

# Risley Family Ministries

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**Taking the Gospel to the Mountain Villages, Prisons and Hospitals, of Sonora, Mexico**

## January 2025

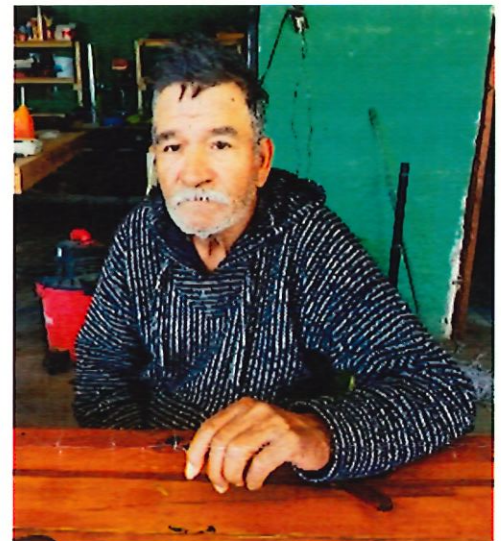
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what an awesome God we serve! He has worked so much over the last few months that I would like to skip the customary opening pleasantries and dive right in.

Some of you might remember a lady named Tania and her two young children who we sheltered for six months a few years ago. I have to be honest, I can't remember all the details, but I do remember she had attempted suicide after being raped. The local Social Services asked if we could provide a safe place for her and her children as they tried to find the man responsible and arrange counseling. While with us she came to faith in Jesus Christ and loved studying the Bible with us.

Social Services and the town built her a house and gave her a job working for the city. Unfortunately, shortly after she left our house, she stopped studying the Bible with us and eventually outright rejected any of our attempts to fellowship and talk with her and her children.

Last Friday Social Services came to our house and asked if there was anything we could do to help an old man from the community. His name is Marcos Antonio. He is 78 years old. Social Services told us that the man's daughter had kicked him out of the house three nights ago and he hadn't eaten since. He had slept on the ground outside his daughter's house for three nights waiting for her to let him back in, but she never did. When Social Services talked to the daughter, she said that she was done with him and that they should take him to us because "they'll help anybody".

Social Services, of course, already knew that, and when they brought Marcos Antonio here he devoured three bowls of soup before vomiting and requesting more. This wasn't out of gluttony, it was pure starvation. When the doctor came out and



**Marcos Antonio**

evaluated him, he was literally skin and bones. The doctor said that he was suffering from malnutrition and had evidently been neglected for quite a while.



**Marcos reading his Bible**

The next morning when I walked outside, I saw Marcos sitting in the front yard reading a Bible. I, of course, started a conversation with him. He let me know that his daughter had led him to Jesus four years ago and that ever since believing in him for his salvation, he had read his Bible every morning. This was such a blessing. We talked for at least an hour about various Biblical topics. However, as he started talking about his daughter his eyes darkened and he started to cry.

He asked me how his daughter could do such a thing. We discussed his situation for quite a while and eventually Cheryl and I realized that his daughter was Tania, the lady we had cared for years ago!

We have no idea why Tania has made the decisions that she has. Social Services has confirmed that she is once again having psychological problems. They have removed one of her children from her custody and are considering placing the child with us so he can be with his grandfather. This is such a wonderfully terrible mess of a situation that God has blessed us with. I know that might sound like something odd to say, but this is exactly the way God works! We have seen Him work things like this to His glory time and time again. We give thanks for our brother Marcos that God has brought to us. Please pray for Tania and Marcos they are both hurting. Also pray for Gods guidance and wisdom for us as we deal with this situation in His name.

Another great blessing is Rafael. Rafael is a 52 year old man who now lives in the next village up from ours called Suaqui. He is a former drug addict who spent ten years in prison in the United States for drug trafficking. In December he was released from prison, deported, and returned here. However, when he got here he discovered that his family home had been torn down and the land sold. Rafael found himself without a place to live, no job, no money and well just... absolutely nothing. He spent many weeks on the street until the police told him about our ministry and said he should come see us.

Well, Rafael did come see us. On January 10<sup>th</sup> a shirtless Rafael came and stood in front of our house, in 40 degree weather, at 9:30PM, and stared at it. Maybe this is a good time to mention that Rafael has some...



**Rafael**

let's just call it damage from having consumed too many of the drugs he trafficked, but we didn't know that at the time.

If you are familiar with some of the cartel, sicario, and drug-related issues we have dealt with in the past, then it will come as no surprise to you how Reagan and I approached the tattooed shirtless man standing outside our house, rocking back and forth, just staring at it.

You may call it stereotyping if you like, and it is, but it's a stereotype for a reason. We called the police to come and pick up the crazy drugged out psycho we had caught staring in the windows of our house. You can imagine our surprise when the police arrived and told us they had sent him. We took the handcuffs off him, put away our guns, and invited him and the police in for cookies and coffee. Folks... you can't make this stuff up if you wanted to!

After learning of his situation, we helped him find a job and a house to rent. He comes every day and sometimes in the middle of the night for lunch. He is a great guy. While getting to know him, we discovered he came to Christ through a prison ministry. We have no idea which one, because he can't even remember what prison he was in, but we thank God for Rafael. While he is indeed mentally damaged, he isn't dumb and he enjoys the Bible studies and fellowship. Please pray for Rafael as he grows in Christ and becomes more able to accept the love and fellowship he enjoys here with us.



**Ignacio**

Another new addition is Ignacio Serrano. He is a 92 year old man who the police found sitting in a wheelchair on the local town square, at about one o'clock in the morning, freezing and barely conscious. They brought him to the local doctor. Not knowing what to do with Ignacio, the police and doctor brought him to our house to see if we could help care for him until they found out what was going on. Of course, we brought him in, warmed him up, fed him, and put a bed in the living room for him to sleep on.

The next morning, Social Services and the doctor came to examine Ignacio. Ignacio was suffering from severe malnutrition. His backside and back were covered in terrible open and unattended bed sores. He has some sort of advanced arthritis which causes him terrible joint pain that we struggle to manage. He also suffers from a massive hernia which will need to be operated on when he is well enough

Eventually, Social Services was able to discover who he was. His family lives in a town called San Filipe about 20 miles away. His daughter and son had called me the week before asking if we had room to accept Ignacio. I had to tell them no, because we just didn't have room. Instead of waiting for an opening, they decided to bring Ignacio to Baviacora, and they abandoned him on the square. They told the police that they knew the police would bring him to us and that we wouldn't refuse him.

The police are prosecuting the son and daughter for elderly abuse and abandonment. Ignacio is now permanently with us and we are caring for him to the best of our abilities. His bed sores are terrible. While they show signs of starting to heal, it is going to be a long and painful road. Thankfully, he has started putting on weight but given his advanced age, terrible arthritis, and overall poor health, he probably won't be with us long. Please pray for God's blessings on Ignacio and that His will be done.

As you can imagine, with these additions we are busier than ever. We thank God for each and every brother and sister He has brought us to care for in His name, but we ask for your prayers. I'm sure you can imagine the joy we have caring for these brothers and sisters, but I'm also sure you can imagine how physically and mentally demanding it is.

We have always had folks with us that needed full time care and were in wheelchairs, however, we have never had so many at once. We are currently caring for six people who are wheelchair bound and need full time attention and care. They are Piriri(73), Ramon(77), Ignacio(91), Rafael(78) (not drug Rafael), Alfredo(73) and Anna(68). There are three other people, Rebeca(82), Jesus Maria(73) and Marcos Antonio(78) who also need fulltime care which includes help with bathing, getting dressed, and personal hygiene, but they walk with walkers and canes. Doc(73), Alfonso(91) and Shakashe(83?) also walk with canes, but they can dress themselves and only need help bathing.



**Ignacio's bed sores and hernia**



**Pepe**

Currently, Pepe (71) and Hose(69) are the only folks living with us that can mostly care for themselves. However, Pepe suffers from a degenerative bone disease which the doctors say will render him wheelchair bound within six months. We also minister daily to Luis(55), Rafael(52), Juan(71), Evan(62), and Juanita(88) who don't live here but come for meals, fellowship, and study. Those are just the regulars. Many others come and go as they have need or desire. We thank God for each and every one of them, but I think you can understand why we ask you to pray for our strength, patience, and health.

Speaking of those who come as they have need, Luis Cantera is a man God led to us. He came to our house a couple of weeks ago. He is about 55 years old, but he suffers from advanced Parkinson's disease. He shakes so severely that he can't drink without a straw and is virtually incapable of eating on his own. Luis has been a Christian for many years, and he never ceases to praise God and thank him for all the blessing He has been given.

As you know, there isn't much that can be done about Luis's condition. Even if the meds were available that he needs, the cost would be prohibitive. Social Services is trying to help him with some of his daily chores. They bring him to our house to eat and spend the day, but as much as we would like to give him a place to sleep, we simply do not have any more space to put another bed.



**Luis Canteras**

For now, we are caring for him as best we can, but it won't be long before he will not be able to live without fulltime attention and care. Please pray for Luise and ask that God handles this situation in a way only He can.

Before I close, I want to address one more issue that is sensitive in nature, and for which we ask for your prayers. As we all know, politics is politics, and regardless of our individual views, we can all acknowledge that political decisions can and do affect ministry.

I won't dance around the issue, I'll just lay it out as plainly as I can. Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the current administration's foreign policies concerning Mexico, the reality is that these policies have created a rather hostile environment for American citizens living in Mexico, especially here in Sonora. Please understand that I am not making a political statement, nor am I offering criticism or endorsement of these policies, I am simply stating the realities of the situation.

Within our community, those who know us have not changed their views of us in any way. However, some who do not know us see only Americans, whom they assume hate all Mexicans. What many people may not know is that violence against Americans has sharply increased in the past month and a half, and we are not exempt. We have received direct and specific threats, including one that explicitly stated, "If you don't leave, you will all burn."

The local police are aware of the situation, and both they and I believe it's unlikely that anyone would be dumb enough to try and burn down our house... but who knows. Even though I hold dual citizenship, the uncomfortable reality is that racial attitudes in Mexico can be highly hypocritical. Many see different races and ethnicities as *different* and, as such, suspicious and threatening. This may be an uncomfortable truth, but it is the reality we face.

In the United States, we are accustomed to seeing and interacting with people from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds every day. While prejudice does exist in the United States, despite what the media often portrays, the fact of the matter is that very few Americans are genuinely racist. In contrast, Mexico has far less racial diversity, which makes foreigners stand out more noticeably. As a result, there is often a high level of prejudice and distrust toward those who are perceived as outsiders and now, particularly, Americans.

I'll leave it at that. I believe you understand the situation, and there's no need to elaborate further. We simply ask for your prayers for our safety during this time.

In closing we once again want to thank you for your prayers, love, and support. We thank God for the blessing of being able and capable of serving, loving, and ministering to His children that He bring to us. Without your faithful love, prayers, and financial support, we would be unable to do so in the way that we do. On behalf of ourselves and our mutual brothers and sisters in Christ that we serve in His name, we thank you.

Grady and Cheryl Risley  
Along with the rest of the Risley Family