

## WHEN THE LORD IS CLOSE

**“The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Ps 34:18)**

I presume that a person can be reconciled to God at any time and in any place. It seems obvious, however, that the easiest time to do so, is when God is close by. This principle was illustrated over and over on a recent mission trip to Nicaragua.

- On Monday, June 1, 2009, I was reading my Spanish Bible while waiting on the flight. A man tapped me on the shoulder and said: “I see you read Spanish”. This began an hour and a half conversation that blessed me in many ways. This man was a Delta Airline Captain who made regular flights to India. He is working in a remote area with a ministry that feeds 9,000 orphans every day. His commitment to Christ came, as you might have guessed, when his heart was broken and his spirit was crushed. Nine years ago his wife was divorcing him and his life was in shambles. With the help of Christ his marriage was saved and his life has now assumed new meaning and significance.
- In Atlanta, on the same day, I met a man who spends eight months of the year doing mission work in Nicaragua. As a young man he had committed himself to the ministry, but after seven years as a youth pastor, his wife divorced him and his dreams of Christian service disappeared. Twenty five long years later the Lord was close by. His heart was broken and his spirit crushed by the thought that he had given the best years of his life to things that had no eternal significance. His radiant smile convinced me that today he is happy in the service of the King.
- On Thursday I spoke for an hour with a young Nicaraguan named Jorge who wanted to be an evangelist. He and three friends were determined to go from city to city like the apostles and preach. They had no money, no car, and no denomination to support them. With tears in his eyes he told me of his life as a gang member, of his time in the hospital near death, and of his futile efforts to win his father to Christ. God was near! He took copious notes on everything I said and sat on the front row at the Pastor’s Conference.
- That same night one of our American missionaries shared the story of his conversion. He once was a drug dealer and addict. Since he had neither a driver’s license nor insurance he traveled on country roads to deliver his illicit merchandise. One day, on a remote country road, he had a head on collision. With blood running down his face he ran to the woods to hide his drugs. Then he returned and pleaded with the other driver not to call the police. By the grace of God, the man was a Christian and assured the frightened young sinner that God was real and that Jesus would help him if he would only give him the chance. The fact that he was now on the mission field is powerful evidence that he took advantage of the opportunity when God was close by.
- On Friday I visited with a man from Pennsylvania. His story, like the others, involved a broken heart and a crushed spirit. His marriage also was on the rocks and he was so far down that he had no way to look but up. A dear friend not only led him to Christ, but disciplined him on a daily basis. The fact that he too came to Nicaragua to witness for Christ is obviously a strong argument for his conversion. He is a diligent student of the Scriptures and believes that the Body of Christ is in transition between organization and organism. He shared with me two books from godly men on the cutting edge of Biblical thought as it relates to the current condition of the Body of Christ.
- Jesus once told the story of a man who had two sons. One went to a far country and the other stayed home. The prodigal, as you know, had a broken heart and a crushed spirit. That’s why the Father ran to his side while he was still a long way off (Lk. 15:20). This is the only time in Scripture that God is pictured as running. How beautiful! God is never more near to you and me than when we have a broken heart and are crushed in spirit.

**DON’T MISS THE CHANCE TO BE RECONCILED WITH GOD WHEN HE IS NEAR!**