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Please Pray

I shared with you just one personal example how HIV and AIDS is ravaging relationships. Pray for families that have members suffering from HIV and AIDS.

Pray for the churches in Nicaragua as they make God-honoring choices about how they will confront HIV and AIDS in their communities.

On another note, we want to thank you all for being faithful in your giving, in spite of a precarious economy. With your support and several large matching grants from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Foods Resource Bank, our programs are blessed and keep moving ahead.

Mario's Testimony: Living Positively with HIV

Not long ago, I missed the opportunity to meet an extraordinary person. A coworker in our HIV and AIDS program had told me the story of Mario and his wife, Fatima, and how they were sharing their testimony in training sessions. I was intrigued and wanted to write a story about them in this newsletter. But I was too late. After several years of fighting, Mario's body finally succumbed to the disease. He was only thirty years old, leaving behind his wife and an eight year old son. From what I heard of him and saw in pictures, Mario was very unassuming. He made his living like many other men with limited options do, by transporting people and cargo on the streets of Chinandega with his adapted bicycle. Yet Mario and Fatima touched people in ways that few could.

Our unique role is equipping church leadership to promote a biblical model of faithful, healthy relationships. Education about HIV and AIDS and the injustice of the stigma associated with this devastating and misunderstood disease is a key part of the program. Even in church circles, there is a lot of "elder brother" attitude (see

the parable of the lost son in Luke 15:11-31) where the elder brother apathetically suggests that 'restoration was not warranted, his younger brother should just accept the consequences of his past behavior'.

As part of the training, Mario and Fatima often agreed to share their personal stories with the participants. Mario recounted the day when he finally built up the courage to tell his parents and siblings that he and Fatima had both tested positive for HIV. From that time on his family avoided him constantly. Fatima recalled the jeers from their community, some of whom wanted them to leave their home so they wouldn't be a "source of contamination" for others. Mario and Fatima's testimony brought people to tears as they confronted their own prejudices.

Four years ago, there was one new case of HIV a week in Nicaragua; in 2010 the



frequency has increased to two a day. We are working hard to reverse this trend, in prevention of the spread of HIV and AIDS, as well as care for those with the virus. This year we completed training for the second round of 25 churches. The training is effective because people like Mario and Fatima are able to share their experiences in a frank and confronting manner. I am not sure how the HIV virus entered Mario and Fatima's lives, nor is it my place to find out. I did not attend the funeral, it was over before I ever found out he had passed away, but I was told that there was reconciliation with their families at the end. I will never meet Mario, at least not in this life, but his testimony lives on.

Money Falling from the Sky—What Would You Do?

Many of you wrote back to me after I shared the story of how a plane loaded with illegal drugs crashed into Wiwinak, one of the communities we work in. It changed the community overnight, a classic story of how poverty collides with fast, easy money. Pastor John Van Sloten from New Hope Church in Calgary took the story and incorporated it into a message, challenging the question whether all the "riches we are blessed with in North America are any different than a plane falling from the sky loaded with cocaine?" I encourage you to check out the video link at www.blip.tv/file/3508929.