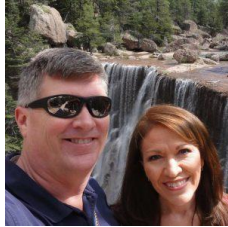


Joy in Difficult Circumstances

There's a joy to the Christian life that just can't be manufactured. It's a joy that is not tied to our circumstances. In fact, our circumstances can get pretty nasty, but when we're walking with Christ, the joy is still there.

Ask any missionary who's ever served in a difficult area. I did. My cousin David and his wife Sherri have served faithfully for many years as missionaries. Three of their four children are either serving as missionaries or in training.



David and Sherri Pryor

David shared the following story with me, not about himself, but about others he works with. It's a great reminder of the joy we experience in sharing Christ even when the circumstances are difficult.

The sound started as a faint thumping wafting through the still mountain air. It grew slowly in intensity until it echoed off the mountains surrounding the village. Missionary Terry Reed soon recognized the sound as an approaching helicopter. He picked up his young daughter and stepped outside to see this rare sight. As he squinted into the bright, crystalline mountain air, he recognized the helicopter as belonging to the military. As Terry watched the circling aircraft, it began firing at gunmen just over the crest of the mountain behind their home. The gunmen returned fire and Terry could hear bullets whizzing through the air, with one striking the ground just a few feet from where he stood. With shock and surprise, Terry quickly retreated to the relative safety of their house with his young daughter clutched in his arms. The ensuing battle between the Mexican military and drug cartel gunmen lasted the rest of the day.

This was just one confrontation between government forces and criminals that has become all too common in the mountains of northwestern Mexico, an area that is known as the "Golden Triangle" due to its rich crops of marijuana and opium. But, the region is also rich in people groups who have never heard the Gospel.

Terry Reed and his family, along with partners Dennis Bender and his family, had lived in the remote mountain village for many years working among the Guarijio people as missionaries with New Tribes Mission. The helicopter incident was not the first time the team had to be evacuated from the village because of violence, and it would not be the last. But, with careful planning and taking steps to mitigate the risks, their missionary team continues their ministry among the

Guarijio. It is not an easy life, but sharing the Gospel with unreached people is worth taking measured risks.

A result of such willingness to share the Gospel despite adversity is the story of one young Guarijio man named Vicente. He was one of the youth that Terry worked with in the village. To overcome the false beliefs that the Guarijio are steeped in, Terry taught the Bible chronological from Creation to Christ. Vicente first heard the Gospel in Spanish, but it was only when he heard it in his native tongue that he fully understood his sin separated him from God and that he needed a savior. As a result, he placed his complete trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Sometime later, Vicente shared this testimony with Terry:

"When I was a kid, the only thing I ever thought I would do when I grew up was plant marijuana. I didn't know anything else. But, now, my future plan is to go work in an ethnic group, whether in my own or another. I want to go teach the word of God to people who have not heard anything about Christ our Savior."

Even though Vicente only had a sixth grade education, he attended New Tribes' Bible Institute in Chihuahua City and graduated with honors. He then went through the mission's training program for missionaries and has since joined the Guarijio team, returning to his home village to reach his kindred.



Vicente and his wife, Erendira

God has gifted Vicente with amazing language abilities and he is helping translate the Bible into his native language.

Vicente's story is one that glorifies God and His goodness. It also illustrates what can be achieved when faithful Christians like the Reeds and Benders are willing to give up ease and comfort in order to share the love of Christ wherever He directs them.

Whether across the world or across the street, there is a joy that awaits us when we share Christ—even in the most difficult of circumstances.

"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20-21).