Margaret) had just moved to Laos and were trying to set up their new residence. The BMMI team helped the ladies clean their new house and move their furniture. They also made many contacts while there.

Dr. Ladd returned to Bolivia and the



Clinic in Laos



John and two doctors in Laos



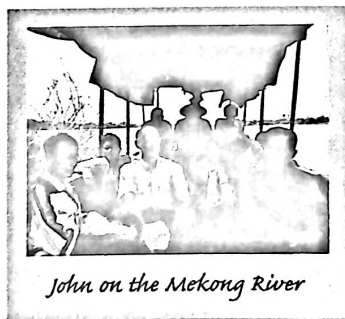
John at Laos clinic

Arrington in April 2011. One problem after another prevented the team from arriving on time, at least in their minds. God, however, had perfect timing. Pastor David went several days trying to get the release of the medications and instruments from customs.

One of the custom agents told him that he would not release anything unless the men could present bills of sale for all of it. He preferred for the people to go without medical attention! The only solution was prayer. Pastor David had people praying, but the BMMI team was unaware of the whole thing

as they were delayed at every turn. Each day when Pastor David went to check about the release, the same agent refused. However, on the day that the team finally arrived, that particular agent was nowhere to be seen. They got their shipment. God's timing is perfect!

Shirley again joined John as they traveled to Ukraine in the spring 2011. Between inexplicable delayed flights and bad weather later, the Ladds were a day late getting to Kiev. However, their luggage didn't make it until three days later. (That's why they always travel with a change of clothes and important things like personal medication in carry-



on luggage.) The BMMI team held five different clinics in five different locations. The people were very pleasant, and they enjoyed church services with some of our missions in the area.

Just a couple of months later, both of the Ladds again flew off to join a BMMI group in Moldova, a former USSR country. Again, they had five days of clinics. Shirley joined the national missionary and another team member for some home visits to families in need. She said that one morning they visited one of the "poorest families and homes I have ever seen — Mexico no exception." The family of two consisted of a fifty-year-old son who was completely paralyzed and bedridden. The eighty-nine-year-old mother could only crawl. She cared for the house, her son, and the garden in spite of the hardship. They did listen to



BMMI in Moldova



John in Moldova



Shirley in Moldova

the gospel presentation, and the son thanked them for the visit. He said he never saw any other humans except on television.

In the Republic of Georgia later in 2011, the BMMI team again was not allowed to bring medications into the country. As in many of the countries where BMMI goes, even if the people have the correct medication they need, they often do not take it as they should. In Georgia, they visited the home of one couple both of whom were diabetic. Their sugar readings were extremely high and the doctors told them how much insulin they should be injecting twice a day, learning that they were doing less than half of that dose only once a day. In spite of the fact that they received their medication through an American program, they had not been using it properly. They showed John over thirty unopened vials of insulin that had never been properly refrigerated. After a couple of days, their sugar count was coming down, but was not at the normal range yet. When the team left, they referred the couple for further spiritual needs as well. While in Georgia, they learned that many people would welcome reverting back to communism because they were told what to do and taken care of without having to think about anything.

After traveling with BMMI to Indonesia again in 2011, John went with a team to Haiti in December. It was still ravaged from the earthquake of almost two years prior. When Shirley took John to DFW airport to depart, the lady told him that he could not take his plastic crate full of medications into Haiti. However, she was nice enough to offer him a small discarded suitcase and even helped John and Shirley to consolidate as much of the medication as possible. When he met the other team members in Miami, he learned that they had checked their plastic crates straight through without a problem. Although he was aggravated at the time with the lady in Dallas, he was grateful to her later. When they arrived in Port-Au-Prince, he walked straight through

customs with his suitcase, but the others had to leave the plastic crates. They never did get the crated medicine and had to make do with John's small supply as well as what they could buy locally in order to treat about four hundred patients.



Church in Haiti

At the end of January 2012, John and Shirley went to El Salvador with a BMMI team of eighteen others. They conducted four clinics, with Shirley and some others helping her to do unlicensed optometry as they helped people find eye glasses that might help them see better.



*Jerry Kidd, John Ladd,
Ralph Izard*

Amazingly, they saw a total of 1,060 patients, fitting over 260 with reading glasses; over 175 patients accepted Christ. What a wonderful God we serve!



*John with children
and stuffed bears*

One of the extra highlights of every trip is the wonderful food that John and Shirley get to

People Are People

experience with the other members of the BMMI teams. Besides enjoying great food, the fellowship is always special during these times. The days are often so busy and hectic that they do not have much time to visit except while traveling to and from clinics on the buses, vans, or boats and while relishing the delectable treats that they are served in each country. Although the Ladds may have never met the other team members before, they become close friends while serving God together, all because of the fact that they are part of the family of God.

People Need to Be Available

Basically, being available is being willing to be used by God in whatever capacity that He chooses. It is the foundation of servanthood, which is a concept that Christ exemplified and mastered. Not only did Jesus understand that He was a servant, He also made sure that His disciples understood it.

Jesus told the apostles in Mark 10:42-43 that in order to be great, they must first:

Many in the world think that serving others is a lowly job. Sometimes people are even ashamed to admit that they have service occupations or that they are willing to help others. What does Isaiah 49:23 say about those who serve God?

As Christians, we need to learn and apply Christ's ideas about service. Check out John 13:13-17. What does Jesus say will happen to us if we follow His instructions?

Ephesians 6:5-9 reminds us to be obedient to the Lord in everything and also to obey those who are over us in this world. We should never do things for our own sake. We should always do it in _____ according to Colossians 3:17.

I know one church that hands out bottles of water in hot weather at parks, ballgames, etc. They never say that they are doing it for X Baptist Church, but rather "in the name of Jesus."

Read Matthew 5:14-16. When we make ourselves available and serve others, then we are following Christ's example and letting His light shine through us. All of this is so that we can _____ God because He is the only One who is worthy. We should never take the credit for things that only He can do.

Are you available for God to use in whatever way He wishes? Are you afraid that maybe He will call you to some foreign land as He did the Ladds? Maybe so, but being in the Lord's will is better there than living in the United States out of His will. And chances are that most people will not be asked to pull up stakes and move thousands of miles from family and friends.

You may, however, be asked to pray or give money. Maybe you will be asked to fill Christmas shoeboxes. Perhaps you could buy pairs of eyeglasses to send to those who can't get them. You may even be able to make a short-term trip to bless others and be even more greatly blessed by helping with a BMMI trip. Or possibly you could be a volunteer missionary to some other state or country.

People Are People

God has many ways that He can use us if we simply make ourselves available to Him. When I went to Mexico with John and Shirley earlier this year, I didn't want to come home. I would gladly go back. If you get the chance to go to a mission field, do it. If not, then find a mission field where you are and serve there. It may be next door or across the street.

All you have to do is be *available*.

In John's Own Words

What an experience to be part of the BMMI team visiting Thailand and Laos recently. In Laos, we were not allowed to openly/verbally witness for the Lord. Nevertheless, the seed of the gospel was sown. For example, one team member dropped her New Testament, and one of the Laotian nurses working with her immediately picked it up and held it to her heart; she now has a New Testament to read. Many smiles, hugs, and instant silent prayers were part of our silent witness.¹

In Shirley's Own Words

One of the most impressive things about this trip was how just the right persons were there to do just the jobs that needed to be done. The harmony and fellowship were great and the blessing of serving others was most rewarding!²

1. John Ladd, *The Gleaner* (September/October, 2008): 28.

2. Shirley Ladd, "Cruising' The Amazon River Basin Of Bolivia," *HeartBeat* (January, February, March 2010): 4.

People Are People

People Are People

“Dios es amor.”

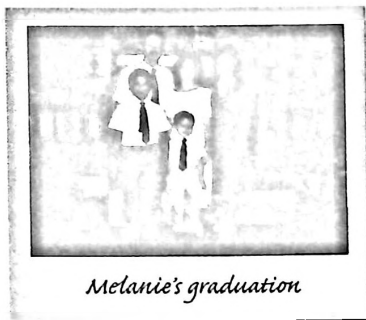
1 John 4:8

People Need Love

An old saying is that love begins at home. That is truly right in the home of John and Shirley Ladd. No parents could be any more loving than they are. But the love that they exemplify comes from God. Just as the beautiful cross stitch of pink roses hanging in their living room says "*Dios es amor*," the Ladds know that God must be the head of their home and thus, He brings the love that they are able to share with everyone.

As the years go by, families grow and leave the nest so that they may make families of their own. Thus, John and Shirley Ladd have an empty nest in Aquismon, but their family has grown quite a bit, they just all live in their own homes in Tyler, Texas. Their children grew up and left Mexico to explore the world beyond and make their own lives. John and Shirley raised them up in the admonition of the Lord and they each have made their own way as the Lord has led.

Melanie left home first. Shirley said that their original plan had been to allow the children to go to Texas for regular high school. However, when Melanie reached that age, they decided that none



Melanie's graduation

of them were ready for her to go that far away yet. They thought they would let her stay two more years and then finish the last two in the United States. However, when she reached her junior year of high school, they put it off until her senior year. At that point, they still weren't ready. Then finally, after finishing her regular school studies in Aquismon, Melanie left for Jacksonville College in the fall of 1986. She knew what she wanted to be. In fact, Shirley recalls that Melanie's favorite book as a very young child was *Nurse Nancy*. During Melanie's senior year she had decided to become a registered nurse.

Although many people know about third world countries, very few know that there is actually a third culture. Those are the people who have grown up in a different country than their parents' homeland. Then they return to that country not really knowing the customs. These are often the children of military families, business people, or diplomats. Our missionaries' children also fit this category. Problems may arise in their parents' homeland because the children still think, speak, and act according to the culture where they grew up.

Melanie, Tim, and Steven grew up in Mexico, speaking Spanish as well or better than they did English. They knew the customs of the people in and around Aquismon better than they knew the customs of their relatives back in Texas in spite of visiting many times through the years as they grew up. A period of adjustment was obviously necessary when they came to live full-time in the United States.

Today the children do not remember many problems from that time. Perhaps it's because they were young and they adjusted to those as they did to any of the things they were learning at that age. John and Shirley remember it a little differently. They saw their children struggle a little more than the typical young adult as a result of the third culture problem.

Perhaps it was just the parental love coming out that made them see it more.

The main problem that Melanie remembers is the lack of communication during her college years. From Jacksonville College, she went on to attend the University of Texas at Tyler. Although the Ladds had a telephone during those years in Mexico, Melanie calls it the "Little House on the Prairie" phone system. The only way a person could get a call through was if the operator was in the office. However, no one ever knew when that person would be in the office. There were no regular office hours! That made for frustrating times when Melanie wanted to talk to her parents.

While in Tyler attending college, Melanie met a young man at church. His name was John Mills. They dated for two-and-a-half years. He came to Mexico with her to visit the Ladds for six weeks. Finally, the last day while the two men with the same first name were working on the van that John and Melanie had traveled down in, John Mills asked John Ladd for Melanie's hand in marriage. They've laughed many times since that he waited until John's head was under the hood of the van before popping that question!

Melanie and John Mills married on August 3, 1991. Shirley was able to help with all the wedding plans just as she had always hoped. She was able to attend the showers and stay close by during furlough. Of course, both John and Shirley were present for the wedding in Tyler.

Melanie worked for a pediatric doctor's office in Tyler for eleven years. During that time, she had Natalie on April 23, 1997. Shirley was at the hospital waiting for her first grandchild. Then four years later when Caroline was born on July 19, 2001, both John and Shirley were present.

Melanie quit work for a while after Caroline was born. However, she went back to work as the upper school nurse at Grace Community School, a private Christian school in Tyler, and has been there for seven years at this writing. John Mills is employed at Citizens State Bank in Tyler.

Tim couldn't wait to grow up and go to the United States. He had looked forward to that for a long time, probably more so because his sister had already paved the way. In 1992, Tim moved to Conway, Arkansas, to attend Central Baptist College. However, after a year he decided that college was not what he wanted to do. He moved in with Shirley's parents, the Dyers, and lived there for three years. Tim helped his grandfather on the farm and also worked at the Brookshire Grocery Store in Corsicana. Years later after Mr. Dyer died, Mrs. Dyer told Tim, "You were like a son to your grandfather." He felt very close to them.

However, the time came for him to move out on his own when he married. He got a job at the glass plant in Corsicana and worked there for many years. During that time, Kaleigh Nicole Ladd was born on April 25, 1997, just two days after her cousin. She is the light of his life. He says that he is trying hard to raise her just as his parents raised him. Tim has full custody of Kaleigh after his divorce.

Tim later met Michelle Whisenant. They dated about a year and married on January 11, 2008. He also became father to a son when he married Michelle. His name is Corbin Whisenant, and he is now 21.

Tim continued working in Corsicana for several years, but was not as happy as he would have liked. In September 2011, the opportunity arose to move to Tyler. They did, and he now works in the warehouse for Helmerich and Payne Oil Company in Bullard. Michelle is an administrator at Labor Ready in Tyler.

People Are People

Steven grew up the last few years without any other children in the home. He was interested in many things. Once Shirley looked out the window and fire was everywhere. He said he liked to "blow things up." But everyone survived without any harm. According to Joyce Gibson, he was the only one who got to benefit from a computer at home. She had suggested that they hire a local computer geek to teach him about computers because he would need that when he went off to college.

In 1999, Steven was the last to leave and John and Shirley had an empty nest, or as empty as it could be with groups continuing to come down and some often staying in their home. Steven went to Jacksonville College and then to the University of Texas at Tyler. He said that he had the usual problems of adjusting to college and what to major in.

He got a degree in both Spanish and biology, not really sure what he wanted to do. However, he learned of a job with the Tyler Independent School District in bilingual education. That sounded perfect! He began working at Austin Elementary teaching bilingual education. He has done that for nine years and will move into an administrative position as cognitive coach in the fall of 2012.

Although Steven is perfectly content to remain unmarried, he does have a *child*. John and Shirley always refer to Maddie as their *grand dog*. The bulldog often visits at the Ladds' house in Tyler when Steven comes over.

John and Shirley are so glad that they have a house in Tyler to come to when they are in Texas. For years when they were on furlough, they would stay with either the Dyers near Corsicana or the Ladds in San Antonio. In 2004 God brought another miracle into their lives. Some friends that they knew from college had visited them from time to time. These people

had by that point been very successful in business. They believed in giving to others in large ways.

One day the couple told the Ladds that they wanted to buy them a house wherever they wanted. Although John and Shirley did not really feel right about it at first, they also knew that the Lord works in ways that we don't always understand. Who were they to refuse this couple the blessing of showing their love for the Lord through this act?

The couple explained that they wanted them to buy the house as soon as possible. They all went house shopping in Tyler. The Ladds found a small house, but it all seemed like a fairy tale. The couple told John and Shirley that they would get the paperwork going, and then the Ladds could come back when it was time to sign papers.

However, Melanie called them one day and told them that the deal fell through. It had been a foreclosure, and things just didn't work. Their friends asked what details would they have wanted different in another house that the first did not have. That's when Mela and the lady went house hunting again. They found another house that had the things Shirley had told them she would have liked. Everyone said, "This is it!"

Everything was set again for the signing, but the husband passed away two days before the signing. Although the wife did not expect John to be able to come to the funeral, he did. By that point, Mela had told him that the original house was back on the market again. At the funeral, the lady said that her husband was probably getting a laugh out of that. God had worked it out to give John and Shirley the house that they would have chosen if they had been able to.

They have now been in the house for about eight years

at this writing. They love it. John has a garden in the back and Shirley has everything decorated with things from Mexico and their BMMI trips all around the world. There is plenty of room for all the family at holidays.

Shirley and John love the holidays. They have a traditional Thanksgiving each year in Mexico. Of course, that's an American holiday.

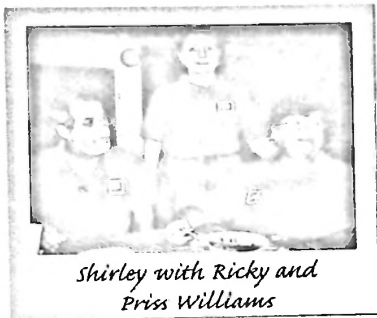
They usually invite any Americans who are in the area. In fact, Joyce Gibson continued to come down for Thanksgiving many years after she quit teaching for them.

Shirley and Priss Williams usually divide up the cooking responsibilities. They serve turkey, chicken, or ham (whichever is available) and cornbread dressing. She has to either remember to bring the corn meal down before then or someone has to bring it down as they come for the holiday. Corn meal is not sold in Mexico.

As long as Joyce Gibson was there and any children were present, the children would put on a play about the first Thanksgiving. Joyce took all the young ones out onto the patio and worked with them until it



Thanksgiving in Mexico

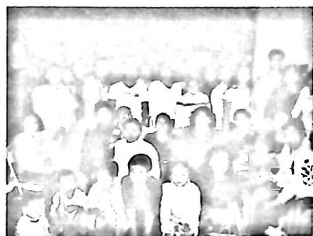


Shirley with Ricky and Priss Williams

was time for the meal. Then they performed their play for the adults.

Then as all gathered around the table, John asked each person to share one thing for which they were thankful. The love always abounded along with the food that each family had brought with them to share with the Ladds. Through the years, many recipes were shared and served at Thanksgiving. Of course, John makes the bread, Priss brings chocolate and pecan pies as well as sweet potatoes on occasion, and they have Gladys' pumpkin pie. When the Hearn's were still able to come, Gladys always made potato salad as well. Now it has become part of the celebration.

Since Thanksgiving is always on Thursday, everyone goes to church in the mission downstairs that evening. Afterwards, they invite others to come



Clinic Christmas 2005



Family Christmas 2009



Tim, Mel, and Steven

up and share in the leftovers. Thus, they spread the love of God through all their extended family and friends.

Every Christmas, the Ladds have a special Christmas celebration for all of the clinic staff and their families. The responsibilities are divided up as they all come to John and Shirley's house for a time of fun and fellowship. They have a combination of Mexican and American foods including baked pork, scalloped potatoes, green spaghetti, layered green salad, cherry cream cheese pie, and bread with hot Mexican fruit punch.

The staff and family members draw names for gifts. The children draw with each other and then the adults do the same. Singing Christmas carols is always enjoyed during the party. This usually takes place a week or more before Christmas. Then the clinic shuts down for a few days at Christmas so that all the staff may enjoy being with family, even if they have to travel across the country to do it.

Of course, the Ladds all have a big family Christmas together in Tyler after John and Shirley return for the holiday. Caroline remembers especially that Pop reads the Christmas story before the family opens presents. Then Caroline says, "We proceed to open presents all the while thinking of the True Christmas present Jesus!" They usually also take a family photo while everyone is together.

Everyone who has ever spent time with the Ladds talks about how much they enjoy being with them. They are fun! In fact, you can't be with them for long without laughing about something. John and Shirley have the attitude that you can find something good and something to enjoy about anything if you just look. Therefore, they laugh and enjoy life. I saw a quote on a candy wrapper that said, "Laugh until your heart overflows." John and Shirley do that, but I think actually for them the quote

would more accurately be, "Love until your heart overflows." That is exactly what they do. Through them, others are able to see the love of God.

Whenever the Ladds are in Tyler they enjoy being with their children and grandchildren as much as possible since all of the children live in Tyler now. They usually have special dinners for each person's birthday. John and Shirley also enjoy being with each granddaughter at different times.

Kaleigh recalls a time when she needed to go shopping and expected Shirley to take her because her parents couldn't. However, when she got to her grandparents' house, she discovered John there by himself. Shirley had plans and was already gone. That's when Kaleigh and John spent a day together shopping at the mall and having fun, just the two of them.

All of the grandchildren remember times when they helped John make his weekly yeast bread. Caroline especially enjoyed helping Pop, as they call him. He shows the girls how to roll out the dough and add flour to it. Then, of course, the favorite part of all is getting to eat the fresh, hot bread, perhaps with butter and jelly.

Both Caroline and Kaleigh remember riding their bikes with John and Shirley while they walked. The Ladds have a habit of walking every morning if possible. When Kaleigh lived in Corsicana, she lived near a park and they would go over there to walk while she rode her bike. Another time when Caroline was in Mexico, she remembers riding bikes with her sister and dad. She was riding barefoot (something she now realizes was not a good idea) and ripped some skin on her foot. They returned to Nana and Pop's house. John then changed from being Pop to being Dr. Ladd (or maybe just a natural grandfather caring for his loved ones) and doctored her up. The girls treasure these special times

with their Nana and Pop.

Sometimes John and Shirley can hardly believe the love that God has for them. He protects and cares for them so well, just as He will do the same for you. A few years ago, John began to have some health problems and wasn't quite sure what it was. After some tests, the doctors in Tyler said that he had a tumor on his kidney. They wanted to do a biopsy.

John told them to remove the kidney if it was malignant. When he came out of surgery and awoke, he learned that they had removed a kidney. However, the biopsy showed that the tumor was benign. That was not what John had intended. He only wanted it removed in case of a malignancy.

Although patients live a fairly normal life without one kidney, there is always the possibility that something could happen to the other one. Also, for people who have chronic health problems, having only one kidney presents trouble that an ordinary patient would not have. Special precautions have to be taken in any health-related procedure. God has been good, however, in giving John a healthy body and allowing him to travel all over the world without any serious trouble.

For years, John and Shirley had planned to take a vacation of a lifetime for a special anniversary. However, as the years went by, it kept being postponed. Finally in 2011, to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary, they took a trip with Coy and Pat Quesenbury to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Holland. They spent ten days and celebrated the love that they shared, reminding themselves how God had brought them together and allowed them to have such a blessed life.

As always, John and Shirley have been praying for God's will in their lives. Recently, they have been led to slightly change

People Are People

their focus in life. Whereas the Ladds have been based in Mexico, but often travel with BMMI around the world, beginning after the national BMAA meeting in 2012, they will be based in Tyler, and John will be going with BMMI on most trips. However, he will continue to oversee the clinic in Mexico.

This is possible because the staff of the Good Samaritan Clinic is well trained and capable of running the day-to-day operation without John there. He has shared love with them and shown them what needs to be done so that now they can do the job and continue to share love with others.

People Need Love

God gave us the perfect example of love, and we should follow it in our own lives. The New Testament uses two different Greek words for love. One is *phileo*, meaning the love between friends. The other is *agape*, the love that God has for man and that Christians should have for each other. We should all demonstrate both kinds of love on a daily basis.

Jesus gave two commandments in Matthew 22:37-40. What are they?

If we could obey the first of those, we would be keeping the first four of the Ten Commandments. Then, we would keep the other six of the Ten Commandments if we obeyed the second of Jesus' commands. Chances are if we have trouble with the first, then we will surely have trouble with the second. However, we should strive to obey both as best we can with God's help.

Christ went a step further when He spoke the words of

People Are People

Luke 6:35-38. This is something that few people today will do. Think of someone whom you need to try to love more. Make an effort to pray for them.

Sometimes we think that we should pray for God to take our enemies away or actually take revenge on them. However, we should pray for God to bless them or allow them to see Him and possibly change their lives for all eternity. That is the kind of love that Jesus recommends.

First John 3:18 talks about not loving in word only but in deeds as well. What is the difference?

Think of an example of something you have done lately that although you said you loved someone, you did not show it in your actions. What should you have done in that situation?

What does Acts 20:35 say that would be a demonstration of love?

Giving does show love. However, another act of love that people often don't think about is the act of receiving. How is that? When you receive something from another, you have allowed that person to receive a blessing because of the joy of giving. You may not have that problem. You may always be on the receiving end. If

so, what are some ways that you can become more of a giver?

However, if you always give, then the next time someone wants to give you something, take it in the spirit of Christian love so that he or she may receive a blessing. Which are you: a giver, a receiver, or are you well balanced in giving and receiving?

Although John and Shirley Ladd have given much through the years to many people in many circumstances, they have also been on the receiving end many times. It seems that the more a person gives, the more they can understand the need to receive, and then they in turn want to give more because they have received. It's a never-ending circle as long as we keep on giving.

In working with the Ladds on this book, I was reminded of the song *Love in Any Language*. They speak fluent English and Spanish, but they often find themselves in other countries around the world where they do not speak the official language. However, they do speak the language of love fluently. The song talks about teaching our children the differences in people, but John and Shirley have strived to teach everyone how people are the same. Thus, people are people. That's how their ministry has been so successful throughout the years because they show God's love in everything they do.

The Ladds have also taught others how to love, especially their children. Each one makes an effort to follow the examples they saw growing up, but the most important thing they saw was how much their parents loved the Lord and wanted everything to be for His honor and glory.

People Are People

They were reluctant for this book to be written because they were afraid too much would be said about them and not God. I hope I haven't done that. My purpose has been to show God in everything. After all, He tells us in Matthew 5:16, "*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven.*"

The one request that John and Shirley had for the book was that I include a special verse as the motto for their life. I knew that this was their heart before I ever began writing, but after being with them as much as I have over the last two years, it has been reinforced even more. That verse is Psalm 115:1, "*Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness*" (NIV).

In Others' Words

I am very grateful to my parents for the way they raised me and for the wisdom God gave them (Melanie Mills, email to author, April 10, 2012).

I'm very fortunate to have the parents I have. They gave me a chance to live. If it weren't for them I probably wouldn't be here. They've always been there for me; the door's always open, but they don't push me. They don't make a big deal about problems or bring things back up. They want you to know they are there for you. They've set good examples. They just provide peace for us all. It's a dream come true to be in Tyler with them. I try to be the same for Kaleigh and raise her like they did me. They have always been supportive (Tim Ladd, telephone interview with author, April 1, 2012).

When people ask me what it was like growing up in Mexico, I don't know exactly how to respond other than to say that it was

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home; it was where my friends, neighbors, and extended family lived. As an adult, I have been able to better understand that it was your humble acceptance of people, culture, and differences that created an environment where, as a child, I felt part of the community (unaware that I was, in fact, a gringo!) As a result of your example I have received a valuable heritage of seeing the world less as those people and more as people. Pop, your mantra "People Are People" was more than a phrase that we loved poking fun at. I now realize that it was what the two of you were doing with your life all along; accepting, caring, and meeting the needs of all people, regardless of how they responded to Christ.

I thank the two of you for giving me an exciting and rich childhood. That happy place that I go to when things are not nice is home. It is Aquismon.

I love you,

— Steven (Steven Ladd, email to author, April 10, 2012).

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“Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

Matthew 15:11 NKJV

From Shirley's Kitchen

Chicken Tortilla Soup

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2-3 garlic cloves
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 cups diced tomatoes
- 1 cup whole corn kernels (fresh-cooked is best, but canned is fine)
- 2 cups chopped or shredded cooked chicken
- 1 ½ quarts chicken broth
- 1 can black beans
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Saute onion and garlic in olive oil in a stock pot until tender. Add remaining ingredients, and simmer 30 minutes or so.

Add after serving (each person adds these to individual serving):

- Crushed tortilla chips
- Chopped sliced avocado
- Shredded cheese (whatever kind you like)
- Chopped green onions, or regular onions if you prefer

Chilaquiles

2 dozen corn tortillas

3 large tomatoes

½ large onion

1 teaspoon salt

Dash garlic powder or 1 clove fresh garlic, finely chopped

3 tablespoons oil (more if needed)

½ - 1 cup grated cheese (whatever kind you like)

Chop or cut the tortillas into strips. While browning in the heated oil, blend the vegetables in the blender with small amount of water.

Drain oil from crisp tortillas, pour vegetable sauce in and stir well, simmering 3-5 minutes, until the tomato sauce is cooked (it will change color). Top each serving with cheese.

This is good served as an accompaniment for scrambled eggs and toast for breakfast, or with lettuce and tomato salad, refried beans, and guacamole for lunch or supper. Chopped cooked chicken also can be added to the chilaquiles.

Chiles Rellenas

8 large jalapeno peppers

Wash the peppers well. Slice off the stem end. Make a vertical slit from the stem end down one side only, to the tip. With a small spoon, remove the seeds and veins, scraping well. Place the peppers in a pot of boiling water (enough to slightly cover the peppers) into which you have dissolved one-half cup of salt.

When a toothpick or small sharp knife can be inserted easily into the pepper (this doesn't take long), drain hot water off and empty

the peppers into a bowl of cold water in which one-third cup of sugar has been dissolved. Let sit for about 15-20 minutes. Drain.

Filling:

- 1 ½ tablespoons chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 pound ground beef or ground turkey
- 1 medium tomato
- 2 tablespoons chopped, lightly toasted almonds
- 1 tablespoon chopped raisins
- 1 tablespoon chopped green olives

In a frying pan, sauté the onion and garlic. Add the ground beef and cook until done. Add the chopped tomato, cooking until done. Stir in almonds, raisins, and olives. Set aside to cool.

Batter:

Separate 4 large eggs. Beat the whites until stiff. In another bowl, beat the yolks with a fork. Into the beaten egg yolks, stir 4 rounded tablespoons of flour and 2 teaspoons of water. Stir yolk mixture until smooth, then fold lightly into the beaten whites.

Fill each pepper with filling. With a large spoon, dip each pepper into the batter, covering the pepper completely and place carefully into a frying pan of hot oil, browning lightly, turning only once. Drain well on paper towels, salt lightly, and serve with beans, Mexican rice, a salad of your choice, and hot tortillas.

Flan

In a heavy skillet, melt (caramelize) one-third cup sugar, stirring constantly and being careful not to burn it. It will turn a caramel color.

In a blender, place 4 eggs, 1 can sweetened condensed milk, 1 can evaporated milk, and 1 tablespoon vanilla flavoring. Blend well.

Pour the melted sugar into the pan you'll bake the flan in. Then pour the blended mixture on top of that. Place this pan in a larger pan, filled with cold water up to the ½ mark of the smaller pan with the flan in it. Bake until a knife stuck into the middle of the flan comes out clean. Carefully remove the pans from the oven. Remove the flan pan carefully from the pan of water. Slide a knife around the edge to loosen it from the sides. It may either be cut and served from that pan, or turned onto a larger plate for serving. Drizzle the remaining melted sugar over the flan. May be served when cooled, or may be chilled in the refrigerator, but do not put it in the refrigerator while still hot. Allow to cool to room temperature before refrigerating.

Guacamole

2 ripe avocados (just barely soft to the touch)

1 small tomato

1 tablespoon chopped onion

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Salt to taste

1 tablespoon mayonnaise, if you like

Peel and mash avocados. Add remaining ingredients and stir. Serve immediately, or cover tightly, leaving the seeds inside (some think the seeds keep avocado from turning dark) and store in refrigerator until serving time.

Mexican Rice

- 1 ½ cups raw rice
- 3 tablespoons cooking oil
- 3 tablespoons chopped or sliced onion
- ¼ cup chopped tomato
- 3 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt

Brown rice in hot oil until it just begins to brown. Add onion, tomatoes, and salt. Stir for one minute. Add water and stir. Cover tightly when it begins to boil and turn burner to low. Do not uncover or stir for 20 minutes. Serve.

Pico De Gallo Salsa

- 4 jalapeno peppers (more if you like)
- 2 large tomatoes
- 1 small onion
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon salad oil
- 2 tablespoons or more of washed, chopped cilantro

If you do not want a very hot sauce, remove the seeds and veins from the peppers. Chop all vegetables; add salt and oil, mixing well.

Refried Beans

Soak 2 cups black or pinto beans overnight. Cook until tender. Add more water if needed. Add salt to taste. Pour out most of the liquid, leaving only enough to be able to grind them in the blender, then fry for 10 minutes in about 2 tablespoons hot oil, stirring constantly.

Tostadas

12 tostada shells

1 pound ground beef

Onion, garlic, salt, cumin, and chili powder to taste

1 cup grated cheese (your choice of kind)

2 tomatoes, chopped

Finely shredded lettuce

Refried beans

Hot sauce

Saute onion until tender; add ground beef and seasonings. Cook until meat is done. Spread refried beans on each tostada shell, add small amount of beef, then lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, and hot sauce. (Chicken may be used instead of beef.)

Ricks, Jackie (Blackaby),

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John Ladd



Shirley Ladd

An account of the lives and ministry of
medical missionaries John and Shirley Ladd.

As a preacher's daughter and wife, Jackie Blackerby Ricks knows first-hand about ministry. A school teacher for over thirty years, she enjoys writing and music.

Jackie's historical fiction series, *Chance on Love*, includes the novels *Love Rejoices in the Truth*, and *Love Is Patient*. Discover more of Jackie's works at amazon.com/author/jackiericks.

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