



Celebrating Five Decades of Marriage

A special event was held on August 16 in San Bartolomé to celebrate the fiftieth wedding anniversary of José Benito and Tiburcia Ramirez. This was an unusual occasion, as not many Guatemalan couples have been married for five decades.

Divorce is rare in Guatemala, partly because legal marriage is still more of an exception than the norm, depending on the area. While many couples do live together faithfully, even while not technically married, many do not. "Shacking up," then leaving one partner for another is sadly very common. So, it was refreshing to celebrate with this dear couple who has served together in the church for many years.

After singing some of José's favorite hymns, including "Oh, Lord my God" and "Day by Day,"

Brother Victor Ovalle shared a twenty-minute meditation. Hermano José also shared, expressing his gratitude to God for granting him and his wife life and strength. He shared how he was one of four survivors out of thirteen passengers of a truck hit by a bomb blast during the civil war of the early 1980s. He mentioned how his wife barely survived Covid-19 a few years ago and how God has faithfully sustained them through many difficult times. Victor then led in a special prayer for José and Tiburcia, who were surrounded by their forty-eight descendants—children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

The church service was over, but the festivities had just begun! As the guests filed by and greeted the couple, the rows of chairs were rearranged around tables, and soon food was served. After the delicious meal, everyone was told to stay in place; cake was on the way! It was an enjoyable day for all.

Please pray for Brother José and his family. José is struggling with health problems, and only a few of their children and grandchildren are faithful to the Christian teaching they received. But most of all, prepare to meet the faithful few at the great wedding feast of the Lamb!



José and Tiburcia celebrated fifty years of marriage this August



Well-wishers greet José and Tiburcia



EDITORIAL

Conrad Miller

A Better Victory, A Greater Prize

Early in the year of 1524, Spanish conquistador Captain Pedro de Alvarado was making his way down the Pacific coast of Mexico with the goal of conquering an unmapped and unexplored land to the south, which we know today as Guatemala. Alvarado was a ruthless and greedy man, eliminating anyone who stood between him and the evident riches of the indigenous peoples.

The Aztec were the largest and most well-known indigenous tribe in Mexico. They were also very cruel and preyed on their less-powerful neighbors. Due to the fear the smaller tribes had of the Aztecs, Alvarado easily persuaded these minorities to join the Spanish in defeating them. But unfortunately for the smaller tribes, things did not turn out well at all. As soon as Alvarado had conquered the Aztecs, he turned his back on his indigenous allies and treated them terribly, giving the men no choice but to join his army on his expedition southward. European diseases, for which the native tribes had no immunity, took a terrible toll on them. Eventually, nine out of ten succumbed to various plagues that swept through their villages.

Alvarado and his army advanced unopposed along the Pacific coast until they reached the Salama River in western Guatemala. Here, they were first confronted by the K'iche army. After a hard-fought battle, the Spaniards and their allies crossed the river and proceeded to terrorize and scatter every village they encountered. They made their way inland, into the highlands and mountains of the Sierra Madre range. (The Sierra Madres cross through several Central American countries including Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and are extremely rugged, reaching an elevation of 13,850 feet above sea level in Guatemala.) The K'iche army had the advantage of being familiar with the territory but were severely out-armed by Alvarado's army. The Spaniards had 180 cavalry, 300 infantry, crossbows, muskets, and plenty of ammunition, while the K'iche only had bows and spears made from volcanic rock. The Spanish army met resistance but continued to push their way upward and inward until they came to the city of Xelajú (modern-day Quetzaltenango). They found the city deserted, but a week later on February 18, 1524, they met the K'iche army in the valley of Xelajú.

Tecun Uman was one of the last rulers of the K'iche people. Legend has it that he was leading the army when they met the Spanish in the battle of El Pinar. Tecun Uman allegedly entered the battle wearing feathers from a resplendent quetzal and was accompanied by a quetzal bird itself. (The quetzal is a rare and beautiful bird and today is the national bird of Guatemala. Guatemalan currency is named after it.) The K'iche army resisted to the best of their ability but were shocked and terrorized by the charge of the cavalry. Most of them had never seen a horse before. According to historians, Pedro de Alvarado and Tecun Uman met face-to-face in the battle. Uman, having never seen a horse, made the fatal mistake of assuming that horse and man were one being and proceeded to spear and kill the horse. This gave Alvarado time to plunge his spear into Tecun Uman, killing him. This was the last real resistance that the K'iche army could muster, and they soon surrendered to Alvarado, who proceeded to burn their capital near modern-day Santa Cruz del Quiché. Today, Tecun Uman is a national hero, and a giant statue of him stands in Quetzaltenango.

Tecun Uman was considered a lord and great leader. We Christians also have a Lord and King who was slain, although under very different circumstances, at the hands of cruel and unjust men. Tecun Uman's death meant defeat for the K'iche army. The death of our King means victory for those who claim it. Praise God, our Saviour didn't remain in the tomb, but today is alive, living within us, and leading us through the hottest battles! While our battles aren't fought against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), our battles are real and present. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).* We must not become careless, or our adversary will attack!

Tecun Uman took the quetzal bird with him to battle with the belief that it would give him strength, bless, and protect him. We Christians have a much more sure and powerful weapon at our disposal, the Holy Spirit. There is no battle too hot or fierce for the Spirit. The K'iche had no way of defending themselves against the cavalry. This is never the

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Youth Institute, From Two Perspectives

Andrea Dyck, Oratorio

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13, 14).

These verses were on the front of our programs for Youth Institute this year. As youth, we are faced with this big decision in our lives: which road will we take? The goal of the youth institute is to help youth make this decision and to encourage those who have already decided to follow Christ to continue on the straight and narrow way. It also provides an opportunity for youth to meet other youth their age and fellowship together.

A committee organizes a three-day institute for the youth once a year at the Farm in Sumpango, Sacatepéquez. The institute this year was held June 27-29.

Ninety-one youth aged sixteen and older attended. Several young people from El Salvador, Belize, and Canada joined us as well. Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday were filled with topics taught by various church leaders. Thursday, we spent some time at a park nearby filling our time with fun activities, volleyball, singing, and a delicious meal of grilled chicken, beans, and tortillas.

The institute ended Thursday evening after one last message. Those who didn't leave that night left the next morning. We are thankful to each one who played a part in making this institute possible. And we pray that the seeds of truth planted in each heart will sprout and grow, because as we heard in one of the messages, "The youth not only are the future church, but also the present church. There is work for each and every one."

Leidy Natareno, Mixcolajá

I felt very excited when I heard that after such a long time without one, there would be a youth institute. These youth meetings are a great blessing in our lives. My time there was a great blessing because each of the lectures were an encouragement in my life and helped me to reflect. It also gave me much joy to see other young people with the same

spiritual interests, but I felt sad to see spiritual opposition working against both the leaders and the youth.

Although there were not so many fellowship activities, nor many hours set aside for prayer together, the little time we were given for these activities did make me notice that there are other young people with a great desire to grow in their spiritual lives. This inspired me to be one of them and strive to be better every day in my life.

The activities were helpful, but maybe another time they could consider setting aside more time to share testimonies about the struggles that every young Christian lives through. And perhaps more topics like, "How could a young man or lady become a man or woman of purpose," or other interesting topics for young people. And they could ask more young people to share topics, because listening to a young person's topic or testimony would be a great encouragement to young people. And I feel that some talent is being lost by not motivating them to start looking for their talents and purposes.

There could also be activities like singing in a public place, handing out tracts, or setting aside time for singing or discussions in small groups. This could motivate young people who have not yet given their lives to God as well as those who have already done so. It is quite sad to see how few young people today are dedicated and fearful lovers of God.



Ninety-one young people attended Youth Institute.

Staff News

Prayer and Praise Items

- Pray for the young people in our churches, that they would seek the Lord in their youth.
- Pray for the current missionaries serving on the field, that they may “serve with gladness” and bless others without “burning out.”
- Praise God for opportunities to evangelize and disciple believers in this country!

Ria Ringler recently returned to Pennsylvania after serving in El Guayabo for three months. Thank you for your service!

Cheryl Wenger, from Sauk Centre, Minnesota, is serving as domestics aide in Mixcolajá. She is a member of the Faith Mennonite Church. Welcome to Guatemala!



Cheryl Wenger

A Better Victory... continued

case for us. The devil can bring no attack against us for which God has not already provided the tools to resist and conquer. We are not meant to only survive and limp along, but God has made us conquerors—more than conquerors! *Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Romans 8:37).*

There were many casualties in the battles between the Spanish and the K'iche. Unfortunately, we are also surrounded by casualties today. The battle is too hot for some; others depend on the world's tools, which fail in the heat of the battle.

In earthly wars, the spoils go to the victor. But no spoils or riches claimed by an earthly army can compare to our promised heavenly reward. *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).*

Coincidentally, a little less than a year after the battle of El Pinar, a movement began that would

change thousands of lives and turn portions of the world upside down. In January of 1525, several men met in secret in Zurich, Switzerland. Among them were Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz. The results of the actions taken that night reach all the way to the Anabaptist church today. By rebaptizing, these men became criminals and outlaws in the eyes of the state. A war was started on that January night in Zurich that continues to this day.

Much blood has been shed and many have lost their lives in this spiritual war. While this may seem like another victory for Satan and the world, in reality every martyr who died was another victory for the heavenly kingdom! At times it may seem like we are outmanned and out-armed by the enemy, but this is not so (Hebrews 2:14, 15). Our Lord's death on the cross defeated the powers of Satan and ensured victory for all who choose to make Christ king of their lives. The victory has been won and the power is available for His followers.

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