

# Insights to help you . . .

February 2010

## Latin Americans and the Beauty of Jesus ~

*"But in your hearts  
set apart Christ as Lord.  
Always be prepared to  
give an answer  
to everyone  
who asks you  
to give the reason  
for the hope you have.  
But do this  
with gentleness  
and respect,  
keeping a clear conscience,  
so that those  
who speak maliciously  
against  
your good behavior  
in Christ  
may be ashamed  
of their slander.*

- 1 Peter 3:15-16

One afternoon in Guatemala I listened to a courtyard fountain spill, trickle, gurgle and sing. It restored my soul...I was there to teach Guatemalans who were heading to places like Mauritania, Kurdistan and Sudan. My topic was Muslim women. Many Spanish-speaking missionaries serve in such countries. Like Jesus' people elsewhere, Latin Americans not only worship and witness and network and grow in maturity, but also reach across borders in well-planned mission.

There is a large ethnic group in the Middle East where several hundred former Muslims follow Jesus because of the witness of a team of Latin American professionals. When they first arrived, they immersed themselves in local life. *"We learned what their profiles were for an ideal man and woman, and we tried to fulfil those standards,"* says a leader, Abraham Duran. *"We tried to walk, behave, eat, drink, talk, share, keep silence, sleep, and relate in ways that our people group considered right, proper, and ideal...We tried to dispel their prejudices...We never initiated apologetic discussions, but we responded...People cannot see the beauty of Jesus if they see only our ugliness."*

*"We presented the beauty of Christ's teachings about God, human beings, society, religious leaders, and God's kingdom before we talked to them about who Jesus is...His teaching "rings true."...We think we are good, and discover that we are unable to keep "the law" or noble "New Year" resolutions consistently. We are sure we can fix society with more education, and our best projects end in chaos. We insist that the revolution will solve the problems, and it multiplies them. We affirm that we can manage wealth and power, and they become our masters. We know we can change the world if religion is in power, and religion in power turns people into rebels and saints into monsters."*

The people discovered that Jesus was the hero they were looking for. They saw Jesus' compassion demonstrated by the missionaries who *"took the side of justice, served the poor, healed the sick, educated the ignorant, and provided for the needy..."* They practiced community, and welcomed new believers, even as they encouraged them to stay close to their families and friends. These Latin Americans deliberately traded the beauties of countries like Guatemala—the colourful flowers and textiles, the familiar spices and fruits, the greenery and flowing water, the language of Cervantes—to share the beauty of Jesus.

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