

Various Aspects of Life in Bogotá, Colombia,
Which Includes a Review and Analysis of Interviews
with Fifteen Evangelical Colombian Pastors

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Running head: COLOMBIA

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Introduction

The following report deals with various aspects of life in Bogotá, Colombia, as perceived by fifteen Evangelical Colombian pastors. Themes which arose in the interviews are arranged alphabetically and include the following:

- *cell groups*
- *attitudes of the Church in Colombia*
- *the Colombian Constitution and political changes*
- *gamines (homeless children)*
- *missionaries and international relations*
- *needs in Colombia*
- *the perceived strengths and weaknesses of Operation Blessing in Colombia*
- *praise and worship*
- *prostitution*
- *race and immigration*
- *the Roman Catholic Church*
- *the negative and positive aspects of the spiritual environment in Colombia*
- *transportation and time*
- *unity and division*

Appendices include an English transcription the unabridged interviews; the journal I kept during my seven weeks in Bogotá during summer 1993; a few linguistic differences between Colombian and Mexican Spanish, and English; a review of various aspects of Colombian culture which are different from those of the North American culture; a translation of the strategy for *Plan America for Christ*, the Christian fellowship at America University, whose leader I interviewed; and Operation Blessing's mission statements for 1984 and 1988.

Attitudes of the Church in Colombia

Alvarez

- “We still find the problem of indifference or lack of interest from the people They have simply just begun taking their salvation for granted. And very few people have really understood what their commitment means...”
- “We must not think, ‘How many souls am I going to win?’ but rather ‘How much of the love of God am I going to sow?’ ... Success must be measured by the amount of love given out to people.”

Pinzón

- “Sharing about Christ is easier than being a Christian.... It’s easier to share about Jesus than to live for Jesus.”

Nunpaque

- “When there’s a lot of liberty, people kind of lay back.... There used to be persecution before, but now you can preach the gospel in any place and with all kinds of liberty. But there’s hardly any commitment with the members of churches.”

Llorente

- “All our fellow students noticed that we weren’t just a group of people who like to meet together, pray, and sing, but that we’re concerned about the real spiritual needs of each person.” [He is referring to the campus fellowship which he directs.]
- “Some of the churches have 2,000 members and the only one who will give spiritual counseling is the pastor.”
- “I think that local ministries do not function properly over a long period of time. This is my personal opinion, but local ministries tend to be short-term things. I mean, it may come on strongly, and function perfectly as a short-term project. But then when we’re talking about long-term projects, I think that they will not prosper.”

- “I think there are only about eight large established churches consisting of only Indians. That’s a very small percentage.... as far as the Indian community goes, there’s a lot of witchcraft and sorcery going on. They talk a lot about evil spirits and all of the various things of the spiritual realm.”

Velásquez

- “[Church members] are very disciplined. I think that because of the needs that they have, they aren’t able to commit much to the church.... They are people who at the moment cannot be committed to evangelistic work or regular church attendance.”

Barrios

- There are very few congregations that perform a social type of work.”

Kronfly

- “The Colombian Church is a healthy Church. Those who are in this Church are healthy people. This Church is like a garden of roses found within a barren land, which can perfume, give aroma, which can make society happy.”
- “When people talk of the Christian Church in Colombia, we want that they talk of a good Church. That they talk about an honest Church. That they talk of a healthy Church. That they speak of a holy Church. And over all, that they speak of a model Church because the model is the Lord.”

Cell groups

Nunpaque

- “We try to form little home cell groups where we pray, read the Bible and just worship God and learn a little more about him every week.”

Barrios

- “We have many little cell groups. We plan to convert those small family cell groups into congregations later.”

Pardo

- “Our church has many different ministries. We have a mission ministry. We have another department in charge of home cell groups.”

Colombian Constitution and political changes

Alvarez

- “Up until 1991 the Colombian Constitution still declared that there was only one religion in Colombia — that was the Catholic one.”
- “[The current Constitution] gave the right for free assembly here in our country.... It has given us liberty to work without fear of any persecution or any further problems with the Catholic church.”

Patiño

- “The Colombian Constitution is now for us, permitting us the freedom of gathering in worship.”

Kronfly

- “Now, it’s been a year since the Constitution’s change, maybe two years, that the door’s been opened for the Evangelical Christian Church.”
- “The Catholic Church in these days is wrapped up in social help, in material help. They want to meet the material needs of man, and that has gotten them involved with politics, and has gotten them involved with many other things, which has led them to stop caring for the spiritual side of man.”
- “The doors have been opened for us. The political sphere has been opened up to us as well. We’ve become involved with this. We have senators. We have representatives. We’ve got consuls. So we’ve got to ask the Lord for wisdom to know how to conduct ourselves in the political realm.”

Velásquez

- “We have another organization that has just opened, Christian Union, whose goal is to go into the senate and Colombian politics. At this moment we have three senators, two of whom represent this group. We have many mayors and other people who are involved in politics who believe in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Pardo

- “We retired from economics, from the arts, from the justice system, from politics and we did this because that was ‘from the devil,’ and the only thing that belonged to us was heaven. Now I see that as a great, great mistake.”
- “I founded a political participation movement called Christian Union, which has brought about profound changes within the life of this nation, especially in the relationship of the Church.”

Crawford

- “Because of some of the political changes that have occurred recently, there’s even more liberty to preach.”

Gamines (homeless children)

Nunpaque

- “Well, we have some social ministries here, such as the ministry which helps street children — the *gamines*. We have a group helping in this area.”

Llorente

- “One of these churches is Philadelphia. They also have health brigades. They have a special program, in which they work with prostitutes. They also have a program for the *gamines*.”
- “They [Operación Bendición] also have a house in La Florida to rescue children from becoming *gamines*.”

Osorio

- “There are many groups which work with the *gamines*, helping them and protecting them; helping them to get a better living.”

Malagón

- “I’ve heard that [Operación Bendición is] giving a lot of help and that they’re working with the *gamines* — the street children — to rehabilitate them.”

Velásquez

- “It’s a ministry with many facets. They [Operación Bendición] help the *gamines*....”

Missionaries and international relations

Alvarez

- “If we look back we can see missionaries who were murdered because of their beliefs, because they were Protestants.”
- “[Some congregations] submit their missionaries to a manner of training in different areas, to prepare them for life in the jungle. But there’s really not much jungle left.”
- “[The missionary’s] main mission is the restoration of the Kingdom of God in this world.”
- “You should share [what the Spirit is revealing to you] with us, and we should also do the same with you.... If we don’t do this, we will be just acting individually, with individual purposes. And that is not what the Church of God is.” [Alvarez suggests a bottom-up form of communication, rather than the traditional communication paradigm.]
- “Jonah never got to know the real needs of the people in Ninevah.”

Pinzón

- “We do have lots of preachers here, and many preachers from other countries come frequently.... I think that doctors really would be a good help.”
- “I consider that it would be very good for the foreign preachers and missionaries who come here to integrate themselves more — get to know better the churches of the south.... God might give a vision to some of these missionaries to work with these poor churches.”

Patiño

- “[A missionary] might have many titles and studied many things, but if Christ is not the king of his heart, anything he does for his work will be fruitless.”
- “I believe that maybe [missionaries] could be organized in a different way.”

Llorente

- “[Colombians] have a certain disposition against foreigners.... So many times [missionaries] could find themselves with people here who would like to take advantage of them, and get whatever they can out of them instead of helping them have a fruitful ministry.”

Malagón

- “The gospel has been concentrated mostly within Bogotá.... We may have forgotten a little about other areas of the country — we’re not sending missionaries out to these areas.”
- “The missionary ministry is not being pushed very much in the churches. Mostly what is pushed is pastoring and the evangelism within the city.”
- “There are not many doctors, and the ones who are here are dedicated to make money, not to serve the community.” [Malagón is pointing out the need for missionary physicians.]
- “I don’t know why, but when someone else — some foreigner — bring the message, it touches more hearts.”

- “I would recommend something to the missionaries who come to our country. That is that they pray and fast.... If we want to gain more spiritual fruit than what we’ve attained up to now, the only way to do it will be by fasting and praying, battling against the evil forces of darkness.”
- “I have heard of many missionaries who have come to our country, who leave very soon. Many of them have died. Why? I believe it’s because they don’t have any spiritual backing.... Many of these missionaries have left because in many parts of our country there’s a lot of witchcraft.”
- “I believe that God is strongly calling the churches and the people toward missions.... The Lord is constantly calling people to go to the mission field.”
- “I know that Colombia is going to come to the point where there won’t be such a need for missionaries to come because missionaries will be going out from our country to reach other nations for Christ. And yes, God is forming many missionaries here.... Our prayer is that God would put in people’s hearts the desire to become missionaries to the Arab countries, because we have a lot of the Spanish blood in us, and the Spanish have a lot of Arab blood. So I think that we could relate pretty easily to their culture and their country.”
- “Many have gone to the missionary field to work with the Indians and have come back and don’t want to have anything more to do with the Indians, because the forces of darkness are working very hard against them, making them sick and causing them to become discouraged easily. We have noticed these things in many missionaries who have gone to the field and have come back. They have returned sick and with many doubts about God’s faithfulness. They get sick, their wives do, their children suffer. So they come back and don’t want to have anything to do with the church or even return to church, because the enemy is fighting a strong battle in this area. These are things which I think are good to get to know at the missionary level, so that the people who come to our nation are well prepared, and will enter the presence of God knowing what purpose God has in bringing them to our country.”
- “The churches are open at this moment to work with new missionaries coming to our country.”

Cortéz

- “I Believe that the spirit of this century is a missionary spirit. But the best missionaries have recognized that the doors have been closing down for Americans because of their white skin, their blue eyes, their own culture.... People don't see them as this spiritual giant that they used to see them as.”
- “At this moment missionaries are needed, but at the same time that we're needing missionaries, we're trying to bring about within the national Church the burden of producing our own missionaries. The act of sending missionaries to the Arab countries would allow us to have better growth, because in the measure that we give to others, the Lord will give back to us.”
- “The fact is that the Colombian Church itself will be exporting missionaries.”

Velásquez

- “We are trying to create a sense in the members of our churches to go out as missionaries.”
- “... to penetrate the Arab countries, with which we've got a lot of affinity, in order to expand the Kingdom of God, which is our ultimate objective.”
- “In our prayer meeting we always pray for missionaries. We like for missionaries to come here to recount their experiences, to strengthen us, to support us with their prayers and intercession.... And we just believe that there's a missionary spirit in our congregation.”

Barrios

- “We really have a missionary vision. Our desire is not so much to have a big church as it is to have a church that will bless others.”
- “Very few Colombians like foreigners. Their pride interferes with their letting Americans help them.”

Pardo

- “Those traditional missionaries who came here to tell us what we had to do and all that, and to dominate everything — no, we don’t need that. We need missionaries who will work shoulder to shoulder, like nationals, without any discrimination or inferior feeling.... I think we do need [missionaries], and we welcome them, but with that mentality — the servant mentality.”

Kronfly

- “Oh, that many missionaries would come from the United States, New Zealand, Germany, England! And oh, that many missionaries would leave from Colombia for other regions. Colombia at this time is sending missionaries to the Arab countries. At this time we have missionaries working among the Muslim culture, something which the United States isn’t able to do.”
- “If a missionary were to come from the United States to the Church in Colombia, he’d arrive at *his* Church because the Church is one. If a missionary from Colombia were to go to a German Church, he goes to *his* Church because the Church is one. The Church is of the Lord.”
- “The Church needs teachers — preachers who preach the Word.... If you receive the Word of God, the preaching of the Word, that Word stays in your heart. You forget the rest. You’ll forget the singer. You’ll forget about the mime troupe. But you don’t forget the Word.... Oh that many teachers would come, who sow the Word among us! The rest are welcome — the singers, the mimes, everyone. But in this world the teachers of the Word are more welcome.”
- “We aren’t sending any missionaries because we haven’t got the economic resources.”

Crawford

- “I think the time is over when missionaries come into a city like Bogotá, or even Colombia. Colombia is sending missionaries to other countries! ... I feel that the national Church has come of age and the national Church is able to do the work that needs to be done here in Colombia.”

- “Now, I’m not saying that God won’t send any missionaries to Colombia, but I think they’ll have to be very specialized. I don’t think we need missionaries who are going to come in to start a church. I think that’s the task of the local churches, or the local Christians. But, for example, they could come in and do a very specialized ministry. Television will be opening soon. I believe that there’s an opening there for missionaries to work in that area....”
- “The problem is that so often you see someone up in the United States — a church in the United States or Great Britain or some other part of the world — their church wants to start a church. I don’t think that’s what we need now. We need people to come in who are going to contribute in areas where there’s a need. And I would say that that’s one of the needs — in television. Although we have people now who have already been in television and have been able to work in that ministry....”
- “I think most of the time, when people come to Bogotá, they think they’re coming to the jungle. Well, it’s not the jungle. The biggest problem in Bogotá is the traffic jams.”

Needs in Colombia

Pinzón

- “There needs to be a greater vision for education. One of the other great needs which we have in Bogotá is the health need.”
- “If we are going to talk about needs, there are hundreds of different ones. Many people focus mainly on the economic lack.... I really believe that the best way of helping is showing them who Christ Jesus is.... The Bible says that we should seek first the Kingdom of God and then all these things will be added unto us.”
- “It is better to teach someone how to fish than to give them a fish.”

Nunpaque

- “The people need food. They need basic things.... There are a lot of uncultured people, because of the lack of means to get an education. There are many schools in Bogotá, but there are not enough for all of the people.”

Llorente

- “I think the best thing to do is not to give [beggars] money, but to give them bread.”

Osorio

- “The greatest need that I see in Bogotá is the economic need.”

Velásquez

- “We lack economic resources, but we meet this need with a lot of faith, with a lot of enthusiasm, with a lot of fervor, and with a confidence in God. I’m saying that we have all the resources.... There’s a shortage of church members who are prepared for the work of Christ. So this means that the pastors have to do much of the work in the churches.”
- “The social problems that need help would be in the medical realm, the educational realm, and the technical realm. All of these are important areas in which we would appreciate help and we are lacking it.”
- “... [Colombians’] lack of conscience, and their lack of awareness that they need to organize themselves and think of tomorrow.”
- “There’s something else that we need here — a Christian television channel. Now that we have freedom of worship and congregation, we will be able to transmit programs, such as the 700 Club, which are recorded in North America and Central America.”

Cortéz

- “Sometimes we have a shortage of money. In the congregation where I am at this moment, many people come to me. Unfortunately, we aren’t able to help them

because we don't have the resources. Another area in which we need help is education, because access to education is very costly today.”

- “If we were to ask something of the brothers and sisters in the churches of the United States, it would be that they could help us in the logistic part. That is, the scientific part, the technical part — with new advances of technology, with the implementation of hospitals and clinics.”

Barrios

- “We're trying to unite with another congregation so that between us we can open a university which will be dedicated to the study of health.... Here in Colombia there's a lack of this service. Many people who have car accidents die — not because of the accident, but because of the lack of proper attention.”

Kronfly

- “Human beings have lost their morality. There is no longer any morality in human beings. We can, however, recover morality through the Lord Jesus.”
- “There are many needs — economic needs, there's poverty, a lack of education, a lack of culture in people, a lack of a good conscience to live in society, a lack of security....”

Operation Blessing — perceived strengths

Pinzón

- “All of the churches here have clearly seen the work that they [Operación Bendición] have been doing among us. They have a precious ministry in their work among the children. The schools are wonderful, and the health brigades and their periodical have brought much help to the area.”
- “[Operación Bendición] has been a very positive influence in our community.”

Patiño

- “[Operación Bendición Director Lindsay Christi] has helped us a lot in this area in many ways — economic help, he has given us literature, spiritual help, setting an example for us....”
- “[Operación Bendición is one of several entities] which help you without taking into account what denomination you belong to.”
- “I have received many things. Among them are literature, teachings, help from the health brigades.... I have also received economic assistance to buy 130 chairs for children ... [and a prefabricated] house and the fixtures for the house.”

Nunpaque

- “[Operación Bendición’s newspaper Desafío] is very, very well known.”
- “We have received a lot of help, such as with the videos and with other things, but I really don’t know what their work is about.”
- “I keep myself informed through the radio.”

Llorente

- “I know about the work that Brother Lindsay does, such as Operación Bendición; Club 700 with all the films and all of the testimonies; and through the newspaper, Desafío; for the children, Los Valientes; and the project of the hospital of Operation Smile, of God is Love — I think they’re planning on starting this hospital next year, if God allows them to. So of the entities which help meet the needs of the poorest people here in Bogotá, I could just mention Brother Lindsay’s group.”
- “You must recognize that as Colombians we’re not really constant and firm in the things that we do. So it’s good to know that we have help from a foreign country in the work that they’re doing here.”

Osorio

- “I think that [Operación Bendición’s periodical Desafío] is well done. Christian groups from all around the country keep themselves informed through this newspaper.”

Malagón

- “I know about the newspaper. I think they’re doing an excellent job. I’ve also seen the house that they have in the center of the city. It’s a beautiful work that they’re doing there.”
- “About the ministry of Desafío, it is a ministry which has brought a blessing to the entire Church in Colombia, because it is seeking a unity among them. This newspaper reaches all the churches in Colombia, and its content builds us up and strengthens us as Christians.... They are people who are in God’s will.”

Velásquez

- “We also have a great organization, which is Desafío, with the newspaper and the ministry that they have. It’s a ministry with many facets. They help the *gamines*. They help the people of the street. They help with health brigades. They train Sunday school teachers, and do many things.”
- “Brother Lindsay has been raised up in Colombia by God as one of the great leaders that we have.... So the work which has been developed is a very great work. And in all the areas in which our Brother Lindsay has begun a work, he has really left a mark and we believe that his work has been very effective.”
- “We don’t want the paper [Desafío] to disappear.”
- “I really consider that [Lindsay Christie, originally from New Zealand] is more Colombian than perhaps many of us are, in the sense that the love he has for our country is a practical love, a love that you can see, that is evident.... So we can’t see [Operación Bendición] as a satellite project from a foreign country, but rather as something national. Even though the directors are foreigners, I just think that they have lost that foreign identity and have shared a lot with us.”

Cortéz

- “What I have heard [about Operación Bendición] is excellent. I believe that they’re doing a good job ... and Brother Lindsay Christie, who is their promoter, the motor of this work. We keep ourselves informed of all the different events that they have through their newspaper, which we have right here, Desafío. They are doing many works in the worst areas of Bogotá, where there are many necessities among children and adolescents and street people. I think they are supplying a vital, spiritual need, by bringing the social aspect as well, help which is needed. Operación Bendición is doing a wonderful ministry. I hope that the Lord will allow them to fulfill the purpose which they have, to take the gospel to all peoples. As far as I’m concerned, all that they have done until now is excellent.”

Barrios

- “They have a very beautiful work in the social area. Even though they have done a lot of work, I insist that the need is much higher. There are very few people working in it, but Desafío has done a great, great labor. Denise Christie and Brother Lindsay are very respected and loved by us.”
- “I think that [Lindsay Christie] has an advantage in that he is supported by the United States. So he has many resources. That is an important ingredient in order to have success in the social ministry.”
- “They have also helped us with seeds, and some time ago they gave us some food for the children in our rehabilitation center.”

Pardo

- “Operación Bendición has done a very beautiful job — a very wonderful job with the health brigades that they do on a regular basis. They’re very good. The centers that they have where the street children go and eat or wash themselves. The farm that they have in Funsa. Their work is very, very important. I believe that they’re doing a beautiful work ... what they’re planning to do with the hospital. They’re all good works and I’d just like to encourage them to continue doing so.”

Kronfly

- “I think that for the Christian Church in Colombia, *Desafío-Operación Bendición* has been as its name says — a blessing operation. I think that the Christian Church has been strengthened greatly through the work of *Desafío*. I think that *Desafío* has met the need of the Church. How has it supplied these needs? Promoting churches. How has it supplied these needs? Its publicly announcing the activities of various churches.”

Operation Blessing — perceived weaknesses and proposed solutions

Pinzón

- “[Operación Bendición] could work more united with the entire body of churches in Bogotá.”
- “[People consider Operación Bendición a foreign ministry] because the people who direct this ministry here are foreigners.”

Patiño

- “Many people do not value the work that they are doing. Many people go to these health brigades and ask for help, but only because they want their immediate needs met.”
- “They have the means, the material things with which to help, but there are not enough people who are available who want to give their time and their service.”
- “I think that if [Operación Bendición] could find a way of knowing the needs of each family, and perform a kind of census with all of these people.... If we have a follow-up, and make them aware of the commitment which all this help involves, then we will be able to help them, not only materially, because I think that the most important help is not the material help.”
- “They should focus more on teaching and on didactic things.... It is better to teach someone how to fish than to give them a fish.”

- “It would be great if we received the means and the teachings of how to reach people. For example, I as a pastor can be a kind of bridge for Operación Bendición to reach 120 people. Then there won’t be a need of 120 people to teach another 120. I, as a pastor, can teach these 120 people what I have been taught.”

Nunpaque

- “I really don’t know it [Operación Bendición] that well, but I have heard of many people who have been blessed by it.”

Llorente

- “Just the other day I heard by accident Brother Jorge saying that he needed 25,000 pesos [about \$35] to be able to finish the kitchen at the school in Cazuca.... What I have seen missing for Operación Bendición to expand is the economic factor, the lack of finances.... This year, for example, I think it was in the month of July, they weren’t able to put the paper out because of lack of finances.... I think that is pretty sad, because the newspaper is a blessing for ... more than 25,000 people.”
- “There are very few [doctors]. Maybe it’s because doctors have many commitments.”
- “Many of the people who are receiving medication were selling them just two blocks farther along the street to get money to buy drugs. [Dr. Parada] said that probably a better idea, if they wanted to have health brigades in that area, was to say, ‘Okay, there’s going to be free medical attention during this week....’ Many people here can be dishonest with you and receive your help, but then use it for what they want to get and then continue in the same situation.”

Malagón

- “There are campaigns and different events which are taking place, but only every once in a while. Some say, ‘Okay, we’re going to take a health brigade there today,’ and they do it — but there’s no follow-up for these people.”
- “I’m not really very well informed about Operación Bendición, or how we could be helped by them.”

Cortéz

- “We support them in prayer because we haven’t had the opportunity of having close contact with them.”

Barrios

- I believe that the churches don’t know much about the help that they are able to give or have the capacity to give.... This limits the blessing to just a few people, because not everyone knows that they want to help.”
- “I believe that they should let themselves be known a little bit more. And the second thing is that they have a closer relationship with the various churches which have a social-type of labor so they can exchange ideas and help.”
- “I think that they don’t give enough information about what’s going on and what events they’re planning to do. They should allow more participation from the various organizations or churches that want their help. So maybe through letters or visiting churches they could keep us informed and help us in a better way.”

Pardo

- “I would like to see these ministries, such as Operación Bendición, more involved with the Church.... I’d like to see them working together shoulder to shoulder so that if tomorrow for some reason Operación Bendición cannot continue working in Colombia — because you never know what’s going to happen — that the work will continue. What if Operación Bendición stops working here? Then the work that they’ve been doing will stop also. I would like to see them more involved in this work. I really have no answer how that should come about. I think that the Church would be willing in certain areas to work with them.”
- “When you talk about Operación Bendición, we always think about a foreign ministry, which is sustained by foreign contributions, no matter where they come from — from the 700 Club or the university of Pat Robertson or any other part. But I would really like to see, again, the Colombian Church more involved economically, and in every single area, with Operación Bendición.”

- “The day when Dad cannot help anymore, the day that his dad dies, the child will rebel against things or die of hunger.... I just insist that they need to work more in unity with the Church and be a little less dependent on foreign ministries, not because this is a bad thing, but because it will enrich their ministry much more.”
- “It’s very important to open workshops to train people in certain areas, so that those children who are receiving lunch, that these children later on become capable of learning an art, working, studying in order to be someone tomorrow.”

Kronfly

- “Some talk of weaknesses in the area of administration — that they don’t know how to conduct things; that they don’t know how to direct the resources. They talk of weaknesses encountered in regards to people. Many times people arrive there — I’ve heard the complaints — and they don’t feel very well attended to.”
- “In order to be more effective you’ve got to pray more for them. We’ve got to pray more for them.”

Crawford

- “Operation Blessing ... must work with the local churches in the different areas where they’re working with the poor people. I believe they’re already doing that. Perhaps they could do it a little bit more. That would be one way to be more effective. And make known what is being done. So often local churches don’t know what missions are doing or what’s happening when outside help comes in.”
- “There are an awful lot of other organizations that are blessing in schools and in the area of *indigentes* and all of this. So [Operation Blessing] is not the only organization.”

Praise and worship

Alvarez

- “Over our whole congregation we believe that we have the unction of praise and worship. That is what God has given us, and thanks to this ministry we have been

able to reach many places and accomplish many different things. That's how one of the members of our church went as a missionary last year to Venezuela.”

Pinzón

- “The spiritual life has been renewed, as well as the praise and worship.”

Nunpaque

- “We also have a video and audio recording system — many Christian singers come here to record their songs. We give them this service.”

Llorente

- “Most young people’s attention is caught by the clapping and the jumping and the singing and all that. So we start with singing and praises. Then we teach them how to worship and adore the Lord. After this, we share the fundamental truths of the gospel with them.”

Osorio

- “My working team is made up of the praise and worship team, who minister in praise and worship and at the same time are leaders.” [Praise and worship was the first characteristic Osorio mentioned about his congregation.]

Malagón

- “God is bringing about revival, as far as the Word goes, and as far as praise and worship as well.”

Velásquez

- “More or less in all of the congregations there are wonderful praise and worship teams. This ministry has been improving substantially.”

Barrios

- “We have a praise and worship ministry that goes out to other congregations and shares with them what God has given to us.”

Kronfly

- “There’s the ministry of praise, a very beautiful ministry in this church. The church’s strength is in adoration. We move a great deal in praise and worship in this church. Within this ministry of adoration, the Lord moves through prophetic song. The Lord moves through the ‘new song.’ There’s prophecy within the same adoration. If there’s a need, we lay hands on people. During this same adoration, there are healings, restoration. The ministry of adoration and praise is a very beautiful ministry.”

Prostitution

Malagón

- “The prostitution level has gone up. There are a lot of young girls who are dedicated to this ... you could call it a profession. Little girls from 10 years on up begin working as prostitutes.”

Cortéz

- “There’s a lot of prostitution, drug addiction, orphans. And the Church has wanted to help. As my brother Armando has just said, we have lots of enthusiasm and we have a willing heart, but many times we don’t have the resources to complete the projects that we have.”

Barrios

- “Well, the greatest problem here in Bogotá is that there are many subcultures. For example, in Bogotá there are 18,000 prostitutes. That’s as big as a complete suburb!”
- “At this moment we are working with children, and would also like to help the prostitutes, but this is a difficult area to enter, because they form little Mafias — little closed groups that manipulate girls, even ten years old to older women in their 40s and 50s.”

Crawford

- “We have work with the children of prostitutes, a home for those children where they are received and cared for by the church.”

Race and immigration

Alvarez

- “I would dare to say that only 30 percent of the people who live here have actually been born in Bogotá. The rest of them are foreigners. They come from different parts of the country.”

Pinzón

- “People from all the different regions have come to live here in Bogotá. The majority of these people who come from other regions have come looking for a better life, but they have a very low income.”

Patiño

- “We are all descendents of Indians.”
- “We do have brothers from different regions of our country [in our congregation].... The most important thing is that Jesus has united us. He has guarded us and kept us until this day.”

Nunpaque

- “We all have a little part of Indian in us. We’re just basic Colombian people from different parts of the country.”

Llorente

- “I think there are only about eight large established churches consisting of only Indians. That’s a very small percentage.... as far as the Indian community goes, there’s a lot of witchcraft and sorcery going on. They talk a lot about evil spirits and all of the various things of the spiritual realm.”

Malagón

- “As far as race goes, most of us are normal Colombians. There are just a few colored people, but if more were to come, we would receive them happily because we’re all one in Christ Jesus.”

Cortéz

- “There is a phenomenon that is known throughout the world. And that’s the immigration of the *campesinos*, the peasants. All of the farmers are leaving the countryside and coming into the city. And this causes needs — naturally spiritual needs — but also social needs.”
- “We have the problem of bad managing of our country’s economical resources. This causes disunity among the people, and has established a war in the countryside where the *campesinos* live. The ones who have to pay for it are the farmers who really had nothing to do with the problems in the first place — they are fearful of the guerrilleros, and so they come here. They form groups of popular defense, and the only thing they get is a worsened situation, because they just bring about more violence.”
- “We have colored people, but they are Colombian — you know, from Antiochia, from the coast.”

Barrios

- “Our city is a metropolis with 7 million people. Very few of them have been born in Bogotá.... We’re having great problems because many people have immigrated from the countryside trying to run away from the guerrilla groups and the violence that is taking place in those areas.”

Crawford

- “One of the biggest problems in Bogotá is the immigration from the country areas into the city. This causes problems for a city like Bogotá. It’s not so structured as some other large cities in the world. So there’s a strain put on public services in the city — housing and all of the other public services in the city. This immigration has been caused by the violence, terrorism in the country areas. It’s precisely there

where the *guerrilleros* are in control and where they hold their activity. So you get this violence in the countryside which creates this problem of people leaving the countryside, coming into the cities, straining the public services in the cities. And not only that, when they leave the countryside to come into the city, then they're not producing. And so this causes the prices to go up. So it's all linked. I think all of the problems are linked to violence and terrorism in Colombia. I think the main problem in Colombia is terrorism and all of these other problems are byproducts of that main problem, which is violence and terrorism in Colombia."

Roman Catholic Church

Alvarez

- "They abandoned all moral principles and everything which meant spiritual guidance or spiritual life.... And this resulted in moral decadence and the moral decay of our country."
- "The Catholic religion, as a religion, never asked for many good things."

Patiño

- "I believe a person who is 100 percent Catholic will know God and will respect the things of God. Now, fanatical Catholics ... don't know what being a Catholic means. Many of them are Catholic just because their whole families are Catholic."

Llorente

- "Some [students] have the excuse that 'I was born Catholic. My parents were Catholic. And I don't plan to change my religion.' That's what many of them say, so we have to go and explain to them that it's not a change of religion, it's a change of life, in which we will have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."
- "[Some Catholics] become charismatic, which I consider a midpoint between Evangelicals and Catholics. After being charismatic, they will gradually become Evangelicals and accept the total truth of the Bible."

Malagón

- “The Catholics have done a pretty good job, as far as social help goes. They work with schools and universities. They are very well organized and have an excellent plan. Catholicism in our country is, you could say, a very strong creature. Economically, they have a lot of power.... They have spent a lot of their money building beautiful churches and, in the process, forgotten a lot of people. Overall, though, they have done a pretty good job in the community.”

Barrios

- “The Catholic Church is like an economic octopus, which has fed itself on the government for years, so they don’t need more money. They’ve got enough money to give away.”

Kronfly

- “The big religion here is the Catholic religion, which up until a year ago was the official religion of Colombia.... I think that the Catholic Church, as a Christian Church, which it really is, in a manner of speaking, has fallen behind the moving of the Holy Spirit.... The Catholic Church wants to meet one need, and we’re meeting the spiritual need which the Catholic Church is not able to meet. But in no point are we trying to compete.”
- “We could say now that the official church in Colombia has always been the Catholic Church. Now, it’s been a year since the Constitution’s change, maybe two years, that the door’s been opened for the Evangelical Christian Church. We’re able to say that while we’ve not got the same resources, we do have the same conditions. That’s created a certain jealousy within the Roman Catholic Church. And so, in some ways we’ve felt attacked.... We’ve felt confrontation. They’ve published articles trying to minimize the Evangelical Church. They’ve had articles written in magazines and newspapers. They’ve also had news programs on the radio trying to destroy the reputation of the Christian Church in Colombia.”
- “Every day, although there are many points that unite us [the Catholic and Evangelical Church], I see that every day the smallest points that separate us are becoming greater. Now, if you ask me my personal opinion, in the spiritual arena, I wouldn’t want to work with the Roman Catholic Church. I would like to work

within biblical parameters.... If the Catholic Church grows closer to the Lord, within biblical parameters, if they believe in the Lord as the Bible says, and if they work for the Lord as the Bible says, and not as a Roman Catholic hierarchy says, I would work with the Catholic Church. But while things continue as they are, I wouldn't want to. Now, if only it were possible! Some are seeking to become united. Some are trying to become only one for the Lord. Some are trying to ransom many people for the Lord.”

Crawford

- “We believe that probably there will be a lot of opposition from the Roman Catholic Church soon, precisely because of the political changes that have occurred in the last two years. I believe there's going to be a lot of opposition from the Roman Catholic Church.”

Spiritual environment in Colombia — negative perceptions

Alvarez

- “The strongest spirit over Colombia, I believe, is a religious spirit.”
- “... the idolatry spirit that we have received from our ancestors and the witchcraft and religious spirit that came from Spain....”
- “This is the situation of Colombia: lack of morality, witchcraft, the occult ... New Age.”

Patiño

- “I consider the Christian environment in Bogotá to be pretty heavy because of the idolatry, the witchcraft centers. There's a lot of paganism and there's a lack of knowledge of the truth of the gospel.”
- “Besides a lack of knowledge of the Word of God, which is a very central need, there's a lack of honesty and of sincerity. Here it seems that the one who has resources is the one who has power and authority over those who don't have it. This goes for the moral, for the spiritual realm, for the material realm....”

Malagón

- “Whatever the government gives to the needy, [the directors of the distribution projects] skim. We call this ‘cERRUCHO.’ They take a little part of this money and they do help people, but they’re always trying to see what they can get out of it. I really believe that that’s one thing which has brought our country to the state which it’s in.”
- “Something that has me amazed at this moment is how far Satanism has gone in our city. Our suburbs have been invaded by Satanists, reaching young people between 15 and 25 years old.... We have to keep in mind that this Satanism movement is advancing rapidly, and since it does such in hidden places, most church people don’t notice how strong it’s getting.”
- “I have heard of many witches and warlocks who have lists of pastors and missionaries, and they’re even praying and fasting that these people get sick and die. They do all kinds of sorcery and perform spells.”

Cortéz

- “Even though at this moment we have been experiencing difficult times — we have been experiencing violence and all kinds of things — I believe the Word is fulfilled where it says that where there was sin, there is abundance of grace.”

Velásquez

- “Our country is very idolatrous and we are governed by a very traditional religion. People have not left that ignorance, and that has caused the Colombian people to be misguided in their goals, in their purposes.”

Pardo

- “Here in our city, some years back, I can’t recall how many years it was, they celebrated the First World Congress of Witchcraft. Since then, our city has been marked with lots of powers that are contrary to the principles of God.”

Kronfly

- “There have been other movements which haven’t been Christian — metaphysics, New Age, witchcraft. And people want to fill the emptiness they have inside with these things — these other religions and cults which are being offered.”
- “Satanism in Colombia is arising in a big way.... There’s a lot of witchcraft, and we’re confronted with this as well. We understand that there are vigils and fasts by witches. Here in Colombia they come together with the only objective being to direct their vigils and fasts in such a way that the Christian Church in Colombia falls and the pastors which the Lord has raised up to guide his Church fall into sin.”

Crawford

- “That doesn’t mean to say that the devil’s given up. I believe that he’s still very active.”

Spiritual environment in Colombia — positive perceptions

Pinzón

- “I really believe that we’re living in a moment of revival in the Church. The spiritual life has been renewed, as well as the praise and worship.”

Nunpaque

- “There are big churches here in Bogotá, with great revival, but I still think that there’s a lot more to be done.”
- “There’s been revival in some churches.”

Malagón

- “At this moment I think there is a great movement of the Spirit here in Bogotá. The Church has had an advance as much in number as in ministry.... So as far as Bogotá goes, I believe that there is a good spirit here.”

- “I think we are living in a revival. God is bringing about revival, as far as the Word goes, and as far as praise and worship as well.”
- “There is a lot of thirst and a lot of desire to hear the gospel of the Lord. When you preach, the people are open and willing to listen to you.”

Osorio

- “Many people daily are coming to the feet of the Lord. There is a lot of revival going on.”

Velásquez

- “There’s a very strong movement of the Holy Spirit in the entire Church. This has caused a great deal of growth in some of the churches.”
- “The Holy Spirit is permitted to flow. There’s a freedom. So in that sense the churches are experiencing the power of God — miracles, signs, growth, and revival.”

Cortéz

- “We, as Colombians, are expecting a great revival to take place and I believe that opening ourselves up would be the beginning of this great revival.”

Pardo

- “There is an opening in the hearts of people who wish to find a different path for their lives, and there is an opening to talk about Jesus Christ, and the Church is growing. The opportunity that we have at this moment in Bogotá is very healthy.”

Kronfly

- “I believe that in Colombia there’s a revival in the faith. People have a hunger and thirst for the Word. They’re searching for the Lord.”

Crawford

- “I would describe Bogotá as in a time of revival. Bogotá is a city where the churches are growing. There’s a lot of activity. And because of some of the political changes that have occurred recently, there’s even more liberty to preach.”

Transportation and time

Patiño

- “Since the congregation is on the outskirts of Bogotá, I have a problem with transportation. I haven’t been able to go to all of the places....”

Pinzón

- “Everyone is in a hurry to go here, to go there, to do this certain thing or the other. So there’s very little time left to devote to God.”

Llorente

- “Students don’t have that much time to go to church during the week or on Sundays.”

Osorio

- “I know of people in my congregation who don’t come to the meetings sometimes because they can’t find 110 pesos [15¢] to get a bus over here. I think that hinders the spiritual growth of those in the lower income bracket.”
- “People work too much and don’t have time to attend church or study the Bible, so I think that because they’re so busy, they get their blessings robbed. Distances in Bogotá are too far, it’s tremendous. And it takes too long to get from one place to another place.”

Barrios

- “We have our meetings, although not many of them because everyone either studies or works and is pretty busy.”

Kronfly

- “Here, for example, when a car driver climbs up an incline he feels as if he were fighting against everyone. And the pedestrian thinks that he is the whole world’s enemy. So the pedestrian gets in the way of this car, and the driver ends up on top of the pedestrian. There’s just a lack of education among those who go around on the streets. Here in Colombia it’s totally different from what you have in the United States. People who go about the streets in the United States are educated. The drivers there know how to drive; they are prudent. The pedestrian, who goes about by foot, knows where he can cross and he knows that he has to go to the corner to cross. So in this — in the environment of the street — there’s a lack of education.”

Crawford

- “The biggest problem in Bogotá is the traffic jams. That’s the biggest problem. You know, there’s so much traffic and there’s very little structure for that traffic.”

Unity and division

Alvarez

- “There might be three churches of 50 or 100 people that work only for themselves.” [Alvarez perceives a lack of unity and communication between groups of Christians.]
- “We’ve lost the Apostolic Church vision.... And so we had the problem of competition and rivalry amongst the differing denominations. I think that that’s the reason for many people’s lack of commitment.” [He perceives that Christians’ lack of commitment is caused by disunity.]
- “The people of our churches feel a greater commitment to their own organization than to the whole Body of Christ.”

Osorio

- “Churches tend to be very segregated [according to income].”

- “[This congregation] is quite young, with a lot of power and unction. We’re all very united. There’s a lot of love.”

Malagón

- “The Church has grown, but something that I think is lacking is a sense of unity among the churches. It seems as if each church would like to have their own kingdom.”
- “In the Amazons there are many churches which have been left alone, which haven’t been looked after, and they’re having to go through some hard times at this moment. The Church in Bogotá has built up too many things for themselves, perhaps, and hasn’t given them away to other brothers in need.”
- “The Church in Bogotá is keeping too many things to themselves instead of giving them out to others.”
- “It seems that the Church in Bogotá is divided into two parts.... The southern Church prays and searches and looks for God, but doesn’t have much money. The northern Church, however, has a lot of money and a lot of ways to perform different ministries.”
- “One thing which I believe has hindered the work of the Lord in the ministry is the division which politics has caused. As I said before, each person wants to build his own kingdom, and strengthen himself, instead of opening himself to work together with the whole Body of Christ.”
- “I’m not talking about a unity where everybody thinks exactly the same, but rather to be with the same spirit, the whole Church.”

Velásquez

- “There is a lot of unity among the pastors, with few exceptions. And through this unity, we’ve held various events which have effectively impacted the city.”
- “We’re working through the Confederation looking for unity.... It is necessary to join all our strength and proclaim the gospel in such a way that we won’t need to spend as much energy and money, but just help each other.”

Cortéz

- “Lately God has been moving our city toward an encounter with the principles of the Scripture. And this is because of the unity that we find among the people of Christ.”

Barrios

- “We might be missing human resources as well as economic ones. But there is a great need, and the need creates a lot of types of work. I believe that if the Church were more united....”

Pardo

- “One of the factors that ... hinders the growth of the Church is the Church’s unity. We have felt very burdened to have more unity within the Church, and we understand that it’s a very difficult problem, not only in Colombia, but around the world. There are many people who come to Colombia and say, ‘You guys lack unity,’ and of course this is nothing new. We understand that there is a lack of unity. But sometimes they try to make us believe that in their countries they do have unity. When you go to the States, you realize that the churches are not united. The churches are even more divided than they are here — more divided than they have ever been before. And in Europe you find the same thing. Also in Latin America it’s exactly the same. So I believe that one of the things we need to strive for, not only in Colombia, but in the whole world, is to be able to grow in a real principle of unity — not just in an apparent unity, but a unity that has a strong foundation, and that the pastors will all unite and show acceptance so that we can all march together toward our common goal. So I think that that’s the problem, and that keeps the Church from walking and marching like we should. It’s the lack of growth in the unity of the Church.”

Appendix A: Unabridged interviews with various Bogotá pastors.

The following interviews, except for the one with Colin Crawford, were all conducted in Spanish during summer 1993. The majority of the translation was done by Lindsay Christie's daughter, Missy. She tended to translate loosely, paraphrasing, as the translators of the Living Bible had done. I translated a few of the interviews, more literally than Missy, and revised her translation work some.

Bold and italicized words are mine; the rest are those of the person being interviewed. I tried my best to spell the names of towns and people correctly, but there may be some misspellings.

Pastor Camilo Alvarez from *Comunidad Cristiana de Fe — Calle 53*.

Tell me what the spiritual environment is like in Bogotá.

First of all I would like to describe what the Christian atmosphere is like here in Bogotá, what the Church is preparing for, and what state it is in, spiritually speaking. If you want to talk about the spiritual state of the Church, we first of all need to go back and see what the religious life has been like here, not only in Bogotá, but in all of Colombia. And when we do this we notice that up until 1991 the Colombian constitution still declared that there was only one religion in Colombia — that was the Catholic one. This meant that no other type of religion was accepted by the law here.

When I'm talking about religion I'm not referring to what this world means by the word — because we all know that the definition of religion is “what man does to please God.” But let's take this word and put it as a foundation of what we're talking about. The intolerance of all religions came to such a point that if we look back we can see missionaries who were murdered because of their beliefs, because they were Protestants. Men, women, and whole families were persecuted because of Christ.

With this backing of the law which the Catholic church had there came a point when they were more interested in earthly possessions and earthly power than in the spiritual life. They came to a point that we could say that they abandoned, or left to one side, their spiritual guide. They abandoned all moral principles and everything which meant spiritual guidance or spiritual life, living in this earthly life, having their interests more on material things than on God himself. They began searching for economic power and for earthly possessions. And this resulted in moral decadence and the moral decay of our country. This is the reason why at this moment we're living in a very, very difficult time, spiritually speaking.

Fortunately, thanks to the Lord's grace, he gradually puts everything back in place, little by little. In 1991 we had an example of this because the Colombian constitution accepted other religions — it gave the right for free assembly here in our country. This has been a blessing because it has given us liberty to work without fear of any persecution or any further problems with the Catholic church.

With all the problems that we used to have, there are people who do not just stay still, but they gave their entire lives to take the salvation message around our country. Here in Bogotá you can see how things are a little bit easier, that here in our country we have our little regions such as Boyacá and Nariño where the people are very conservative in their thinking. And I believe that anything besides their religion — the Catholic religion, which they had been brought up with — is totally wrong. This is simply because the strongest spirit over Colombia, I believe, is a religious spirit.

Well, the Catholic religion, as a religion, never asked for many good things. But I think the people in our country, and actually not only in our country but around the world, including in the States, have forgotten or maybe don't know that this is a way of living. And if we add to this the idolatry spirit that we have received from our ancestors and the witchcraft and religious spirit that came from Spain, then you can

have an idea of what the situational spiritual feeling is here in, not only in Bogotá, but in all of Colombia.

People from all over the country live in Bogotá. I would dare to say that only 30 percent of the people who live here have actually been born in Bogotá. The rest of them are foreigners. They come from different parts of the country: from the coast, from the plains, and from the different regions which our country has. Well, this is the situation of Colombia: lack of morality, witchcraft, the occult. At this moment the New Age movement is coming in strongly. And again, that religious spirit that just governs over all of the whole thing.

Could you tell me what the needs are here in Colombia — not only the material needs, but spiritual and cultural ones as well.

Well, unfortunately, we must recognize that our people are uncultured people and, we could say, ignorant people also. Even though this situation of ignorance and lack of culture is improving day by day our people still let themselves be governed by traditions. Because when there's ignorance people don't allow any changes to take place. Because what they live, where they have experience, they believe that it is the right thing. So we have a great need.

How can we get this change to take place?

Well, the government is very interested in the development of things in the realm of education and open commerce with other countries. We need instruction of this type, and....

Well, no, if we're going to think, if we're going to center in the spiritual realm what we need is people, many people who have decided to do whatever is needed to take the kingdom of God to the needy people, although it's true that the Christian body has grown a lot in comparison with 20 years ago. At this moment we could say that we're 10 times what we were 20 years ago, but we still find the problem of indifference or lack of interest from the people. They have simply just begun taking

their salvation for granted. And very few people have really understood what their commitment means, because they don't have the vision of the expansion of the Kingdom of God. So they don't only remain noncommittal themselves, but they don't back the people who do have a commitment to Christ and who understand it.

Also there are many people who feel a commitment in their heart, but don't have the means to do much. You know that in order to do anything you often need economic backing. You need this economic support to be able to move around and take the Kingdom of God to other places.

The thing is — and not only here in Bogotá — we have many churches. Here when you go to the south of the city you're going to find that in every suburb there are at least three churches. There might be three churches of 50 or 100 people that work only for themselves. We have the terrible problem of the different denominations and people getting stuck in them: Pentecostals work for the Pentecostal church; Baptists work for the Baptist church; the Presbyterians work for the Presbyterian church, and I won't say any more or else I'll probably get into trouble. But every person just works for their own organization.

I believe that we've lost the local church vision. We've lost the Apostolic church vision. Maybe I shouldn't say that we lost it — we probably never received it. And so we had the problem of competition and rivalry amongst the differing denominations. I think that that's the reason for many people's lack of commitment.

So as I was telling you, we need support. We need support for the people. Some time back we needed people to come here and help us. Now we have the people, but we don't have any economic support. For example, Lindsay [Christie, national director of *Operación Bendición*,] has many very interesting projects which he hasn't been able to complete because of lack of funds. Again, unfortunately, the people of our churches feel a greater commitment to their own organization than to the whole Body of Christ.

So what are we lacking? We need to break that denominational mindset. For example, if you belong to the Assemblies of God, why don't you just stop thinking about the Assemblies of God and open your mind a little more to the Church in Bogotá and the Church around your country and what its needs are. Every denomination should do likewise, and stop thinking of gaining souls for its church — to make its church bigger — and begin thinking of the people and what their needs are, and to win souls for the Kingdom of Christ.

Would you like to see more missionaries from other countries come here?

Look, I really believe that when a person comes, or is send by God, they have a lot to give. And we'd welcome them, of course. But, then, we have a problem when missionaries come with their own agendas. You see, again I would like to repeat that Christ's Church is just one big church. We're all part of the same body. And as part of this body we should support one another and help one another.

For example, the things which God is doing in your country — the things which the Spirit is revealing to you — you should share them with us, and we should also do the same with you. Anything new that we receive from God we should share it with you, and that way we will function better, and we will be working as a real body. Because if we don't do this, we will be just acting individually, with individual purposes. And that is not what the Church of God is.

Now could you tell me something about your ministry and your congregation?

Well, what could I tell you about my ministry? I'm a member of a pretty young congregation. When I say "pretty young congregation" I mean that it has only been here, in Bogotá at least, for eight years. My congregation is called *Comunidad Cristiana de Fe* and it belongs to a mission called South American Mission. The head of this mission — we say he is the head because he is the person to whom God gave the vision and then came here with it — his name is Randy McMillan. He's an American pastor and prophet. He came to a city in our country called Cali, and he founded the

Comunidad Cristiana de Fe 14 years ago. And the Lord showed him slowly the people with whom he needed to work.

Today we have different *Comunidad Cristiana de Fe* churches in Bogotá: in Bucaramanga, in Cali of course, in Cartagena and Manisalis. And at this moment we are just beginning a new church. I mean, we have been there for a year, but we're just starters of a new church and I'm head of this church. Well, actually I'm not — it's God who does things. I travel to Ceramosa every weekend. We just began a work there and we're letting God guide us in what he wants us to do. Ceramosa is a little city or a big town, however you wish to call it, which is called the entrance to the plains, the *Llanos Orientales*. It's to the north of these plains, which is near Cosanari and Aralca.

Now the vision is pretty simple. We have begun taking Ceramosa. We plan to take all the surrounding towns until we get to the border of Venezuela. Now what I see is, in the spiritual realm, all of this area taken for Christ. Of course there are other churches and pastors there, but most of them have a work just with their own denomination. And maybe that is why they have lost a feeling for humanity and for the people's needs, because they are only interested in gaining things for their own denomination rather than thinking of the expansion of God's Kingdom. My vision is simply the restoration of the Kingdom of God here on the earth.

Does your congregation have different ministries?

Okay, let's talk about *Comunidad Cristiana de Fe* in Bogotá. Now first of all I want to explain that the congregations in Manisalis, Cucután, and Cartagena have all been birthed from the congregation here in Bogotá. So as you can see the church here in Bogotá has a missionary vision.

Our congregation is governed not by just one pastor, but by a body of pastors. This body of pastors is made up of four elders who each has a different God-given ministry. We have an apostle. We have a prophet. We have a teacher. We have an evangelist. We could say that we have the five ministries in these four people. Just

recently two new pastors were called to be part of this body of pastors. According to their different ministries, they have divided the work which has to be done. So under the apostle ministry, we have the mission ministry and the ministry of praise and worship.

Now, why do we have praise and worship under an apostle ministry? That's very simple. It's because God gave this unction to a person who has this ministry. Now, over our whole congregation we believe that we have the unction of praise and worship. That is what God has given us, and thanks to this ministry we have been able to reach many places and accomplish many different things. That's how one of the members of our church went as a missionary last year to Venezuela; he is now in charge of five different churches in, of course, different cities in Venezuela. We have also done seminars in different cities in different parts of the country. So really our church moves as God leads her.

As I've said before, we have had a problem with economic support. Why? Well, because some years ago if a missionary felt led to go some place, and if the pastor felt a need, we'd try to meet this need. And the congregation would say, "Okay. If you feel that's a need, or if that's what you have to do, go ahead and do it." They didn't have in mind where they would have to stay or anything. If they had to sleep on the floor, they'd sleep on the floor. If they had to have bread and water for breakfast or for dinner, they'd just go through many struggles. They would do it. So all the churches would say, "Okay. We'll send you. Just go on."

Now there are other congregations as well that think that in order to be a missionary you must prepare yourself as if you were going to live in a jungle. And they submit their missionaries to a manner of training in different areas, to prepare them for life in the jungle. But there's really not much jungle left.

Our vision in *Comunidad de Fe* is different from this. We believe that we should send our missionaries with the total support of our church: economically and

spiritually. And if he should happen to go through any struggles or any problems it would be because God desires him to go through it, not because we have not supported him throughout the time he's in the mission field. We don't just send them to see what they can do and to live for themselves with the theory that "God is your provider" and "See what he's going to do for you." Churches send people this way, without giving any support, and then they ask them to report the results of their overseas stay and to have great success. I've known many missionaries who have gone this way from, you know, the Assemblies of God, the Four Square, and many different denominations. They just say, "Go on and see what you can do." And the person goes over and has success and gets a big work going. Then they'll probably bring him back and put him in another place and send a more experienced person to take it over.

Does your congregation have social works? Do they help the needy people, the gamines, or the people who live in the street?

Now that is another part. That is the evangelism part. And the evangelism part of our church.... At this moment we have a home in Cali. It's something that has just begun. But as I've said before, in order to do all these things we need economic support. It's not an easy thing to do over here, because when I talk about Operation Blessing, I think that it was something restored by God to be able to do these kind of works. Now in our home we have people from our country, from our church, and from other countries. Because as I've said before, we believe that the Church is just one big church. There's just one Body of Christ. Because what God has revealed in your country we need it here in ours. Just as what God has revealed in our country you need it also, because we are all just one body and we need each other. We can't think individually, not just say, "Here's so much" and see what you're going to do with it. That is not the idea either. Because we are all human, and we can't just give money away without any control.

I haven't any more questions for you, but is there anything else that you would like to say about the state of the Church or about the missionary ministry?

Okay. When we talk about missionaries, I believe that the first thing that we have to think of is, "What is his vision?" When I say "the missionary vision" I refer to the vision which God has given to this particular missionary. We have to take one thing into account, and that's that a missionary is basically an apostle. I say this because in a missionary we must have the five ministries. A missionary must be an evangelist, because how is he going to get souls unless he works as an evangelist? He has to be a pastor, because how is he going to take care of what God gives him unless he has a pastor's heart? A missionary needs to be a teacher, or else how is he going to teach his people? And the apostle is usually a prophet.

So we have to take this into account. The missionary is not just someone that you can say, "Okay. Here you go. Go away," and you send on. But he is someone to whom something must be given to be able to work on. That's why all the missionary teams must always be under the covering of an apostle ministry. And this missionary must have one thing very clear in his mind. And that's that his main mission is the restoration of the Kingdom of God in this world.

He must not be a missionary like Jonah. Jonah went to Ninevah, but only after God went after him and put him on the spot. And with all this he did not go to Ninevah to take the salvation message, but to condemn the people — to tell them that Ninevah was going to be destroyed. The hearts of the people there were opened to the message that he gave them and they repented. But Jonah became furious. And why did he get furious? Simply because God did not destroy them.

Now we can see something very interesting in this story about Jonah, and that is that Jonah never got to know the real needs of the people in Ninevah. And he never stopped being the type of Jew who thought he was the greatest thing, as most of them were thinking at that time. Now, if we take a close look, and if we think about it, who

establishes missions except God? The Father himself establishes them, because it is the Father who puts everything together for the restoration of this world. So let's look at this and recognize that it is our Father God who is the father of all missions.

Why am I telling you all this? Because it is the Father who in the first place gave his own son. We see the love of the Son who obeyed his father because he knew that through obeying his father he would be able to rescue the lost. We also see the love of the Holy Spirit. And why the love of the Holy Spirit? Well, because he reveals the Son to us. And through him we have the total love of God acting through the mission. And that is the main vision which a missionary must have.

Again I repeat that the missionary ministry must be an apostle ministry, but with the condition that this ministry is representing the love of God. It seems pretty simple. We must not think, "How many souls am I going to win?" but rather, "How much of the love of God am I going to sow?" We always tend to think of the mission ministry or see how good it is according to the amount of souls which have been won. But I'm convinced that at this moment things must change. Success must be measured by the amount of love given out to the people.

When we talk about winning souls, there are many different ways of doing it. Many people say yes to God just because they want to have their consciences stilled. Many people say yes to God because a certain person did so or maybe because it's the "in" thing to do at the moment. And all these souls are counted. But my question is, "How much love of God is there in those hearts?" Let's not forget that missions reflect the love of God.

In the same way let's not forget that God has worked with authority. The missionary must always keep in mind that there are two types of authority working together. Two types of power. One of these powers is the *dinamis* power of the Holy Spirit and at the same time the power *exolsiu*; that is, the power delegated by the

authority of God. And this is something which you don't see many times. You don't see it maybe because not much is known about it.

So these people, as soon as they face any type of problem, begin thinking, "Okay. What am I going to do? Where can I go to?" because it really hasn't been God's calling for them to do that, but it's just been a desire that they've had in their heart — their own desire. And as soon as they've had the first little problem, they get stuck. Now the trials that God puts in our way to form us is one thing. But the trials which we allow to happen to our ministers — because of the lack of covering I was talking to you about before — is a totally different thing.

So it is necessary for the missionary to be aware of what his calling means: to be aware that he is an apostle who goes around taking the salvation of restoration of God's Kingdom, who is dressed with the power of God, with the power of the Holy Spirit and the authority given to him by Christ. And when we refer to the restoration of the Kingdom, we're talking about the sovereignty of God. And that is what we're taking to the world. So when we try to take the sovereignty of God, we the missionaries are in charge of establishing his sovereignty on the earth.

Pastor Lázaro Pinzón from *La Iglesia Cruzada Cristiana — Lucero Alto (Peniel)*.

Would you please describe what the Christian atmosphere is like in Bogotá?

Well, for what I know about churches, I really believe that we're living in a moment of revival in the Church. The spiritual life has been renewed, as well as the praise and worship. I really think that we're living in quite a good time, spiritually speaking.

Is it easy to be a Christian in this kind of atmosphere or is it hard? And is it easy to talk about Christ, to share about Christ?

Well, about being a Christian — no it is not easy. Maybe sharing about Christ is easier than being a Christian. The reason why is because there are many things which can distract you from Christ. Many, you could say, temptations that would tangle you up. So if we're not aware, they'll make us lose our communion with God. One of these things is music. And another is that the people are so busy. Everyone is in a hurry to go here, to go there, to do this certain thing or the other. So there's very little time left to devote to God. So if you're not really dedicated to being a Christian, it can become pretty hard.

But on the other hand, I believe that to share about Jesus is pretty easy because people won't reject you — at least here in Bogotá people are open to the gospel. They will at least listen to you. Sometimes, if they're in a hurry, they won't have time to listen, but then another person will. So, again, I believe that it's easier to share about Jesus than to live for Jesus.

As you see it, what are the needs in Bogotá — not only the material needs, but the social and spiritual needs as well?

Well, I believe that one of the greatest needs is the social need. After all, the message which Christ brought was a social message. It was something which addressed man's needs. I think that the Church went through a time when the biggest emphasis

was made in the spiritual part of man, and his spiritual needs. But this has gone, and now I think the opportunity for the Church to reach man in a more complete way, and do more social works, exists. There needs to be a greater vision for education. One of the other great needs which we have in Bogotá is the health need. There's a lot of lack in this area. And many people, because of their circumstances, can't be attended at a hospital. There's just a lot of need in this area.

Missionaries will be coming from other countries — from the States and from different countries. I'd like to know what kind of missionary you'd like to see working here. What do you think the missionaries who come here can do?

I think that one good thing that they could do would be to help awaken the Church to the people's needs and awaken them to have a closer relationship with God. I believe that the fact that they are leaving their country and making a great sacrifice to leave their homes and the people they love to come to our country and help is a great example for the people. So really, again, I think that one of the good things they could do would be just to awaken the Church to the reality of a commitment to Christ and to serve in God's kingdom.

What kinds of missionaries do you need? Do you need doctors? Do you need preachers ... what kind of people?

Well, I believe that we need all kinds, though we do have lots of preachers here, and many preachers from other countries come frequently. Maybe the best people to come are not really missionaries — they'll come to work here. But I think that we would need doctors.... You know, I think that doctors really would be a good help. We need help in the health area because our country is going through a hard time. The social security system, for example, has financial problems. And just the whole situation of the country is hard. So any help in this area will be a great blessing.

Now please talk to me about your ministry and your congregation.

Well, I have been serving the Lord in the pastoral ministry now for 12 years. I have been with this particular congregation for four years. During these four years the Lord has supported me through all the different ministries and he's really helped me to press onward. And with each day that passes I remain convinced that I am in the place where God wanted me to be.

One of the things that assures me that it is God who wants me to be here is that the congregation has backed me up in all things and helped me many times.

About your congregation, what kind of social class do you work with, and the age group.

Well, this congregation belongs to the Christian Crusade (*Cruzada Cristiana*). The social group which I work with is very low. They have very little income; they're a most needy people. This area, called Simón Bolívar, where our church is, is one of the poorest and neediest areas in the whole city of Bogotá. The spiritual needs and the material needs in this area are great. They have a lack of education and lack of culture. As I said, it's one of the neediest parts of the whole city.

In your congregation, do you have colored people or indigenous people?

Well, we don't have authentic Indians, but we do have people from all over the country. People from all the different regions have come to live here in Bogotá. The majority of these people who come from other regions have come looking for a better life, but they have a very low income. So that's the reason they don't go to a better place, but just come here to this poor area.

Which para-church organizations do you know here that are trying to meet the needs of Bogotanos?

I really don't have much knowledge about this area. But thinking about it, we do have some entities which back Christian ministries. One of these is ADME, which is an organization which covers the ministers of the gospel: they're in charge of getting the pastors together. They try to sponsor different events with these pastors, trying to

bring benefits to the community and, especially, the Christian community. Some of these events are campaigns, seminars, meetings — Christian meetings, praise and worship meetings.

Another one of these is a new one called FRAN, which is doing a good work also. But I really don't remember the names of any other entities that would be helping the needy people here.

Now, have you heard about Operación Bendición program or Desafío?

Oh yes, of course. Yes. They are doing a great work and have a wonderful vision. All of the churches here have clearly seen the work that they have been doing among us. They have a precious ministry in their work among the children. The schools are wonderful, and the health brigades and their periodical have brought much help to the area. Just everything that they do has been a blessing to us.

Now I have some questions about Operación Bendición and Desafío. In what ways have you seen Operación Bendición being effective here in Bogotá?

Well, I have already mentioned some of the works that they have done here. But, then, something that's worth pointing out is the help that they have given to the neediest area of the city. For example, they could have put their schools in other places and helped people to prepare them to make an income. But no, they have come here to Lucero Alto, Cazuca, Cartucho — which are the most terrible areas of our city. This is something which no one else has done and we're just grateful for it. It has been a very positive influence in our community.

What direct benefits has your congregation received from Operación Bendición?

Well, one of the benefits is that many of the children who attend their schools are members of our church. They have also benefited us with the merchandise they send — I think it's more than 20 members of our congregation who receive these goods, which are of course a great help to them. And through the paper, of course, we receive

great blessing: teaching, hearing the news about what's happening in other Christian communities.

Now, there are 100 members in your congregation, right?

Well, yes. That's the average number of people who attend our church.

Do you support the ministry of Operación Bendición - Desafío?

Yes. Of course I do, 100 percent. I'm very grateful for them, and I encourage my congregation to buy their paper and to support them as well. I recognize that they are a great blessing, not only for our church, but for the entire Body of Christ in our country.

What weaknesses do you think Operación Bendición has?

Well, that's a difficult thing to answer. I really wouldn't know.

Well, then, tell me what you think Operación Bendición could do to be more effective.

Well, maybe they could work more united with the entire body of churches in Bogotá. Maybe that way it will be known better by everyone and it could be more effective. I believe that all the churches should support *Desafío* 100 percent.

When you think about Operación Bendición, do you consider it a local ministry, a foreign ministry, something that is set to one side, apart from the churches. How do you see it?

I would personally describe it as a ministry of the Church and to the Church. That's why I said before that it needed to work more united with the whole body of churches here in Bogotá.

Do you know of any people who consider this ministry a foreign ministry?

Well, yes, yes. Many people do, but of course that is because the people who direct this ministry here are foreigners.

How do you inform yourself about the work that Operación Bendición is doing?

One of the ways I keep informed about this is through the radio station, *Nuevo Continente*. They continually update us on the things that this ministry is doing. Another information medium is the newspaper, *Desafío*, of course, and through another magazine that *Desafío* is distributing. Those would be the media through which I keep myself informed.

I'm also friends, and have good relationships with, many workers of *Desafío* and *Operación Bendición*. So this is another way of keeping myself informed.

Is there anything else that you think would help me, or do you think you've said enough?

Well, yes. I consider that it would be very good for the foreign preachers and missionaries who come here to integrate themselves more — get to know better the churches of the south, especially in this area, Simón Bolívar, because this is the other face of Bogotá. Many people, even in our own city, can't imagine that there are people living in such poor conditions. Many of these people in Simón Bolívar live in shacks made of tin, carton, and wood, and they really need their help. That's why I think that maybe.... Well, who knows? God might give a vision to some of these missionaries to work with these poor churches.

So tell me, what do you think of this interview and the questions I asked you?

I think you did pretty well. Maybe it was I who was not very well prepared. You took me by surprise.

Pastor Rafael Patiño from *Cruzada Cristiana* — *San Mateo Suacha*.

Could you please describe for me what the Christian environment is like here in Bogotá?

Okay. I consider the Christian environment in Bogotá to be pretty heavy because of the idolatry, the witchcraft centers. There's a lot of paganism, and there's a lack of knowledge of the truth of the gospel. And the government itself promotes many of these things. As a pastor and brother in Christ, we all have a lot of conflict. We have to battle a lot of these areas, even though the Colombian constitution is now for us permitting us the freedom of gathering in worship. I still consider that the spiritual atmosphere is pretty heavy.

So you consider Catholicism a problem?

Well, I'm not only referring to the Catholics; there might be people who are very, very Catholic and they don't pose any problems to us. Those Catholics who are fanatics — who many times don't even know the basic fundamentals of their own religion — are the ones who bring us problems. So I believe a person who is 100 percent Catholic will know God and will respect the things of God. Now, fanatical Catholics don't do this because they do not know these truths. They don't know what being a Catholic means. Many of them are Catholic just because their whole families are Catholic — because their families were of this religion — and they don't really know what it means to belong to it.

What needs do you see in Bogotá, not only materially speaking, but social needs and spiritual needs as well?

There is a lot of need. Besides a lack of knowledge of the Word of God, which is a very central need, there's a lack of honesty and of sincerity. Here it seems that the one who has resources is the one who has power and authority over those who don't have it. This goes for the moral, for the spiritual realm, for the material realm, for the

financial realm, and just for all kinds of things. Unfortunately our society has been raised this way, and this makes us, as pastors, many times feel not totally downcast, but worried and sad, because we don't have the means to reach all the needs that there are.

If we are going to talk about needs, there are hundreds of different ones. Many people focus mainly on the economic lack, but I think that that's just giving in to doubts and the difficulties, more than helping them. If you help someone economically, you will cause them to become dependant upon you. And the day that you don't help them, they won't be your friend anymore.

I really believe that the best way of helping is showing them who Christ Jesus is. This is the best way. I believe that if they know this, then all of the other things will follow. The Bible says that we should seek first the Kingdom of God and then all these things will be added unto us. So I believe that the most important thing is to show them this divine truth. Now, when this gap is filled, then all of the other things will be much easier to undertake. Because that same person is going to do what he can to get ahead and is going to be a totally different person from what he was before without Christ. But we have to know how to get to their heart.

Missionaries will be coming from the States or from other countries to work here. What kind of missionaries do you think are the most needed? Preachers? Doctors? What do you think?

Yes. I believe that the need is total and it covers the whole being. The main thing is that they get to know Jesus Christ. I think that a doctor, a missionary by heart.... It really doesn't matter what kind of occupation they have or what they come to do. If he has been called by Jesus Christ, he will bring forth fruit. The most important thing is that in that person's heart — be it a man, a woman, or a couple that comes to work — that Jesus will be in total control of their hearts and lives. If Christ lives in their hearts, there will be no problem at all. When Christ is not in their hearts, it doesn't matter how good they are as doctors, there will always be problems. He might have many titles

and studied many things, but if Christ is not the king of his heart, anything he does for his work will be fruitless.

Now, when I talk about fruit, I'm talking about spiritual fruit. It might bring forth many material fruits, but these things will pass. The spiritual fruit, however — the fruit that is brought forth by God — that will stay. A number of beautiful things will take place then, and we will understand that God does not work through human knowledge, but through his divine power.

Now could you please talk to me about your ministry and your congregation?

I've known Christ for about 15 years now, but have been working full time in the ministry for six years. I became a Christian at the *Cruzada Cristiana* in Santa Isabel. That's when I began seriously walking with the Lord. And then when I met my wife — you know who she is — my life was further impacted. When I met brother Lindsay and his wife, they became a great blessing to my life, and they have helped me in many different ways.

As a result of this friendship I had with them, I felt the call of God after a three-day fast. And that weekend the brother who was ministering to us... There were about 120 of us at a men's retreat. The Lord woke me up at 5 O'clock in the morning and I felt something which I had never felt before. It was a sense of warmth that covered my head all the way down to my feet. I began to cry and sweat. The servant of God — the pastor who was directing this retreat of Santa Isabel church at that time — anointed us with oil and we received something beautiful, which was a call to the ministry. I know of many from this group who have continued with the Lord and have very fruitful ministries.

I then began to work at my church as a leader, had discipleship groups, went out visiting people, participated in the different events which took place at our church. In one of those many discipleship groups which the Lord allowed me to have with my wife, I came to this suburb named San Mateo. It's part of a little town connected with

Bogotá called Suacha. It's in the outskirts of Bogotá. The Lord called me to this place and we began a discipleship group with six people. Then the Lord just continued to send people to join us.

After this our pastor, Brother Silvio, and his wife Marcela — they are the pastors of the central church, which I belong to — had us begin a small church in the same area. Now, after four years have gone by, it has grown up to have 150 members and about 250 children. I think that God has brought forth fruit from this ministry because, with his help, we have been able to reach many homes and many different people with needs. God has allowed us to share many beautiful things with our brothers, and also allowed us to see the healing of souls in different people. Hearts are being changed and we have seen how the power of God changes people who have come humbly to serve him with a sincere heart. We have seen what the power of God does in their lives.

At this moment I have 10 leaders working together with me. There are many things we want to do. Among those things is work with children. Brother Lindsay, of course, has helped us a lot in this area in many ways — economic help, he has given us literature, spiritual help, setting an example for us, and in many, many other ways. I think that my wife's and my ministry has had an impact because of what I've seen in the ministers and the leaders who have been over me and how the Lord has taught me to submit to them.

Could you tell me again how many members you have in your congregation?

We have, at this moment, 120 members — adults — and around 150 to 200 children.

What denomination do you belong to and what social class do you work with? Also, could you tell me what ages most members of your congregation are?

Well, in our group you can find people that.... Well, there's a range of ages, between 60 years old and little newborn babies. We also have people who work with the

government and with the district, as well as people who work independently. Some of our members are bus drivers, taxi drivers. But you can also find engineers, nurses, and many people of different occupations. But we're all united by Christ. Their economic situations vary. Some people earn the minimum wage; some people earn a little more, some people a little less. You could say that I work with the middle class society, as well as maybe a few from the lower class as well. So this would be a middle-lower class, I suppose.

Among your members, do you find Indians or colored people?

Well, as far as us, we are all descendents of Indians. But if you're referring to an authentic Indian, such as those who live in the plains and different regions of our country — no, we don't have any of these. But we do have brothers from different regions of our country. We have brothers from Antiochia, from Tolíman, where I'm from, from Bogotá, from Boyacá, from Santander, from the Plains, from the *Llanos Orientales* and from Valle, from the coast and so on.

So we have a group of people who might have different dialects — and when I talk about dialects, I refer to the ones that are in our country. For instance, you can tell the difference between a Tequeño person and a Tolíman person because of certain words they use. But we all speak the same language. The most important thing is that Jesus has united us. He has guarded us and kept us until this day.

What other religious entities do you know which work to supply the needs of the people in your city?

Okay. Well, there are many. For example, we have the 700 Club; the *Desafío* newspaper; and the Christian Literature Center, which supports us; the Colombian Biblical Society; and the radio station, *Nuevo Continente*. These are all entities which help you without taking into account what denomination you belong to. They simply give help. The only important thing is that Christ might be the head of all the work. I

know that there are many others, but at this moment, these are the only ones I can recall.

I would like to talk with you about Operación Bendición - Desafío now. I have several questions about this. What effectiveness do you know of Operación Bendición - Desafío having here in Bogotá?

Well, as far as I can see, Brother Lindsay has done a very strong work. I know the many various activities which he has going on. And he has many support centers. I know these works, but I haven't visited them all because of my duties with church. And since the congregation is on the outskirts of Bogotá, I have a problem with transportation. I haven't been able to go to all of the places, but I know what they have in Cartucho street. I know the place that they have in La Florida — the halfway house. They also have a place in Lucero Alto and they have another work in the area called La Cazona.

And as far as working with them, I have participated in some of the health brigades. And they have held many of these in the upper part of the suburb where I am stationed, which is called Casuca. I've also had occasion to help in a brigade which they had in Suacha. I consider this a very beautiful ministry and am sad to see that many people do not value the work that they are doing. Many people go to these health brigades and ask for help, but only because they want their immediate needs met. I believe the work that they're doing is excellent. And maybe, well, they could expand some more, if they had the people to do it. There's a lack of help. Well, they have the means, the material things with which to help, but there are not enough people who are available who want to give their time and their service. I mean, it might be a minimum thing, but just to offer your help to them.

What direct benefits does your congregation receive from Operación Bendición?

Well, I have received many things. Among them are literature, teachings, help from the health brigades. My congregation has benefited from these health brigades,

because every time I hear of one I inform them about it, and no matter where it is, we try to attend it. I think it's important for them to receive something because it will be a blessing to their lives. I have also received economic assistance to buy 130 chairs for children. We bought them just 15 days ago.

Some time ago I talked with Brother Lindsay and he helped me with a problem I had with a prefabricated house. In this little house we plan to have a nursing home or kindergarten. It's still in the early stages because the mayor of Suacha hasn't approved certain things which are needed in order for this place to begin working — we think it's important to have everything in order before the law. Now the house is functioning, well, half-way because they haven't approved the water and electricity for us yet. But we have received many things from them— as I said, this little house and the fixtures for the house such as for the bathrooms and things such as this, as well as the chairs, of course. And, of course, we expect much more.

What do you think that Operación Bendición - Desafío could do to become more effective?

I think that if they could find a way of knowing the needs of each family, and perform a kind of census with all of these people.... I think they should do a census and a follow-up also, because many of these people go just to receive and to see what they can get out of it, and then when they can't get any more, then you have no idea what happened to them. But if we have a follow-up, and make them aware of the commitment which all this help involves, then we will be able to help them, not only materially, because I think that the most important help is not the material help.

It is important to make the person conscious of the state that their soul is in and show them the way out of that state. I think that's the best help that we can give them. I'm referring to people who have been victims of violence or of marital problems — victims of a violation or maybe an accident. So when you come and help these people in a material way, and you give them exactly what they need, sometimes instead of

really helping them get out of the situation, you are making it worse, because you are creating a dependence. And I think that would be a very sad thing.

So what's important to me is not their immediate needs, because you can give me the money to have lunch with today, and I'll be very grateful. And next time that you don't have anything for lunch, then you're going to say, "Hey, who's going to be giving me lunch today." And in this way I've created a dependency for the person who's receiving the lunch. But if you tell me, "Look, Rafael. You have to do this and this and this in order to get the money you need to buy your lunch," this won't be just enough for one lunch for one day, but for many lunches.

So I believe that the 700 Club — and please forgive me if I'm getting into too much — but they should focus more on teaching and on didactic things. Someone once said, very wisely, that it is better to teach someone how to fish than to give them a fish. Because, okay, you received that fish, but then half an hour later you don't have anything and you need another one. But if you tell him how to fish, where the fish are, then that person will be able to get ahead, and he'll be very grateful from the bottom of his heart that this took place.

And it would be great if we received the means and the teachings of how to reach people. For example, I as a pastor can be a kind of bridge for *Operación Bendición* to reach 120 people. Then there won't be a need of 120 people to teach another 120. I, as a pastor, can teach these 120 people what I have been taught. This would be a great help. I really believe that on this scale the 700 Club and *Desafío - Operación Bendición* could be of great help. I really believe that they have the mechanisms and the way. The only thing is to put it into practice.

They probably are already doing it — I don't know — but just the fact that I have received so many blessings from them makes me feel satisfied. I still believe that there can be much more done to overcome those difficulties which have shown up on different occasions. Not that these difficulties have stopped them from doing certain

things, but maybe because someone forgets something or just some little thing goes wrong. Different situations can come up, so instead of helping and bringing benefits to a greater number of people, they're probably not doing harm, but they have done something more simple. But it could have been more effective. Do you understand me? *I'm following you. Now, when you think of the 700 Club and Operación Bendición, do you think of it as a foreign ministry, or as a local ministry, or as a mixture of foreign and local? How do you think of it?*

I think that it would be something like a mixture. As students we commit many mistakes, but if your teacher is right beside you, he will correct you immediately. If they give you everything at once, you can easily get intoxicated. It would be easy to get indigestion. But if they give you according to the measure that you can manage, and help and teach you to administer, then this would be fabulous.

What advantages do you think a mixed ministry such as the 700 Club and Operación Bendición has with the Church, with the people?

Well, again, I'll tell you that the experience of others and the fact that people tell you, "Do this, do that," and that you can do it with a kind of guidance or set order so that he'll tell you, "Okay. You have to do this and this and such and such a thing. And then I will overlook what you are doing."

I believe that all of the activities which we develop, if they are supervised by someone, then we will be much better off. Again, I'll say that it is just like when you are studying: If you have a good teacher and this teacher has enough character to tell you when you are wrong, this student will learn from his mistakes, and maybe make fewer mistakes every time. This is why it is important that there be a kind of agreement, and some set goals achievable within a certain period of time. I really believe that this is important.

Is there anything else that you would like to say for missionaries or for people who would like to support Colombia and come and give some of their working time to Colombia?

Yes, I must say that I'm very, very grateful to God and to the people from other places whose hearts have been touched by God to come and give us their time and their help — and help us in an effective way. I've seen that most of the help which we've received has been pretty effective. Now it's another thing that I believe that maybe they could be organized in a different way, but all of the help which I've received to this day has been very effective. And all I want is to just thank the Lord for what he's done through these people. Those men who, before you and me, felt in their hearts the desire to come to Colombia and leave in our hearts the satisfaction of being served by them, left with us an economic blessing, and material blessing, and a spiritual blessing.

I believe also that the most important thing is that they have a knowledge of God. I have had many conferences with missionaries and have been in many different meetings, and because of the organization which I belong to, have had the privilege to have contact with many other entities. The vast majority of these entities bring foreign missionaries — not only from the States, but from other parts of the world. They have all been a great blessing to my life. I have learned many things and they have corrected many things in my life. And many of these things have enabled me to have a fruitful ministry. I have put into practice what I have learned. I have many materials which I read and study, and later on teach to my congregation. And the fruits to this day have been, thanks to God, marvelous.

Well, this is the end of the interview. What did you think about it? Is there something you would have liked me to change?

No. Everything was fine. Thank you very much.

Visitation Leader Jorge Nunpaque from *Jesucristo es el Señor*.

The purpose of this interview is to understand Bogotá better. I'm planning to send this thesis to some missionaries, and maybe to some pastors as well. So first of all, could you please describe what the Christian atmosphere is like here in Bogotá.

I would say that there is a lot of freedom, as far as preaching the gospel goes. And yes, there's been revival in some churches. But I would dare to say that when there's a lot of liberty, people kind of lay back. So I just think that there's kind of a laid-back atmosphere. There used to be persecution before, but now you can preach the gospel in any place and with all kinds of liberty. But there's hardly any commitment with the members of churches toward their churches.

So yes, it's a nice atmosphere, as far as preaching the gospel goes, but we have to push the people in the churches and make invitations, trying to get them going along. And yes, there are big churches here in Bogotá, with great revival, but I still think that there's a lot more to be done. Now that's what I believe personally.

What needs do you think Bogotá has? I'm not only referring to material needs, but social ... those kinds of needs.

I think the greatest need is in the cultural and social part. We have many people here in Bogotá, but the vast majority of those who live here are very poor. I think that the Church sees itself in a kind of confrontation with this. Yes, you can give a lot of spiritual help, but maybe we are a little bit short in helping them socially.

The people need food, they need basic things. People say, "Yes. God is my helper. He is my provider." But then they go to church, and with that alone they're not going to be fed. They're not going to have all their needs met there. Economic needs have got to be met right away. So I really think that the biggest need right here in our city is the social need. The need to help people.

Also, of course, there are a lot of uncultured people, because of the lack of means to get an education. There are many schools in Bogotá, but there are not enough for all of the people. So, yes, there's a very low culture level here. I'd say that there's a great necessity in this area.

Now I would like for you to talk with me about your ministry and your congregation here. How does your ministry help those in your congregation?

My ministry consists of discipleship. What I do is visit all of the new people, following up. That's kind of the basic goal of my ministry in this church.

Many new people come to our church because they have been invited by friends or relatives who are members of our church, or through other circumstances. Every Sunday we have new people. And these people, when they make a decision for God, need to have follow-up. So that's my job — I go and visit them, with some other leaders, of course.

We disciple them in their homes and try to help them with their spiritual needs. We try to form little home cell groups where we pray, read the Bible and just worship God and learn a little more about him every week. We try and give these people counsel and keep on calling them frequently, making sure that they're okay and that they're coming to church. And try to help them — not only spiritually, but also, if we can, if we have the means, to meet their material needs. This is basically our church's ministry.

Of course, we also perform evangelism. But then, the basic thing is just to feed them and look after them and pastor them so that they continue to grow and bring forth fruit. In this way we will make new leaders who will, further down the road, help us and teach other people.

What is your church doing to meet the needs of the people in your city?

Well, we have some social ministries here, such as the ministry which helps street children — the *gamins*. We have a group helping in this area. We also have another

one working with drug addicts. We have a rehabilitation center for them to come to and leave drugs. We also have campaigns and events in the poorest areas and we frequently help people with goods and stuff like that. At our church we're continually giving out goods and helping people who have needs. We have a big goods-giveaway bimonthly and we give foodstuffs to people and their families — those who are the neediest in our church.

Those are basically the ways that we try to help the people socially — giving them all the help we can, and trying to meet the needs of the people who come here with them. Meet both their material and spiritual needs.

What is the denomination and the social class that you work with? The ages? And do you have any different races in your church?

I would say that we work with the middle class ... upper-middle class. In the beginning we had mostly poor people, because of the mentality that Colombians had. But slowly more professional people have joined our church. Some of these professionals have formed a help cooperative which ministers to the neediest people in our church. We also have a lot of university students. I think that this idea that they had, of the gospel being only for the poor, has been changing slowly and more upper class people have been called by the gospel.

As far as race goes, do you have black people or Indians?

The truth is, we all have a little part of Indian in us. We're just basic Colombian people from different parts of the country. We have maybe two or three colored people in our church.

What is the leadership team like and what characteristics does it have?

Well there's a pastor, who is the main leader. He works with a group of elders which forms the governmental body of our church. All of the decisions which must be made in our church are made by the pastor and this group of elders. There's also a group of leaders, of which I'm a part. There are about 10 of us. Four of us are in

charge of visitation and discipleship. One of us is in charge of evangelism, and another one is in charge of the children and children's church. Another with the rehabilitation of drug addicts. Another one with the street children. And another one is the leader of praise and worship. We also have a prison ministry. We also have a video and audio recording system — many Christian singers come here to record their songs. We give them this service.

So that is basically the team — all except the secretaries, the cleaning people, the guard, and the accountant. So this is basically the team we work with. But we all depend on the pastor and that group of six elders. Any decisions they make will affect us and we'll submit to them.

How many members does your church have?

Well, members that are written down and recorded, we have between 2300 and 2500, although we have more people who come to our church. On Sunday we usually have from 3000 to 3500 people.

What other entities do you know of which supply the needs of Colombian people?

I know of the Philadelphia church, which helps a lot in the social area. They have schools at that church. And also at our church we began a school last year for our members' children. It's a Christian school. But Philadelphia is one of the entities that helps a lot. There's also the Assemblies of God church which has an excellent program for helping people. The International Charismatic Mission church is a good church which has given a lot of help and the Four Square could be counted among these. I think those are the churches which help meet the needs of the people here in Bogotá — their spiritual needs and their material and social needs as well.

You refer only to churches when I asked you about entities. Do you know of any other ministries, besides churches?

Yes. There is Youth With A Mission. They're not a church, but they help a lot. There's also another organization called Compassion. Their work consists of helping

the poorest children with scholarships so that they can study. Another entity would be World Vision. They have helped in the poorest areas of Colombia and with the poorest churches. They help with housing construction and the buildings for churches. Those would be the three entities which are not churches, but that help in the social arena a lot.

Have you heard about the ministries of Operación Bendición and Desafío?

I really don't know it that well, but I have heard of many people who have been blessed by it.

As far as you know, what do they do?

Well, I know of the help they've given, especially in the social realm. But they also help churches and pastors when they have campaigns and stuff. They have evangelistic groups which come and help them. I also know about the health brigades. Basically what I know about them is all the social help that they have given.

Do you know anything about the newspaper, Desafío?

Oh, yes, of course. That is very, very well known.

There is the ADME organization and the three schools. Have you heard about the three schools which they have?

No.

These schools are in the areas of Cartucho, Cazuca, and Lucero Alto. They also have a children's ministry with clowns. They have a video ministry.... Well, the questions I have next are about Operation Blessing. But if you don't know much about it, that's okay.

Oh yes, we have received a lot of help, such as with the videos and with other things, but I really don't know what their work is about.

Just tell me whatever you know. What effectiveness do you see that Operación Bendición has had in Bogotá?

Well, as far as I know, they have been a great blessing and they have directly blessed many people through the health brigades and also blessed many churches, helping them in different ways. I know they have been a great blessing.

Could you tell me what benefits your congregation has received from Operación Bendición?

Now in our particular church they have helped us in the video ministry. And the newspaper, of course, is a great help.

What videos have you seen? Can you recall the names of a couple?

I can't remember the names right now, but I know that we have shown a couple, or more, films which have been provided by them for us.

How does your church support the ministry of Operación Bendición?

I would think that it would be through buying the paper, I guess, and supporting events that they have.

What weaknesses do you think that Operación Bendición has?

Well, really, if they have a weakness, I couldn't tell you.

What do you think that Operación Bendición could do to become more effective?

No, I think that they're doing a great job. I keep myself informed through the radio. You know, you always hear through the radio what's going on, what events are being organized. And also through the newspaper. So I think that everyone's pretty well informed of what's going on with them.

When you hear about Operación Bendición, do you think of it as a foreign ministry, as a local ministry, or some mixture of local and foreign?

I personally see it more as a local ministry.

Tell me, how do you keep yourself informed on the work that Operación Bendición is doing?

Well, as I said before, through the radio and through the newspaper that they have.

Those were all my questions, but do you have anything else you would like to add that will help me to understand the Christians' situation here in Bogotá?

I think that you could get a better idea asking some more people and getting their opinion about the situation.

What do you think of the questions I asked during this interview? Do you think it's okay or would you change something about it?

No, I think it's pretty good. It's been very interesting.

Juan Llorente, leader of the Christian fellowship at America University (*PUPC*).

Now, you work with university students?

Yes, I do. I began working with them because when I was 12 years old the Lord told me that I had to share his Word. So after studying in a military school, I began studying at University America. While I was at school it was very difficult to share the gospel because it was a military school. You know that the military is pretty harsh on people. So I really didn't have the opportunity to share the gospel with any of my fellow students there. But, thanks to the Lord, I got to the university, which I hadn't planned on — I had planned to continue in my military career. But the Lord took me on to the university, and that's when my ministry began.

Before I got to the university I heard that there was a Christian group which had fallen apart because of the leaders' lack of follow-up. The leaders of this group had already graduated and so the group had just ended. I told them, "Let's start the group again." We did so.

And it became a great blessing, not only for the Christian students, but for all the students because, for example, we had conferences dealing with various themes. Some of these conferences were about the loss of the moral values in society, about the hidden messages in rock music. One of the leaders who has helped us is Marco Fidel Ramírez, who is in charge of the young people's movement here in our city. Another person who has helped us is Hans Peter Mueller, who is the president of our city's Christian Executives Society.

So all our fellow students noticed that we weren't just a group of people who like to meet together, pray, and sing, but that we're concerned about the real spiritual needs of each person.

How many people are there in your group?

Well, in the group — people who are committed to the group and the work in the universities — you could count about 40 people. This is in the University America. We have groups at two other universities in our city but, of course, with a different strategy in each one of them.

For example, one of those universities is Los Libertadores University. We work very differently there because the owners of this are the Opuste, which is an organization derived from the Catholic religion. The founder of this university was a Spanish priest, who's already died. They're open to receive the Word. But then it's on an individual basis, because they don't have the liberty that we have on our campus to have an open-air meeting for an hour or an hour and a half. They're only able to share 15 to 20 minutes with each person.

The problem with the other university, which is called the University of the Andes, is that the majors are on the philosophical side. So people are not that open to the gospel.

As for our university, the majors deal with engineering and things like that. And since they are your peers, from the same university as you, it is easier to share with them than with students from other universities. One thing we were able to notice was that students don't have that much time to go to church during the week or on Sundays, so it was pretty good to have a meeting right there at the university which they could attend, and be spiritually fed. At this moment, we're having meetings every week. I'll share with you the new strategy that we have now. [See appendix E.]

How many areas of study are there in your university?

Well, in my university there are six — four different types of engineering, architecture, and economics. There are about 3000 students.

Does your group have a name?

Yes, we decided to call it Plan America for Christ. At one time we used to have a column in the newspaper *Desafío*, which was called “University Vision for Christ.”

Are you the founder of this organization?

No, not really. As I was telling you before, there used to be a group before I arrived at the university. But when I had got there, the group had fallen apart because of a lack of follow-up and a lack of leadership.

Is your group from a certain denomination?

No. Our aim is to keep it interdenominational. In our group we have people from the Assemblies of God, from the Church of God, from Philadelphia, and from many other churches here in Bogotá. What brings us together is our commitment to the work of God, ministry, and that we're Christians. A good thing about this is that many people have come to know the Lord through this group.

Now could you please describe for me what the Christian environment is like in Bogotá — in the universities of Bogotá?

If we're talking about young people, they are very emotional. You see, it is different to talk with an adult than with a young person. Most young people love music, so that's a good way to communicate with them — through the music and sharing with them about the hidden messages in music. What we try to do is take them from the physical realm to the spiritual realm. Most young people's attention is caught by the clapping and the jumping and the singing and all that. So we start with singing and praises. Then we teach them how to worship and adore the Lord. After this, we share the fundamental truths of the gospel with them, which is something very important for the young people to have — the Word of God.

What kinds of spiritual problems do you find here?

We try to help in counseling because very few of our friends, our fellow students, are able to attend church and meet up with counselors there. Also very few churches have this service. Some of the churches have 2,000 members and the only one who will give spiritual counseling is the pastor. In order to get this spiritual counseling, you

have to get an appointment. It's pretty difficult for them to get this appointment — their being very busy and all.

For example, when we talked about abortion at my university, one of the girls came up to me and said, "You won't believe this. I've had two abortions because my boyfriend has asked me to. I had no idea that it was a little human being." So we have given counsel in this area.

We've also counseled in the area of study habits, because at one time we had a type of attack from the enemy. New students would come and join our group and become Christians, and immediately their grades would go down. As soon as they stopped attending our group, their grades would go back up. So they got to the point of thinking, "Hey, this thing of being a Christian doesn't work for me. Everything's been worse since my becoming a Christian." And so we explained to them that that's not the way things are. God is not only the God who is there when I need him. He is God also when you're in victory and when everything's going great. And so that's how we began to share with them.

In the plan that I gave you [appendix E], there's a certain part which talks about *Koinonia*, which is very important for us. We knew which churches members of our group attended, but we had no idea what semester they were in, or what their interests were. We just didn't know each other. All we knew about each other was that we were Christians. So that's why we decided to have this time to get to know each other better.

Another thing we learned as well was how to share the gospel with others. Many of us didn't know how to do it. They would go out really excited and say to everyone, "Hey! Jesus loves you!" But when they were asked something — like what happened to me once when someone asked me, "You say that your God is so good. Then explain to me why in the Old Testament he killed so many Israelites and so many people." These people knew about the Word of God, but then the attack came that they thought, "I'm too young for these kinds of things." They use this type of excuse. So what we did was

teach our fellow members basic fundamental truths so that they could answer these questions. Some of our friends were scared to share the gospel. They were scared that they would be asked something, that they didn't know the Bible well enough to answer. And they felt that they would be ridiculed. So that's why we decided to train them in the basic truths of the Bible.

So our goal in the university is not just to give birth to children and leave them to their own destiny, but to feed them, look after them, and nourish them so that they can grow and be built up and become new leaders. In addition to having new people involved in our group, we try to find churches for them, because we think that it's important for them to be under authority. As you probably know, many of the churches are different. For example, in some churches they believe in the Fruit of the Spirit. In some churches they dance and jump. In other churches they don't. Some other ones have men sit on one side and women sitting on the other. So we try and get to know the person — first in our group, getting to know their ideas on things — and then recommend what we believe is the proper church for them.

Is Catholicism a problem for the students, or don't you consider it such a problem?

Yes. Some of them have the excuse that, "I was born Catholic. My parents were Catholic. And I don't plan to change my religion." That's what many of them say, so we have to go and explain to them that it's not a change of religion, it's a change of life, in which we will have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. No religion at all will save you. So many times we share with them from their own Bibles, from the Catholic Bible. We show them the truths that are written just as they are in our Bible. And we explain to them about the books that they have which should not be there. You know, we explain to them why we don't accept these books. And they slowly realize the truth of what being a Christian really means. Some of them don't leave Catholicism right away. They become charismatic, which I consider a midpoint between Evangelicals and

Catholics. After being charismatic, they will gradually become Evangelicals and accept the total truth of the Bible.

What other needs do you think Bogotá has, not only the material needs, but the social, cultural

What I'm going to tell you is not something that I've seen in my particular university, but in other activities which have taken place. Because of our city's poverty, people need a lot of material help. I have noticed this in the health brigades that Brother Lindsay has organized. You know, many people ask you for 100 pesos to buy a piece of bread. So I think the best thing to do is not to give them the money, but to give them bread — you know, to feed them, and to meet those needs.

There are also many people who, instead of confronting their problems, take refuge in drugs. They take them as an escape. They begin with a cigarette, and then continue with drugs, and eventually become dependent on them.

For example, this girl once came to my house and told my mom, "Look, Señora, I'm pregnant and my boyfriend left me and there's no way I can go to my parents and tell them. I'm desperate. I don't know what to do." My mother took her in and counseled her and explained to her that the most precious thing you could have in life was a child. That it was a gift from God. And slowly, with much love and patience, she brought this girl to the feet of God. She was a girl because she was only 16 years old. This girl, well, she didn't have an abortion, she had a very beautiful baby, thank God.

But then with this we can see that the problems are not only in the poor and low-income areas, but in the higher-class society there are problems as well. For example, I have noticed that in high society they have dependencies on different things. In the lower society, they are kind of pushed because of their situation to many of these different things which I've referred to. One thing that the whole Colombian society has in common is their spiritual needs, of course.

Now, what kind of missionary do you think Colombia needs? Do you think they need teachers, doctors, missionaries, preachers? Or do you think you've got enough missionaries and enough people working here already?

No, I wouldn't say that we've got enough people working. When you go to different place, you see all the different needs that people have. So I think that we need all kinds of missionaries. Now people need help with their material needs, but we should always put a priority on their spiritual needs. Just like Paul told Timothy — preach the gospel in season and out of season. Sometimes we don't feel like it's time to share the gospel, but maybe the Spirit is urging us inside to do it. So we should obey the Holy Spirit, and whenever he tells us it's time to share the gospel, we should go ahead and do it. We should back the Word of God with social activities, but always having as the fundamental thing, the prime thing, sharing the gospel of God.

What other entities do you know of that meet the needs of the people of Bogotá?

Okay. Now, I know of different entities, but each one is focused on certain societal groups. For example, I talked before about the Christian Executives. They just work with the Christian executives and help meet their needs. There's also another one called ADME, which is the ministers' association. They are in charge of helping pastors. Some others could be retirement homes. As far as Christian groups go, those are what I could mention right now.

As for social help for non-Christians, I know about the work that Brother Lindsay does, such as *Operación Bendición*; *Club 700* with all the films and all of the testimonies; and through the newspaper, *Desafío*; for the children, *Los Valientes*; and the project of the hospital of Operation Smile, of God is Love — I think they're planning on starting this hospital next year, if God allows them to. So of the entities which help meet the needs of the poorest people here in Bogotá, I could just mention Brother Lindsay's group.

Well, of course, there are other churches that have social activities. One of these churches is Philadelphia. They also have health brigades. They have a special program, in which they work with prostitutes. They also have a program for the *gamines*. But then, that would be about all the groups that I know about, as far as meeting the needs of the poor people.

I have some questions about Operación Bendición. What effectiveness has Operación Bendición had here in your city, that you know of?

Well, they have that house, La Cazona, in the center of Bogotá near the Candelaria, where they give soup out to street people. They also have a house in La Florida to rescue children from becoming *gamines*. They also have the school at Cartucho street. They also have a farm in Funsá where they are keeping all of the equipment for the hospital, which they plan to start next year.

What I have noticed, what has kept them from going forth more, is their economic situation. For example, just the other day I heard by accident Brother Jorge saying that he needed 25,000 pesos [about \$35] to be able to finish the kitchen at the school in Cazuca. So maybe when you hear this, you think, “Hey, that’s nothing.” But then when you have to look for it and there’s no money, it causes a problem. So really what I have seen missing for *Operación Bendición* to expand is the economic factor, the lack of finances.

The newspaper has also seen itself affected and has suffered because not all of the churches make their payments on time. Unfortunately I think that when Brother Lindsay learned Spanish, he didn’t learn the word “no.” He continues sending the newspaper to the churches that don’t pay. All he does is, perhaps in the editorial pages, is just say, “Please, if you can send us any money, if you can pay just a little part of the debt, we would appreciate it.”

This year, for example, I think it was in the month of July, they weren’t able to put the paper out because of lack of finances. The paper came out in June and it came out

again in August, but they weren't able to put it out in July. I think that is pretty sad, because the newspaper is a blessing for ... I think more than 25,000 people. Around 1987 we did a survey of how many newspapers were sold, and it was, I think, around 20,700 newspapers. Each newspaper is read by at least six people. So that's why I say that more than 25,000 people are blessed with each issue of the newspaper.

I know that most newspapers are not circulated nationwide. Some of them just go around people's own churches or their denominational groups. But as far as a nationwide publication that goes out monthly, the only newspaper I know of in our country is *Desafío*. There's also another magazine, but that comes out every two months. I think it's called *With Love to the Church*. It's another Christian periodical.

What else do you think Operación Bendición could do to become more effective? You've already mentioned the lack of money, the lack of finances.

Yes. One of the factors is the economic factor. And regarding the doctors that help Brother Lindsay, they're very good doctors. But what I've seen is that there are very few of them. Maybe it's because doctors have many commitments. But the doctors who do help, they get medicines from wherever they can, and they put their whole heart into helping people.

I don't know if you've noticed, but organizing a health brigade is pretty difficult. It has to be anticipated at least eight days in advance, and it's not a very easy task to find the medicines, find the doctors, find all the people who are needed in order to have a successful health brigade. You know, in addition to needing the doctors, they need to find the ladies who help in counseling, the ladies who help serve lunches for the doctors who are helping. So to organize a health brigade takes a lot of work. What I consider to have stopped *Operación Bendición* from expanding is the economic factor. I know, though, that they can count on the spiritual support of many churches.

When you think of Operación Bendición, do you think of it as a local ministry, a foreign ministry, or a mixed ministry?

I believe that it is a mixture.

Do you think that this is good? Do you think that there are any advantages in its being a mixed ministry?

Well, one of the advantages is the support it receives from foreign entities. It's not easy in the situation that our people live in — not only economically speaking, but culturally — to keep a work like this going on. It needs a lot of financial support, it needs spiritual support, and it needs laborers. You must recognize that as Colombians we're not really constant and firm in the things that we do. So it's good to know that we have help from a foreign country in the work that they're doing here.

I do think that it helps them to know ... well, at least to get a phone call from the foreign members of this organization, to find out what's going on, and how things are coming along. I think it encourages them to keep on working, knowing that they have their support, and that they have someone backing them in all the works that they do. I think it's good that when they come here they feel animated to do a better job, to make sure that all the things are coming out right, so that when they do come and visit us, they can realize that their prayers and their support and all their help are bringing forth fruit in our country. So that's what I see as an advantage of its being a mixed ministry.

As I explained before, I think that the local ministries do not function properly over a long period of time. This is my personal opinion, but local ministries tend to be short-term things. I mean, it may come on strongly, and function perfectly as a short-term project. But then when we're talking about long-term projects, I think that they will not prosper.

Also, if it were only a foreign ministry, and made up of only foreigners, probably because of the mindset which many Colombians have — they have a certain predisposition against foreigners — it wouldn't have much success. Also we have what is called "The Indian Malice." You see, when foreigners come here, they have a

different way of thinking, and they think that the people are honest. So many times they could find themselves with people here who would like to take advantage of them, and get whatever they can out of them instead of helping them have a fruitful ministry.

For example, I heard Dr. Parada and my father talking the other day, saying that it wasn't a very good idea to have health brigades at the Cartucho street, because a lady came up to him and mentioned that many of the people who are receiving medication were selling them just two blocks farther along the street to get money to buy drugs. He said that probably a better idea, if they wanted to have health brigades in that area, was to say, "Okay, there's going to be free medical attention during this week." You see, that's what I refer to when I talk about a foreign ministry. Many people here can be dishonest with you and receive your help, but then use it for what they want to get and then continue in the same situation. We're not only thinking about Bogotá — *Operación Bendición* is a ministry that can go and reach all the parts of Colombia.

Well, this is the end of the interview. Do you have anything else you would like to add to it?

Oh, yes. I would like to add that another entity, which I forgot to mention, is Youth With A Mission, which helps the young people a lot.

Who is the leader of this group?

The leader is Wells Almond [sp?]. They have their offices at 64th Street, just above 7th Avenue. I think I already mentioned the youth leadership entity, which is run by Marco Fidel Ramírez. They have a special event every year. This year we had the seventh one. This one was called "An S.O.S. for Colombia," and it was a day of praying in a public place interceding for all of the needs that our country has. They also have concerts every once in a while. On September 18 they're going to have a special Christian celebration for Love and Friendship Day. The ideal thing in these meetings is to take non-Christian young people so that they can hear the gospel and spend time

with other young Christians. As I mentioned before, especially here in Bogotá, the way to reach a young person for Christ is through music. At least it's a very effective way.

And as far as university work goes, I must tell you that it's very different from what church work involves. When you're in a church, you can talk about the laying on of hands, and about speaking in tongues, and deliverance. But in the university, you're not able to do all of these things. You have to take it slowly and share with students little by little, just feed them milk, listen to what they have to say, to their problems.

And you must ask the Lord for discernment to know what their needs are and how to meet these spiritual and material needs. Sometimes you tend to think that the only needs that these kids have are spiritual needs, but many times they do have material needs. You know, many kids spend all their money making photocopies of a book because they can't afford to buy it. Sometimes they need you to give money to them, but some of them are proud and say, "No, no, no. Just lend me 200 pesos to catch the bus home. I'll pay you back as soon as I can." So we see that there are needs in all areas of society. Those are, I guess, all of the comments that I have about this.

Well, what do you think of the interview? Would you change anything about it?

No, it went well. That's all. Thanks, Ted.

Pastor Alfredo Osorio from *Castillo Fuerte*.

Could you please describe to me what the Christian atmosphere is like here in Bogotá?

Well, today, as years and months have gone by, there has been a greater revival. Many people daily are coming to the feet of the Lord. There is a lot of revival going on.

Can you give me an example — a suburb or a person?

Well, for example, I can show you the church we have here. We have been going on for seven months, and after starting out with 12 people, we have become a group of 70. So we can see there's revival going on. Daily we have people coming over — two, three, four people are joining our group daily. So I think this is a good result.

What needs do you think Bogotá has — not only the material ones, but the social, cultural

The greatest need that I see in Bogotá is the economic need. There are many poor people. I know of people in my congregation who don't come to the meetings sometimes because they can't find 110 pesos [15¢] to get a bus over here. I think that hinders the spiritual growth of those in the lower income bracket.

And do you think that there are any cultural needs or social needs?

Always. There are always needs. There are social and cultural needs because unless a person is able to go to a good school or university, it's going to be very hard for them to reach a good level of culture and understanding.

Speak with me about your ministry and your congregation, social class, age, denomination, geography, etc. It's like two questions ...

Well, I began my ministry as a leader two years ago. Just this year the Lord called me to be a pastor. I have just let myself be guided by the voice of the Holy Spirit, and it has been God who has worked in me. I'm a merchant. I have some stores and a production plant, but the Lord called me and I have gone running after him.

As a pastor, what do you do? Do you preach?

Yes, I preach, and I direct all the other things of the church.

And you study the Bible?

Oh yes, I do.

And about your congregation — social class, age

Well, yes, most of my congregation is made up of young people. Of course on Sundays elderly people attend our church and our meetings. But it's quite young, with a lot of power and unction. We're all very united. There's a lot of love. Here you feel a lot of love.

Very well. And do you have street people as members of your church, or middle class people?

I don't know. I don't invite street people to the church because they have lots of resentments against people who are well off, so it's hard to reach them in my position. They won't really believe me. You know, they see you well-dressed, as if you have money, and so they just don't believe in you. We invited this man who works in the street as a shoe shiner, and many times we've invited him to come over, but he never came. They go to other churches such as the Bethesda Temple where there are people from all levels of society. But in this aspect the churches tend to be very segregated.

What is your working team like, and its characteristics?

My working team is made up of the praise and worship team, who minister in praise and worship and at the same time are leaders. In case for some certain reason I'm not able to be in church, one of them will direct the church. As our different ministries grow, we allow for the ministers to grow in their responsibilities. Not that other people who already have a ministry come and take over, but we are allowing for the people to grow and be taught, to grow into ministers and leaders.

Do the young people have a lot of strength? Are the young people committed to the church?

Yes, they really have given themselves entirely to the ministry. They have an open heart and are willing to serve God. Some people are busy because of their different jobs and studies and so on, but there are those who have a willing heart.

Why aren't there more elderly people in your community?

Well, I Perhaps it's because I'm so young, and so young kids identify with me. That doesn't mean a whole lot. We do have grandmas and grandpas here. We have all ages. But the ministry part is made up of young people.

What other Christian organizations do you know of which work to meet the needs of the Bogotanos, the Colombians?

Well, there are a lot. There's Enrique Gómez with Bethesda, the Charismatic Mission, Church on the Rock, Christian Community of Faith — they're a part of Mission South America.

Do you know of any organizations other than churches which address these needs?

Sure, there are clearly social action groups. There are many other than churches which work to supply the needs of people, but at this moment, I couldn't really tell you the name of them. There are many groups which work with the *gamines*, helping them and protecting them, helping them to get a better living. For example, there's a place called *Garanjas del Padre Luna*. This is a Catholic place.

Have you heard about the ministry of Operación Bendición - Desafío?

Desafío the newspaper?

Yes.

Operación Bendición, of course.

The questions that I have left deal with Operación Bendición. If you don't have any answers, that's okay. What effectiveness do you know of Operación Bendición having in Bogotá?

I don't know that.

Do you receive any benefits from Operación Bendición?

No.

Okay. So, well.... Okay, I have another question. What weaknesses do you think Operación Bendición has?

Hmm....

How do you keep informed about the work of Operación Bendición? Do you receive ...

The periodical?

Yes, the periodical.

Yes, the periodical.

What do you think of it?

I think it's very well done. Christian groups from all around the country keep themselves informed through this newspaper.

When you think of Operación Bendición, do you think of it as a local ministry, as a foreign ministry, or as a mixed ministry?

When I hear that, I think of it as a campaign, and I really can't say whether it's a foreign or a local ministry. It comes from God.

Do you have anything else you would like to add that could help me to understand the city or the people?

Something I think could be done is to share the Lord more. Bogotá is a very agitated city and everyone is in a hurry. Nobody has time for anything. But I believe we should share the gospel more. People work too much and don't have time to attend church or study the Bible, so I think that because they're so busy, they get their blessings robbed. Distances in Bogotá are too far, it's tremendous. And it takes too long to get from one place to another place.

And they don't have a subway?

No, no, it's just by buses.

What do you think of my interview? Do you think I should change anything?

No. I think they are very interesting questions. They make you think.

Would you change anything about the interview?

Let me see. No. At this moment I can't think of anything I would change about it, but if I do, I'll let you know.

You said before that your congregation is made up of 70 members?

Yes, more or less.

Half of it is made up of new converts?

Yes, half of them are recent converts. They have all been living the gospel for a year or a year and a half.

How did you meet the non-Christians who are now members of your congregation? Did someone bring them here?

No. They are people who we preach to on the street, at stores, and at different houses. For example, one time this boy who was going to get married walked into my store to buy his wedding garment and so I showed him the materials I had. He told me he was going to get married and all, and I said, "That's a blessing of God. It's good that you're getting married because most people today see marriage as a problem, as a terror, when it was God who instituted it. If we live it and do as each one is supposed to do, it will be a great blessing."

I spoke with him a while and he received the Lord. This took place on a Saturday. After this, I invited him to come to our church in Puente Largo on Sunday, and since then he's become a member. I try daily to talk with people and share the gospel on the street or with people who come to my store — in many different circumstances. I just try to share the gospel with them.

This man who I was talking with you about and who is a member of our church, after he got married, not only did he become a member, but his wife became converted and became a member; his mother, his sister-in-law — and they're all working for Christ now, living holy lives. You see, I sowed a seed in the heart of someone I didn't

know and many people have come to know the Lord through this little seed. They have brought other people to our church, and other people have become converted. With others it has been the same. They all feel as if they founded this church. That's the reason why we have so many new people, people who are newly converted. But the idea that we have is to grow in the Word and to be able to know the Word and share it with other people.

How do you talk with people about Jesus? Are you confrontational? Do you speak with non-Christians very strongly?

Oh, no, no. On the contrary. It was because he was going to get married, so the whole thing started there. So I just began talking with him about what a blessing marriage was. Look brother — he's here now.

(Interview ends abruptly at this point)

Music Leader Luis Norvey Malagón from *Cruzada Cristiana* — *Santa Isabel*.

Please describe to me what the Christian environment is like here in Bogotá.

Well, at this moment I think there is a great movement of the Spirit here in Bogotá. The Church has had an advance as much in number as in ministry. The Church has grown, but something that I think is lacking is a sense of unity among the churches. It seems as if each church would like to have their own kingdom. At the same time, God is pouring out his grace. I know that one way or another we will become united. So as far as Bogotá goes, I believe that there is a good spirit here.

What are the problems, apart from the lack of unity, that you see?

Perhaps there's a problem in that the gospel has been concentrated mostly within Bogotá. We evangelize constantly, we have campaigns and all different kinds of events constantly, but only here within Bogotá. We may have forgotten a little about other areas of the country — we're not sending missionaries out to these areas. People are making treasures for themselves. They're building up big, beautiful ministries — here within the city, for themselves. I think that one of the resulting problems is the lack of interest in winning souls for the Lord, the lack of interest in missions, even within our own country.

In the southern part of the country, in the Amazons, there are many churches which have been left alone, which haven't been looked after, and they're having to go through some hard times at this moment. The Church in Bogotá has built up too many things for themselves, perhaps, and hasn't given them away to other brothers in need. That's a difference I've seen in your country, in the States. The Lord has given you many things and revealed many things to you, but you have not hesitated in sharing them with us. Maybe it's just that — again, as I've said before — the Church in Bogotá is keeping too many things to themselves instead of giving them out to others.

The missionary ministry is not being pushed very much in the churches. Mostly what is pushed is pastoring and the evangelism within the city.

What other needs do you find here in Bogotá, not only the material ones, but the spiritual, social, and cultural needs as well?

Yes, I believe that God is opening doors everywhere — in universities, in schools, in different institutions, in the government. We need to prepare to reach these different places where doors are opening. The Lord is calling professionals and people who are prepared intellectually to work at this level.

Another need in Bogotá is that in the southern part of the city, where there's a lot of misery and poverty, there's not much help being given. There are campaigns and different events which are taking place, but only every once in a while. Some say, "Okay, we're going to take a health brigade there today," and they do it — but there's no follow-up for these people. So it's a thing which happens just every so often. I think we need to strengthen this point; we need to become united among the churches and help the southern part of the city.

It seems that the Church in Bogotá is divided into two parts — the Church of the south and the Church of the north. The southern Church prays and searches and looks for God, but doesn't have much money. The northern Church, however, has a lot of money and a lot of ways to perform different ministries. I think they should help the poorer churches of the south a little more, because in these places there's much need.

Missionaries are sure to come from America, and from other parts of the world. I would like to know what kinds of missionaries you think Bogotá, or Colombia, needs. Teachers? Pastors? Doctors? Or do you prefer that foreigners not come here? Tell me what you think about this.

No, I love foreigners, especially Americans. They have given a lot towards the ministry here and towards preaching the gospel in our country. They don't seem

interested in any rivalries about who has economic power or anything of that sort. I see that many of them have a willing heart to come to Colombia. It seems that we are a nation which they keep in mind when they think about preaching the gospel and helping the ministry.

As far as doctors go — yes, we do need many doctors. There's a doctor crisis here. There are not many doctors, and the ones who are here are dedicated to make money, not to serve the community.

We need people, teachers who will teach the people with whom we share the salvation message. I believe, as someone said, that a prophet is not accepted in his own country. I don't know why, but when someone else, some foreigner, brings the message, it touches more hearts. A short while ago we had a campaign for youth in our suburb and brother Wade Amlin [Sp?] from YWAM came with a team of 13 young boys. We went to the prison and to the schools and parks preaching the gospel. This was a neat experience; it was interesting to see how a foreigner attracts people. We also went to Monserrati. I agree with their coming to our country to share the gospel of our Lord.

Now I would like you to talk to me about your ministry and about the congregation in which you work.

At this moment, my vision includes the youth, not only at my church level, but nationwide. The Lord has given me a burden to minister to the youth. They need an example, so my basic mission is with the youth. At this time I'm working with the ones in my church. It's something that I love to do, and I think it's a very beautiful work. I also work in discipleship and visitation in the southern part of the city. So we have the vision of raising up the youth of Bogotá and the whole of Colombia. Who knows? Maybe we'll reach some other countries because God says that we are hammers and weapons of battle for him, and "through you I will break down nations and through

you I will destroy kingdoms.” This is the word that God has given to the youth. I think we are walking toward this vision.

Do you have a title, such as “youth pastor,” or something like that?

Well, a *title*, no. It’s just the work that God is doing through me.

In regards to the congregation of your church, what are the members like? What is the predominant age group? What social class are they a part of? And do you have different races among the member?

Well, in our congregation I think that there’s a large percentage of young people. I think that at least half of the church consists of young people, people up to 30 or 35 years old. And we have about 2,500 or 3,000 members. The social class that we work with is middle or upper-middle class. You know, there are people who have a very good income, people who have a low income, people who have just enough to survive with. But the vast majority have their own house and their car. As far as race goes, most of us are normal Colombians. There are just a few colored people, but if more were to come, we would receive them happily because we’re all one in Christ Jesus.

Are there any congregations consisting of only colored people?

No. Not here in Bogotá.

In the States there are many. But you don’t have any here, apparently. Now, what other religious entities do you know of which work to meet the needs of Colombians and people from Bogotá?

Are you speaking of the social needs?

Yes.

Well, the government has done a lot in this area. They have helped a lot of the needy. Unfortunately, there are many people who we call “crocodiles” who appear to want to help, but they’re always going after riches — whatever the government gives to the needy, they skim. We call this *cerrucho*. They take a little part of this money and they do help people, but they’re always trying to see what they can get out of it. I really

believe that that's one thing which has brought our country to the state which it's in. Upper class citizens have always liked to get rich with money that they shouldn't use. So lots of help is being lost because of this.

Colombia has many riches and I thank God we haven't used them all up. Praise God, Colombia has a lot. Even though they have robbed so many things from the public, we still have a lot left. I really thank God for the riches of our country — for the gold, the emeralds, the petroleum.

Right now we have a new oil well in Cusiano, a region of Colombia. The money which comes from this is already spent — we can be sure that people are going to get rich off of much of that money. When you least expect it, there's \$2 million missing or something like that. They start to investigate, and they find out that such and such a person has taken it, has used it for himself. There's just too much fraud in our country.

Do you know of any other Christian organizations which work to supply the needs of the people?

Can I talk about Catholic entities?

Yes, you can.

Well, the Catholics have done a pretty good job, as far as social help goes. They work with schools and universities. They are very well organized and have an excellent plan. Catholicism in our country is, you could say, a very strong creature. Economically, they have a lot of power. In one way or another they have tried to help the community, so I think we have to recognize what they have done and accept it, giving them the credit they deserve. Of course, they have so many means of helping that they could do a lot more. They have spent a lot of their money building beautiful churches and, in the process, forgotten a lot of people. Overall, though, they have done a pretty good job in the community.

Have you heard about Operación Bendición or Desafío - Club 700?

Yes, I have heard about it, but I'm not very well informed about it. I've heard that they're giving a lot of help and that they're working with the *gaminses* — the street children — to rehabilitate them. I think this is a great work, but I'm really not very well informed about *Operación Bendición*, or how we could be helped by them. I think I need to familiarize myself with this ministry a bit more.

Well, the questions I have now for you are about Operación Bendición. If you don't have any answers, that's okay. What can Operación Bendición do to become more effective?

Well, I might not be very well informed about what they're doing at the level of the Church. A while back I went to a farm they have in Funsá. We were there with a missionary team, working there. We were there helping, trying to fix the place up, in January. I heard that they're going to have a home for the street children there.

And do you know anything about the newspaper, Desafío?

Yes, I know about the newspaper. I think they're doing an excellent job. I've also seen the house that they have in the center of the city. It's a beautiful work that they're doing there.

When you hear about Operación Bendición, when you think about it, do you consider it a foreign ministry, a local ministry, or do you think it's a mixture?

Yes, I think it's a mixture.

Do you think that its being a mixed ministry has any advantages? Do you think that it's better than a local ministry? What's your opinion?

I think that we need to go in together in order to get the work done. And when we are mixed, joined together, one person may know the needs of the people better than the other. That's why I think it's very important for foreign ministries to mix with local ones. I think it's an excellent way of reaching the people.

There are certain parts in our country, and in Bogotá, where they have some resentment against foreigners. I think that's a natural thing in all nations. It's not that

bad, either. That's why I really believe it's good to mix the ministries — that way you'll be able to reach more people. Many people think that when a foreigner comes, he's coming to take the riches away from their country. I believe that if we do the work between all of us, we can prevent many things from happening. Maybe we can get to know the needs of the people better.

That's all I have for the interview. Do you think I've forgotten any important question, or is there anything you would like to add to what you have said already?

I think we are living in a revival. God is bringing about revival, as far as the Word goes, and as far as praise and worship as well. One thing which I believe has hindered the work of the Lord in the ministry is the division which politics has caused. As I said before, each person wants to build his own kingdom, and strengthen himself, instead of opening himself to work together with the whole Body of Christ. Well, God knows everybody's hearts.

I'm not talking about a unity where everybody thinks exactly the same, but rather to be with the same spirit, the whole Church. Perhaps politics has been a wonderful door God has opened, but we haven't known how to use it properly. People start treating each other in ways they shouldn't, and that's where competition and rivalries are formed. So this is a point where I think we need a lot of help from God. We need to realize that the work is not our work, but God's work. And the Church belongs to Christ.

What else can I say to you? About the ministry of *Desafío*, it is a ministry which has brought a blessing to the entire Church in Colombia, because it is seeking a unity among them. This newspaper reaches all the churches in Colombia, and its content builds us up and strengthens us as Christians. I think that our brothers here have done an excellent job at all of their work, because I know that it's a lot of work to produce a paper. It's been worth it. I want to congratulate them. I'm very glad for the work that they're doing. They are people who are in God's will.

What do you think about this interview?

Well, I thought that it would be longer.

Could you talk to me about violence, then?

Well, violence is a factor which characterizes our society. Moral values are in bad shape, and continually we see in our cities abuses and other terrible things taking place — murders. We have reached quite an extreme point. There are young people who even commit suicide. Also prostitution. The prostitution level has gone up. There are a lot of young girls who are dedicated to this ... you could call it a profession. Little girls from 10 years on up begin working as prostitutes. This is also the fault of many parents who kick the children out to see if they can survive for themselves.

Parents also use their children a lot to earn money in the streets. Instead of the parents working, the children are the ones who have to spend the whole day begging for money in the street. Many of the spend their whole day getting on buses and selling candy or standing at the lights and selling various things. There's a high level of delinquency, armed robberies. But authorities have taken this into their hands and are trying to fix this problem.

Something that has me amazed at this moment is how far Satanism has gone in our city. Our suburbs have been invaded by Satanists, reaching young people between 15 and 25 years old. They have even gotten to the point of publicly speaking about human sacrifices and animal sacrifices. Heavy rock music and metal music has invaded our society, and many of the youth like to listen to this type of music. Most of the young people who listen to heavy rock are the ones who are brought in by Satanism. This is something to be concerned about, and to keep alert about, even though many people have not paid much attention to it. We have to keep in mind that this Satanism movement is advancing rapidly, and since it does such in hidden places, most church people don't notice how strong it's getting.

I would recommend something to the missionaries who come to our country. That is that they pray and fast — not only to work at the social level, but to back these ministries spiritually. This would be an excellent thing, because if we want to gain more spiritual fruit than what we've attained up to now, the only way to do it will be by fasting and praying, battling against the evil forces of darkness, to fight all of the poverty and insecurity in our city, all those spirits who are walking free around our city and our streets. We can do excellent social work when behind it there is much prayer and fasting going on. I believe that that is the key to doing an excellent social work. People don't only need clothing and food and money, they also need their lives to be transformed by the power of Christ. I think that the only way to achieve this is by prayer. So that's what I would recommend — praying and fasting before coming to our nation, because the atmosphere is heavy and strong.

I have heard of many missionaries who have come to our country, who leave very soon. Many of them have died. Why? I believe it's because they don't have any spiritual backing. I think it's necessary to have spiritual backing from ourselves, in our prayer and fasting, and the support of our local church from wherever we come from.

Many of these missionaries have left because in many parts of our country there's a lot of witchcraft. I have heard of many witches and warlocks who have lists of pastors and missionaries, and they're even praying and fasting that these people get sick and die. They do all kinds of sorcery and perform spells, and I think that the part in Mark 16 — “Go and preach the gospel to all creatures, and whoever believes will be saved and whoever doesn't believe will be condemned.”

It goes on, “Those who believe in my name will cast out demons,” so missionaries must be ready for that. In our country it's fairly common for a demon, or even many of them, to manifest himself during a meeting. So I think they need to come prepared for this battle. If in a certain moment a demon-possessed person gets up and starts

mistreating them, they just have to get up and have the power to cast that demon out in the name of Jesus.

This same verse goes for healing. I think that all the signs should go before a missionary. “They will cast out demons. They will put their hands on the sick and they shall be healed. And if they should drink any poison or deadly thing, it shall not harm them.” So I think that prayer and fasting is the key for missionaries coming to our country to keep in mind, to battle against all the forces of darkness in our country. All the Satanism, all the witchcraft, all the idolatry — because idolatry is another stronghold in our country.

But just as idolatry is a stronghold, there is a lot of thirst and a lot of desire to hear the gospel of the Lord. When you preach, the people are open and willing to listen to you. Some years ago they frequently persecuted people. They would stone them, and hit them. But at this moment we find a lot of thirst for the things of God. We have seen this in many of the campaigns and many of the events which we have had in various towns and suburbs of our city. We’ve seen how God backs us up and is with us, and we have seen many people come to the Lord’s feet and repent before him. We’ve prayed and we’ve fasted and I know that God is fulfilling his work here in our country.

I know that Colombia is going to come to the point where there won’t be such a need for missionaries to come because missionaries will be going out from our country to reach other nations for Christ. And yes, God is forming many missionaries here. As I said before, we lack the missionary vision. Many missionaries are being formed, but we continue to ask the Lord to increase this burden for missions and the people.

Our prayer is that God would put in people’s hearts the desire to become missionaries to the Arab countries, because we have a lot of the Spanish blood in us, and the Spanish have a lot of Arab blood. So I think that we could relate pretty easily to their culture and their country. There are also many Colombians who look a lot like the Indians from India. And so that is a great help to get into these countries and work

as missionaries there. I believe that God is strongly calling the churches and the people towards missions. And through all of the campaigns and camps and events, the Lord is constantly calling people to go to the mission field. And I believe that many brothers are preparing for this.

There's also an excellent work with the Indians. It's called "Saving the Indians of Colombia for Christ." One of the brothers from our church is directing this. They are going to the Indian communities and building churches there. I think that in Colombia there are about 80 groups to which the gospel is being taken. I think there are only about eight large established churches consisting of only Indians. That's a very small percentage. But we're working on reaching more of them for Christ. This is a very hard work, because I think you know that as far as the Indian community goes, there's a lot of witchcraft and sorcery going on. They talk a lot about evil spirits and all of the various things of the spiritual realm.

Many have gone to the missionary field to work with the Indians and have come back and don't want to have anything more to do with the Indians, because the forces of darkness are working very hard against them, making them sick and causing them to become discouraged easily. We have noticed these things in many missionaries who have gone to the field and have come back. They have returned sick and with many doubts about God's faithfulness. They get sick, their wives do, their children suffer. So they come back and don't want to have anything to do with the church or even return to church, because the enemy is fighting a strong battle in this area. These are things which I think are good to get to know at the missionary level, so that the people who come to our nation are well prepared, and will enter the presence of God knowing what purpose God has in bringing them to our country.

Well, there are many other things we could talk about. We could spend the whole day talking about them. I know a little bit about many of them, and since I've been in this kind of environment I know many things. I think I could be of great help for

different brothers who come to our country. The churches are open at this moment to work with new missionaries coming to our country. But we still lack a lot of missionary vision. So I believe that God is calling us to the mission field. I don't know if God is going to take us to other countries, but I know that he's putting that burden in different hearts. Some people don't want to accept this, but God is continuing to put this burden on people.

There's also a lot of immorality among the authorities. It's very easy for a thief to buy a police officer. If a thief gets caught when he's stealing something, he'll just hand money over to the officer, and he'll be let go. There's a lack of moral values. Colombians let themselves be convinced by money. They also let themselves be taken from one place or another by fashion and all the new things. Another thing which influences them is music, heavy metal and rock. So I think we need to have the help of many brothers to reach the youth who have been influenced by all these problems.

I really don't know what else to say.

Pastor Oscar Cortéz from *Cruzada Cristiana — Bravo Paez*,
and Pastor Armando Velásquez from *Cruzada Cristiana — Pastranita*.

Please describe what the Christian environment is like here in Bogotá.

Armando Velásquez:

I believe that there's a very good atmosphere. There's a very strong movement of the Holy Spirit in the entire Church. This has caused a great deal of growth in some of the churches. There is a lot of unity among the pastors, with few exceptions. And through this unity, we've held various events which have effectively impacted the city. Campaigns, for example. Many brothers who have come to our country have been able to bless and strengthen the Church. So the spiritual atmosphere is quite good here.

We consider Bogotá to be a privileged city, because if someone comes from outside the country, they come directly to the capital. During the course of the year we have different events for the edification of the pastors. There might be a program by the District Association of Ministers, or by the Evangelical Confederation. Many other events are organized by various para-church entities. So throughout the whole year the pastoral group and the ministers are receiving edification. That's why I consider there to be a good atmosphere.

Oscar Cortéz:

I would like to identify myself. My name is Oscar Cortéz. I'm a pastor of the Cruzada Cristiana. And about this question which Mr. Ted has asked me regarding the spiritual atmosphere here, I would like to say that, as our Pastor Armando was saying, it's excellent. Lately God has been moving our city toward an encounter with the principles of the Scripture. And this is because of the unity that we find among the people of Christ.

There's a lot of interest in getting to know the Kingdom of God. Among us pastors, there is an interest as well that the members of the churches become burdened

with the advancement and preaching of the gospel. And even though at this moment we have been experiencing difficult times — we have been experiencing violence and all kinds of things — I believe the Word is fulfilled where it says that where there was sin, there is abundance of grace. We see that this is happening in Bogotá and in the entire country.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

No. No, that was all I wanted to say.

And your name is?

My name is Armando Velásquez and I'm also a pastor of the Cruzada Cristiana.

What needs do you find in Bogotá, not only the material needs, but social and cultural needs?

Armando Velásquez:

There are all kinds of needs. Bogotá is a metropolis and where you find all kinds of cultures and groups of people. And the Church has been trying to respond to their needs. We have in Bogotá a church for Koreans, and for Chinese. We have a synagogue. We are trying to fill the gaps in all the arenas. We believe that we have a great deal of resources. Principally, we have the help of God. The Holy Spirit is permitted to flow. There's a freedom. So in that sense the churches are experiencing the power of God — miracles, signs, growth, and revival. More or less in all of the congregations there are wonderful praise and worship teams. This ministry has been improving substantially.

We lack economic resources, but we meet this need with a lot of faith, with a lot of enthusiasm, with a lot of fervor, and with a confidence in God. I'm saying that we have all the resources. And the people who are having problems right now it might just be because they didn't prepare themselves. There's a shortage of church members who are prepared for the work of Christ. So this means that the pastors have to do much of the work in the churches. I think that that is one of the most important things. But in

some places they have understood this, and they have found alternatives — they have opened local Bible institutes, they've send their members to work in other places so that God can teach them responsibilities which in a certain way free the pastor of some of their burdens. So I just think that that's what we're lacking.

Oscar Cortéz:

Yes, there is a phenomenon that is known throughout the world. And that's the immigration of the *campesinos*, the peasants. All of the farmers are leaving the countryside and coming into the city. And this causes needs — naturally, spiritual needs — but also social needs.

There's a great need, that the government not appear completely incompetent, to take care of these needs. Of course, we have the problem of bad managing of our country's economical resources. This causes disunity among the people, and has established a war in the countryside where the *campesinos* live.

The ones who have to pay for it are the farmers who really had nothing to do with the problems in the first place — they are fearful of the *guerrilleros*, and so they come here. They form groups of popular defense, and the only thing they get is a worsened situation, because they just bring about more violence.

There's a lot of prostitution, drug addiction, orphans. And the Church has wanted to help. As my brother Armando has just said, we have lots of enthusiasm and we have a willing heart, but many times we don't have the resources to complete the projects that we have. But we are trying. Well, we're doing what's in our hands to do. This church where we are right now, which is the Cruzada Cristiana, has a house that is a rehabilitation center for drug addicts. There are other congregations which have rehabilitation centers for children and for elder people. There are also houses for prostitutes.

But sometimes we have a shortage of money. In the congregation where I am at this moment, many people come to me. Unfortunately, we aren't able to help them

because we don't have the resources. Another area in which we need help is education, because access to education is very costly today. The monthly payments you have to make are very high, making it difficult to put your children in a school.

So the people who come to the Lord and who attend our congregation are mostly lower class people. We're trying to supply this need and trying to find schools for these different people of our church, and we're working together to see what we can do for them. We're training people in all the different areas — we're training them in the secular aspect as well as the spiritual aspect.

I'll be trying to publish this in a periodical. This thesis will likely be read by missionaries, and also by the directors of Operación Bendición. So tell me, what kinds of missionaries do you need — do you mostly need doctors or teachers or preachers. What could we missionaries do for you?

Oscar Cortéz:

Well, I believe that the spirit of this century is a missionary spirit. But the best missionaries have recognized that the doors have been closing down for Americans because of their white skin, their blue eyes, their own culture. We must also keep in mind the fact that the Church in North America is not growing much. So people don't see them as this spiritual giant that they used to see them as.

At this moment missionaries are needed, but at the same time that we're needing missionaries, we're trying to bring about within the national Church the burden of producing our own missionaries. The act of sending missionaries to the Arab countries would allow us to have better growth, because in the measure that we give to others, the Lord will give back to us.

If we were to ask something of the brothers and sisters in the churches of the United States, it would be that they could help us in the logistic part. That is, the scientific part, the technical part — with new advances of technology, with the implementation of hospitals and clinics. Because in order to expand social work and

even train our nationals better, we'll probably need American missionaries to intervene, helping us. Now, of course, we have American missionaries here and we love them, we accept them — our country is known around the world for its openness and its hospitality.

But anyway, I think that we have to force the Church to get out of that little box which it has gotten itself into so it can project itself in a better way to the world. We, as Colombians, are expecting a great revival to take place and I believe that opening ourselves up would be the beginning of this great revival. The fact is that the Colombian Church itself will be exporting missionaries.

Armando Velásquez:

Yes, I agree, we will never say that we don't need help. We are trying to create a sense in the members of our churches to go out as missionaries. And the social problems that need help would be in the medical realm, the educational realm, and the technical realm. All of these are important areas in which we would appreciate help and we are lacking it. But I believe that God will provide this help in his own time.

We mustn't forget that the problem of our nation is basically spiritual. All the problems have their base in the spirit realm. Our country is very idolatrous and we are governed by a very traditional religion. People have not left that ignorance, and that has caused the Colombian people to be misguided in their goals, in their purposes. They're more interested in satisfying themselves and their egos, and no matter what happens with their money — they don't save their money — they prefer to spend all that they've earned throughout the previous two weeks on the weekend at the bar without thinking of the needs of their family.

So I think that that is what brings about our being in so much need — their lack of conscience, and their lack of awareness that they need to organize themselves and think of tomorrow. I consider that in our own Church as well there is a lot of help needed in this area.

Oscar Cortéz:

Another thing with which the American Church could help — that would be in the purely spiritual realm. As Brother Oscar said, conflicts with each Colombian are not recent, but they come all the way from the times of the colonization. Just the fact that we were colonized by the Spanish in such a brutal way, in such an un-positive way — because they imposed their religion through violence — has caused all these problems: the fighting, the narco-trafficking, the folklorism, the fact that there's no discipline. And the Church could help greatly doing spiritual warfare, so that all types of generational curses would be lifted from the Church and from the people. We can experience a revival like the one that North Americans experienced in 1906 in Los Angeles. Or other famous revivals, such as the one of 1948.

So what we want is to be filled with the Spirit of God, with total liberty, and have the fullness of the wisdom of God so that we can complete this work which we have been asked to do. This work which I am referring to is penetrate the Arab countries, with which we've got a lot of affinity, in order to expand the Kingdom of God, which is our ultimate objective.

Now talk to me about your ministries and congregations. Do you work with the same congregation, or do each of you have different ones?

Oscar Cortéz:

Both of us belong to the same denomination, but we are pastors of different congregations. I'm the pastor of the church in the suburb Bravo Paez, which is in the south of Bogotá. The congregation has about 300 members. I have been pastoring this church for two years, and we have been progressing spiritually and materially. We have set many goals for growth in the future. God has been blessing us in a special way and is raising up new leaders who will lead different ministries — spiritual and social ministries. I believe that God has blessed us and will continue to bless us. Our short

term goal, for next year, is to have a congregation of 800 people. We're working on this plan.

What is the social class that you work with, the age group, the races, the denomination?

Oscar Cortéz:

The classes we work with, as I was saying a little while ago, are middle and lower class. Most of them work as regular employees. Some of them are housewives and others get minimum wage. We don't have anyone in industry or owners of companies — we just have normal, middle-class people who work for a living. We also have people from various parts of the country — all Colombians, no foreigners, but from different regions. The age group goes from ... well, one of our members is 100 years old, and from there down.

Are there any indigenous people or blacks?

Oscar Cortéz:

Yes, we have colored people, but they are Colombian — you know, from Antiochia, from the coast. That's the area where we have the most colored people. Indigenous people — those from tribes — we really don't have. No.

Armando Velásquez:

The ministry which I have been involved with has been the ministry of pastor and teacher. I have been emphasizing to the congregation the importance of getting to know the Word of God so that we can fulfill the goals and objectives which God has put in our hearts. I have been pastoring this church for four years and two months and have been teaching my congregation all the doctrine in a systematical way. That way the brothers and sisters who are in our congregation can become stable, strong Christians, and have a good understanding of the gospel. At this moment they have been asked to do the work of God more dynamically, with more fervor, more enthusiasm.

We have around 150 members and 150 children. We have ten Sunday school teachers, a small youth group. We also have a women's group. Our work during this time has been, well, what I just said.

In addition to this we have developed leaders at the regional level of our mission. Under our supervision we have 97 congregations which we have to attend and whose most urgent needs, such as problems with the leadership and administration, we have to meet. These are all under our charge — all our responsibility. We're not all just centered in one congregation, but we move around. Brother Oscar has many daughter churches. His church is the mother, and from this church many other ones have been born. Under my care I have a congregation which has been extended to the suburb of Suacha.

The people who we work with are from the lower class, more or less. They are people who work independently, and work very hard. They are very disciplined. I think that because of the needs that they have, they aren't able to commit much to the church. They are very sincere in their faith, and really love the Lord. The people are willing to give, they're generous. They are people of prayer. But they are people who at the moment cannot be committed to evangelistic work or regular church attendance.

The age group goes from children to old people. In our Sunday school we have five groups. We have babies and we have all ages of children.

At this moment we are trying to implement Evangelism Explosion with the objective being that our church meet the goal that every church should have — to grow and multiply itself. And among our goals is to make people aware of the need to expand the Kingdom of God and to create within themselves the burden to send missionaries to other people — to go as missionaries to other countries.

In our prayer meetings we always pray for missionaries. We like for missionaries to come here to recount their experiences, to strengthen us, to support us with their prayers and intercession. And we like to support them with our prayer. We've been

praying for countries in Africa, and for specific missionaries who have been doing a specific work. They have gone places by themselves, but then we support them with our prayer. We would love to support them economically, if the Lord allows us to. There have been missionaries who have come by our church, and who have told us about their experiences and how to depend only on God. Some of these missionaries are from Bolivia, the middle part of Africa. Some YWAMers have come to share with us....

And we just believe that there's a missionary spirit in our congregation. There are some people who are preparing to leave for the mission field. We have two young men working in Santander and Boyacá with the purpose of training themselves so that further along the way they'll be prepared. These are boys who have finished their education, but have resolved to leave their families and loved ones to go and be a blessing in other places. We are hoping that the Lord permits us to have at least fifteen or twenty missionaries throughout the world.

Now, could you please tell me what your working teams are like, and what their characteristics are?

Oscar Cortéz:

Initially, we are governed by a directive body. Then come the departments: the children, the women, and the men. Each one of them has a specific work team whose leaders work with them to meet their basic needs. These leaders meet together and try to supply, first of all, their spiritual needs, and second, their material or social needs. That is the way that we work. We gather the offerings and the tithes and when there's any specific need, it's collected so that we are able to meet the need.

Armando Velásquez:

The working teams throughout the mission have certain parameters. There's the pastor, but at the same time there's a directive body which is composed of elders. These people are experienced. We've found them to have a lot of enthusiasm and very willing

hearts to serve. But, as you can understand, they can't be on top of every single thing. So this causes some problems.

We have to rotate this leadership team, looking for people who are willing to work with us. But we don't have time to see if they have a specific calling to this sort of ministry, so the work that they're doing can be hindered at any moment because we aren't certain that the people have a real calling in their hearts to do so. We're trying to form leaders beside us, and spend time with them. When we have time to be with them, we are able to make sure that they are capable and that they have the same vision that we do in our hearts. And if for any reason we had to leave the congregation, they can maintain a continuity in the work that has been done.

That is the way that we work. We have some teams in the Sunday school. We have at least one leader for the youth. We have a team for the women. And we have teams for visitation and evangelism. That's the way that we carry out the labor.

What other Christian organization do you know of that meet the needs of Bogotanos?

Armando Velásquez:

There is one called Amanecer which has begun implementing a certain plan so that there are not a whole lot of missions working in the same area, creating competition for people's souls — competing and forgetting about other groups which have not been reached yet. So this Evangelical Confederation of Colombia, as I said, has established a plan called "Colombia Today and Tomorrow." They established some goals, some objectives for the year 2010. The goal is to reach a percentage of the Colombian people, ensuring that they become authentic Christians with a strong commitment and clear comprehension of what the gospel really means.

To facilitate this we're trying to motivate different leaders of various missions to complete a census of the believers in their areas, enabling us to recognize which missions are working in which areas, and in that way bringing a unity to the work. We're trying to saturate every single corner of Colombia with the gospel. That is one of

the things which this entity has given us — a vision and a plan. Later on we will have all the logistic material which will enable us to establish statistics to show us the growth our Colombian Church has had.

There's something else that we need here — a Christian television channel. Now that we have freedom of worship and congregation, we will be able to transmit programs, such as the 700 Club, which are recorded in North America and Central America. We ourselves can even record them here — we have a lot of people here who have the experience of working in radio and television, experienced technicians. We have all the materials we need to tape these programs here and to have a program here that will show others what our Church is. We currently have a group that is in charge of this. So when it come to be it will not simply be the channel of one mission, but the channel of the whole Church, so that the whole Colombian Church can show their work and can show the truth of the Bible.

We're working through the Confederation looking for unity — which is being established by the Holy Spirit, by the Lord himself, and by the Bible. It is necessary to join all our strength and proclaim the gospel in such a way that we won't need to spend as much energy and money, but just help each other. These are the entities which have been helping and I think that they will be the ones to help bring about revival in our land.

Oscar Cortéz:

I believe there are two ways to expand the Kingdom of God. One of them is through the Church, which we are doing. These churches are formed into denominations. But there are other para-church entities that help the Church in a social way without looking for members or people to join them, like we always do. They are a support, from an evangelistic point of view.

For example, we have the case of World Vision which has helped us for many years. There is one which is a foreign mission but is established here. That's Youth

With A Mission. We have also an institution called Crisalinco, which is teaching people about the Indian culture, enabling them to go as missionaries to work among them. All these entities are helping us, supporting the Church, so that we can all do a better job. There is also Cepal. And there is also another one called Evangelism to the Cities. There are various para-church entities such as these which are working together with the churches as a support.

Armando Velásquez:

Yes. There are other entities, such as the pastors' organization at the city-wide level. They have tried to associate all the ministers so that we will integrate with each other in the Word and in the Work. We're looking to be able to work in *koinonia* — you know, all working together for the same goal. There are many other institutions as well. Institutions that are, for example, trying to do theater work with dramas. There are different sorts of associations that specialize in working with children, working with puppets and clowns and on the street in evangelism in different ways. We have various radio stations through which programs of edification and evangelism are transmitted.

We also have a great organization, which is *Desafío*, with the newspaper and the ministry that they have. It's a ministry with many facets. They help the gamines. They help the people of the street. They help with health brigades. They train Sunday school teachers, and do many different things. I really believe that in Bogotá and Colombia we have a multiplicity of gifts, a diversity of talents. I think that the Church has been enriched with the conversion of many people who have willing hearts and are helping the gospel to have a bigger impact in society.

We have another organization that has just opened, Christian Union, whose goal is to go into the senate and Colombian politics. At this moment we have three senators, two of whom represent this group. We have many mayors and other people who are involved in politics who believe in the name of the Lord Jesus. So there are para-church organizations which are helping with no other interests but to support the

Church. All these entities have no other interest than going to all the different social areas proclaiming and declaring the name of the Lord.

So you have heard about the ministry of Operación Bendición and Desafío?

Armando Velásquez:

Yes.

Well, the questions that I have now are all about Operación Bendición, Desafío, and the 700 Club. What effectiveness do you know of Operación Bendición having here in Bogotá?

Oscar Cortéz:

What I have heard is excellent. I believe that they're doing a good job ... and Brother Lindsay Christie, who is their promoter, the motor of this work. We keep ourselves informed of all the different events that they have through their newspaper, which we have right here, *Desafío*. They are doing many works in the worst areas of Bogotá, where there are many necessities among children and adolescents and street people. I think they are supplying a vital, spiritual need, by bringing the social aspect as well, help which is needed. *Operación Bendición* is doing a wonderful ministry. I hope that the Lord will allow them to fulfill the purpose which they have, to take the gospel to all peoples. As far as I'm concerned, all that they have done until now is excellent.

Now could you tell me what effectiveness you've seen that Operación Bendición has?

Armando Velásquez:

In our congregation, we have been involved with *Operación Bendición* through the goods that many of the families receive. There are many people who for a long time now have been receiving this kind of help. And even though many of them have left our church, they are still receiving this kind of help, and are remaining close to the Lord.

But we know not only of the ministry in this aspect, but we know about the other ministries which Brother Lindsay has brought about. Brother Lindsay has been raised

up in Colombia by God as one of the great leaders that we have ... the newspaper and the help that is given to those who are most discriminated against, little kids who are traumatized and who have been abandoned by their parents — they've been beaten, they've been in homes where the foster father would violate them physically and emotionally.

So the work which has been developed is a very great work. And in all the areas in which our Brother Lindsay has begun a work, he has really left a mark and we believe that his work has been very effective. We have nothing else to say except that we thank the Lord for him and for the work that he is doing.

What direct benefits does your congregation receive from Operación Bendición?

Oscar Cortéz:

Well, in my congregation we don't have any direct material help, but one of our youth is working with this ministry. So I believe that indirectly we are receiving a blessing because this brother of ours is there completely dedicated to this work.

How do you support the ministry of Operación Bendición?

Oscar Cortéz:

Well, in my case I guess we support them in prayer because we haven't had the opportunity of having close contact with them. I really don't know what would be a better way of supporting them and helping them more directly. We always buy the newspaper, and through all the information we receive through it we have the burden to pray for all the works that they are doing.

Armando Velásquez:

In addition to praying for them — not only for them, but for any other organization which is working for the expansion of the Kingdom — I think that a good way of helping them is to fulfill our responsibilities and be faithful, making our payments on time. We don't want the paper to disappear. It hurts us when we see that

they are asking their debtors to please pay something of what they owe to the paper. So I believe that that's a way of helping them and supporting them.

In this way, then, we have a direct relationship with Brother Lindsay. At this moment, more than giving him any blessings, we have received blessings from him.

What can Operación Bendición do to be more effective?

Oscar Cortéz:

Well, that's why I say that what we can do for them is very little, because I consider that the work that they're doing is excellent. Personally, I'm not really aware of their works and exactly what they're doing. But if at a certain moment I begin working more closely with this ministry and become more informed of what's going on with them, maybe I could tell you what they could do to become more effective. But I really believe that what they're doing, they're doing very well. What do you say, Armando?

Armando Velásquez:

Well, really, I have nothing to add.

Now, when you think about Operación Bendición - Desafío, do you think of it as a local ministry, as a foreign ministry, or as a mixed ministry?

Armando Velásquez:

Now, even though Brother Lindsay is a foreigner, I really consider that he's more Colombian than perhaps many of us are, in the sense that the love he has for our country is a practical love, a love that you can see, that is evident. Maybe we haven't been diligent enough to do the work that he's doing with the help of the Lord. He has had to pass through many trials and problems, but he has been leaving an impression in each one of us. So *Operación Bendición* has been a real challenge for us.

So we can't see it as a satellite project from a foreign country, but rather as something national. Even though the directors are foreigners, I just think that they have lost that foreign identity and have shared a lot with us. I would say that they are *Chipchas* — they are real Colombians.

Oscar Cortéz:

I think that they are doing a great thing, expanding the Kingdom of God through helping the most needy people of our city.

How do you keep yourselves informed about the work that Operación Bendición is doing?

Armando Velásquez:

Basically through their newspaper, *Desafío*. Maybe in some occasions we hear certain teachings or have chats with Brother Lindsay or attend activities where we find him and hear about what he's doing in his different projects. He informs us of what God has put in his heart and we try to support him in prayer so that he will be able to continue not only with the programs that he has now, but with the ones that he has in his heart. But basically the way that we keep informed is through the newspaper.

Oscar Cortéz:

Yes, the newspaper and the information which Brother Lindsay gives us when we have the opportunity to get together.

Is there anything else that you would like to add about the environment or about the interview?

Oscar Cortéz:

No, I would just like to thank you for the opportunity of talking about this and sharing our opinions and doubts about what's going on in our country. Thank you very much.

Armando Velásquez:

Yes. I agree. And I just want to thank you for this work, especially because of what you mentioned at the beginning — that you're going to try to publish this in a newspaper to make people aware of the needs of our country. To any missionaries who would like to come here, we have been sincere and we think that God has been helping

our Church. We hope that he will continue to do this. We love Americans. We have nothing against gringos. We welcome you to our country.

Pastor Alfredo Barrios from *Fe en Acción Cruzada*.

Describe what the Christian atmosphere is like here in Bogotá, or in Colombia.

First of all, when talking about the Christian atmosphere in Bogotá, you have to take into account that our city is a metropolis with 7 million people. Very few of them have been born in Bogotá. Most of them are people who have come from different parts of the country. At this moment, we're having great problems because many people have immigrated from the countryside trying to run away from the guerrilla groups and the violence that is taking place in those areas — the drug dealing and the drug wars. So we have many suburbs where there's a lot of delinquency. These suburbs are very big areas where many people live and in these same areas you can find lots of violence and different types of delinquency.

The work here in Bogotá is concentrated in the southern part of the city, and for years we neglected the spiritual work in the northern part where most of the professionals and well-to-do people live. Hardly anyone had come to reach this area. It has only been in the last ten years that Christ's Church began to work in the northern area of town. I believe that it happened in a beautiful way.

Today we have about forty different congregations. Some of them are pretty big and others are in the process of growing, but they have a very beautiful work. Just as in the south, there are different places where there is a lot of need. In the south, because they don't have, and in the north, because they have too much. There's a place here that's called the Pink Zone, a place where most of the rich kids go. In addition to this, you find a lot of addiction, a lot of promiscuity, a lot of sad moral problems.

But the atmosphere of Bogotá, as far as I can see it as a pastor, is a source of a lot of challenges. It's a very beautiful place to work. The area of the city in which I work is a new area which has not been touched. I am very excited with the work that God is beginning to do here and what he will continue to do as the years go by. I think that

the view of Bogotá, though it's pretty difficult because of the unemployment, delinquency, social problems at a family level, many abortions.... But you know that when there's an abundance of sin, there's an abundance of grace.

Now that we have talked about the spiritual needs, what other needs do you think that Bogotá has, not only in the material area, but in the social and cultural areas as well?

Well, the greatest problem here in Bogotá is that there are many subcultures. For example, in Bogotá there are 18,000 prostitutes. That's as big as a complete suburb! We have no idea how many homosexuals there are, but there are at least 15,000 to 20,000 street children. We have old people. We have beggars. We have people with mental problems. So there are many subcultures.

Because of this, we need very serious projects to affect these people socially. I believe that here in Bogotá if we give more resources to the Church, we could do a better job. For example, at this point we are picking children up from the street. We have a rehabilitation center, and we've had to rent a farm. The vast majority of what those children have has been provided by the body of my church.

But there are very few congregations that perform a social type of work. I know of some that work with the street people. These are the people who have fallen completely into drug addiction. This can be into crack, marijuana, or cocaine. There are great amounts of people who have fallen into this. Among them, we find some professional people. So I believe that there's a beautiful labor that can be done in the social area.

We might be missing human resources as well as economic ones. But there is a great need, and the need creates a lot of types of work. I believe that if the Church were more united....

For example, I have a project which I want to present to the government. I want the government to give each serious and established Christian church a quantity of money monthly, and in turn each church would pick up at least twenty children or needy people — it would be drug addicts, beggars, or people with mental problems —

and help them, because we have the love of God and we have the human capacity to do it, but we don't have the economic resources. But I believe that Christ's Church at a national level we could contribute to a very effective social work.

So do you think that the government should give money to the Evangelical Church only, or to Catholics and Mormons and all the other different religions and sects that there are?

No. It would be to the Christian Church. The other churches aren't really interested in those things. And the Catholic Church is like an economic octopus, which has fed itself on the government for years, so they don't need more money. They've got enough money to give away. Now, if the government could invest in the Christian Church, they'll likely get an overseer who would make sure that the money is being received and that it's being managed correctly. But no, I don't think that they should give any money to the different sects, only to the Church of Christ.

You have already shared a little of what your congregation does, but what other works are they doing?

We have many set goals, but of the works taking place at the moment, there is evangelism throughout the whole. We are trying to join evangelistic work with social work. Thanks to the doctors and psychologists and dentists who have come to our church, we have been able to form small work teams that go to different places, no matter how far away they are or how difficult the journey might be. If the pastors invite us there, and they open the doors up to us, we'll find a way to get there.

So we're doing a work, first of all spiritually, and second, socially. We preach, we evangelize, we teach in the churches to strengthen the congregations, and we also give social help such as medical help. We ask for free medicine and we take medicine and clothes to needy people — anything that we can get for them.

In addition to this, we have a praise and worship ministry that goes out to other congregations and shares with them what God has given to us. I also have a ministry

that God has given to me — to go and share in other parts of the country, as well as in other countries. Last year in Argentina we shared with many brothers in the Congress of Pentecostal Latin American Churches. This was a great blessing that the Lord gave me. We're planning on going to Venezuela soon. So like that, little by little, God has been opening doors. It looks as though God is opening a door in Italy. So if he does, and they confirm this, we will be traveling over there.

We also have the great desire of opening a Christian university. We're trying to unite with another congregation so that between us we can open a university which will be dedicated to the study of health. It will be for the study of physiotherapy, mental illness; there will be training for nurses and doctors, and all sorts of health careers. God willing, we will be opening the first facility next January. We will start off by training paramedics. Here in Colombia there's a lack of this service. Many people who have car accidents die — not because of the accident, but because of the lack of proper attention.

We are also developing in the social realm. At this moment we are working with children, and would also like to help the prostitutes, but this is a difficult area to enter, because they form little Mafias — little closed groups that manipulate girls, even ten years old to older women in their 40s and 50s. So we're asking God to provide a way for us to work in this area. As I was telling you, we need economic resources as well as human resources, but we need trained and experienced people to work in these areas. And we want to open other works here in Colombia. We have already opened some new ones in the surrounding areas of the city. We are thinking about opening a church in Chile. There's the possibility of opening one in Ecuador as well.

What is your congregation like? What is the predominant age group, the number of members, the social class? Do you have mixed races here?

Well, here the people who are members come from the middle class and upper middle class. The ages go from fifteen to fifty or sixty years old. But the vast majority

are young people. Many of them are professionals or businessmen. What else could I tell you? There are a lot of youth, many university students, and they all have a burning desire to serve the Lord Jesus. There are two boys who are finishing medical school and they have a very clear calling for Africa. So they are waiting to graduate, do their year of rural work, and then they are planning to go as missionaries to Africa. We plan to support them.

We really have a missionary vision. Our desire is not so much to have a big church as it is to have a church that will bless others. What will make it big is the unity we will have among our groups, instead of what makes it big being the number of members. It's one thing to be many of us, and a totally different thing to be working in the ministry that God gave us.

The life of our congregation is something nice. We have our meetings, although not many of them because everyone either studies or works and is pretty busy. But we have many little cell groups. We plan to convert those small family cell groups into congregations later. Most of our youth is working in evangelism, going out and doing things instead of so much being in meetings. So the ministry of our church is not so much focused on meeting, but on work. So we all work. We have a facility in which we have about forty students studying theology. They start at the basic level and they work until they earn leader certification. This small Bible institute lasts for four years. Our first commencement will be next year, if the Lord helps us.

What is your working team like? Tell me what its characteristics are. Or do you consider that you've already talked about this?

No. Well, I have a ministry group which helps me. We belong to the Christian mission "Faith in Action." They have the same postulates as the Church of God: service, to declare the Great Commission, and to extend the gospel, serving humanity in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have a directive group, and a part of them make up my ministerial group.

I have a body of leaders which helps me, because I believe that God does not work through just one person, but through a team. So I have team that I'm trying to prepare and train better every time. They have been trained at our Bible institute and have different practical responsibilities. Sometimes we travel with them to different parts of the nation and do the various works that I've already mentioned. And they're going through a very beautiful formation process.

We have a very beautiful method here — to reach a person who has no idea what Christianity is, minister to them, bring them to the feet of the Lord Jesus, baptize them, and continue by their side feeding them until they become another leader who is able to go out and reach another person. So all the leaders that we have are accustomed to this process — getting someone new in the Lord, talking to him, taking him to a new beginning in Christ, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and obedience, starting with water baptism and the tithe. Just as I said before, until this person becomes another leader. This process doesn't cause very much growth in our church, but it makes the people who belong to the church authentic.

What other Christian organizations do you know of that work to supply the needs of the Colombian people, the people from Bogotá?

Well, there are many organizations in the world, but the problem is that if you compare them with the great need, they become very few. The Word of God is still relevant and there is a lot to gather up, but the laborers are very few. I know of CEDECOL and ADME, CEPAL, Vida Para, and the other ministries that work as local churches, such as the Comunidad Cristiana de Fe, and many other organizations and missions. But as I said before, if you compare them with the great need, they become very few.

You mentioned ADME. Is this part of Operación Bendición?

No, it's not. It is an organization of many pastors in Bogotá which have united to help each other and to help the families of the pastors, strengthening each other and

encouraging each other, and inspiring and motivating each other to complete the work that we are doing in each of our churches.

Have you heard of the ministry of Operación Bendición - Desafío?

Yes, I have heard of *Desafío*, but what happens with *Desafío* is that it is an entity that works with all the churches, so I don't see it as an organization that works with just one church. They have a very beautiful work in the social area. Even though they have done a lot of work, I insist that the need is much higher. There are very few people working in it, but *Desafío* has done a great, great labor. Denise Christie and Brother Lindsay are very respected and loved by us.

How has Operación Bendición been effective in Bogotá?

What I can say about their work is about the results and benefits that we have received as a church. They have come here and taught seminars. They have trained us in certain things, which has been very good. As far as the social work goes, I don't know how much effectiveness they've had, but I believe that it's pretty good, because the work that Brother Lindsay is doing is well planned. I think that he has an advantage in that he is supported by the United States. So he has many resources. That is an important ingredient in order to have success in the social ministry. When you work with resources, things are a little easier than if you don't. They have a very solid and beautiful organization, and that makes the work a good work.

What direct benefits does your organization receive from Operación Bendición and Desafío?

One of them is the newspaper. Another is the children's ministry with the clowns. They have come here and helped us many times. A while back we needed for them to help us with counseling training, and they came and gave us a special course about it. When I've talked with Brother Lindsay, I have received much blessing and strengthening. He is a good friend and we have had some opportunities to share with each other. Each one of these meeting has been very useful to me. Maybe the problem

would be that they are too busy. You see the same problem — that there is a lot of work to do and not many laborers able to do it.

How does your congregation support the ministry of Operación Bendición?

Well, first of all, with what they ask us to do — the distribution of the newspaper, and buying many of the things that they sell: the cards, the posters, and various things. Sometimes they give us the opportunity to use the tape library that they have. As I said before, sometimes it's difficult because they really live very busy lives, but that's the way that we've tried to contribute to support them.

What weaknesses do you think Operación Bendición has?

Well, I really couldn't answer that question because I'm not too close to it. I don't know enough about it to know its weaknesses. I guess it's like any other project. It might have areas in which it's not all that strong, but they have the possibility of becoming strong.

If you were to do a serious analysis of the situation, they have also helped us with seeds, and some time ago they gave us some food for the children in our rehabilitation center. I believe that the churches don't know much about the help that they are able to give or have the capacity to give. The time that we went and they gave us the seeds and the clothes and the food was something completely accidental. They didn't call us, they didn't invite us. We just arrived there like the ones who were invited by Jesus Christ to the wedding. We just arrived there, and had no idea of this. So this limits the blessing to just a few people, because not everyone knows that they want to help, that they want to give other churches opportunities to work in the social area. Those seeds that I told you they had given us, we're going to use them in a garden at the farm that I told you about which we rented for the children.

What do you think Operación Bendición can do to become more effective?

I believe that they should let themselves be known a little bit more. And the second thing is that they have a closer relationship with the various churches which have a

social-type of labor so they can exchange ideas and help, so that at a certain moment they can visit a work and say, “Let’s do such and such a thing here.” And maybe by just helping and giving counsel to people. I think that would be a very nice and appreciated way for them to contribute, at least with us. We would really like that. And if they have a lot, well, why not share it?

What advantages do you think a ministry has when it’s foreign?

Well, I have never considered *Operación Bendición* to be a foreign ministry. No, I think that it’s the ministry of someone who loves Colombia, so that makes it not foreign. That makes it a national ministry, because it’s a ministry born out of love for our country. I believe that there are many advantages. One of them is that the project can be better financed, having more human and economic resources. It can be a more stable project and better planned, because we Latin Americans tend to be very disorganized. That’s very sad to admit, but we are disorganized.

So I really think that having a foreign ministry helping us gives us a lot of advantages. In some cases, though, it can be negative, because very few Colombians like foreigners. Their pride interferes with their letting Americans help them. But that’s only very few Colombians. So the ideal thing would be that the foreign ministry find national directors and then work through those national people. But I believe that they have many advantages. I’ve never seen any problem in them helping us, and anyway, we don’t see Brother Lindsay as a foreigner. We consider him Colombian.

How do you keep yourself informed about the work that Operación Bendición is doing?

The only medium of information that I have is the newspaper *Desafío*. But I think that they don’t give enough information about what’s going on and what events they’re planning to do. They should allow more participation from the various organizations or churches that want their help. So maybe through letters or visiting

churches they could keep us informed and help us in a better way. At least I would like this.

This was my first interview. What did you think about the questions I asked you?

I liked everything, but what I didn't know was that it was so centered on *Operación Bendición*. So it would be better if you told the people that what you're going to talk about is *Operación Bendición*, because maybe some people know a lot, but some of the people might not know much about it. But no, I think it's a very good interview, with very concrete questions.

Pastor Hector Pardo from *Tabernáculo de la Fe*.

There are two sections in this interview: The first one is about the Christian environment and how to help missionaries and pastors; and the second one deals with Operación Bendición. Describe what the Christian environment is like in Bogotá.

When you ask me about the Christian environment, are you referring to the Church or the Church's role in society?

Well, I'm thinking about the struggle that the Church has here in Bogotá.

Well, the spiritual environment in the Church is one that has had a lot of ups and downs. And the struggles that we have to face in this city are pretty difficult. In fact, any big city, any city that has more than 4.5 million or so, will have terrible conflicts, which are very difficult to comprehend and confront. So the situation in capital cities is pretty complicated.

It's very difficult to understand the environment of the Christian Church here in Bogotá. For example, here in our city, some years back, I can't recall how many years it was, they celebrated the First World Congress of Witchcraft. Since then, our city has been marked with lots of powers that are contrary to the principles of God. But in the midst of this situation, there is an opening in the hearts of people who wish to find a different path for their lives, and there is an opening to talk about Jesus Christ, and the Church is growing. The opportunity that we have at this moment in Bogotá is very healthy.

I think we have to take advantage of this time because it might not last that long. But at this moment, we have a great opportunity. The churches are growing. Maybe one of the factors that in this city, and I think in every city of the world, hinders the growth of the Church, is the Church's unity. We have felt very burdened to have more unity within the Church, and we understand that it's a very difficult problem, not only in Colombia, but around the world.

There are many people who come to Colombia and say, “You guys lack unity,” and of course this is nothing new. We understand that there is a lack of unity. But sometimes they try to make us believe that in their countries they do have unity. When you go to the States, you realize that the churches are not united. The churches are even more divided than they are here — more divided than they have ever been before. And in Europe you find the same thing. Also in Latin America it’s exactly the same. So I believe that one of the things we need to strive for, not only in Colombia, but in the whole world, is to be able to grow in a real principle of unity — not just in an apparent unity, but a unity that has a strong foundation, and that the pastors will all unite and show acceptance so that we can all march together toward our common goal. So I think that that’s the problem, and that keeps the Church from walking and marching like we should. It’s the lack of growth in the unity of the Church.

Now, what needs do you find in Bogotá, not only the material ones, but the social and cultural ones as well.

Well, I think that there’s a principle, not only in Bogotá, but in the whole country of Colombia. And this is to understand that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel that has to penetrate into all the sectors of society. For many years we received a partial gospel, a gospel which was affected by theological concepts, especially in the area of eschatology, because we had a lot of differences of opinion regarding the theology of Scofield and all this teaching about the dispensations — that we’re in the last dispensation, and all of that you have probably already heard about. We’re all influenced by this point of view, and we accepted it at that time, but after examining it pretty well, I really don’t agree with it now.

We retired from economics, from the arts, from the justice system, from politics and we did this because that was “from the devil,” and the only thing that belonged to us was heaven. Now I see that as a great, great mistake. So one of the greatest needs that we have is to make the pastors understand, make the leaders understand, and make the

Christian Church understand that this land belongs to the Lord, and that we're here to take this land for the Kingdom of God. I don't say that we're going to establish the Kingdom of God, because the Kingdom of God will be established when the Lord returns. But until he comes, it is our job to go on conquering the land. It belongs to him. I think that what we need is a change of mentality within the Body of Christ.

What kinds of missionaries would you like to see coming to your country?

As far as missionaries go, I believe that there is always a place for them, because the Church of God is just one big church, and the nationalism that sometimes rises up in some countries is not healthy. Those traditional missionaries who came here to tell us what we had to do and all that, and to dominate everything — no, we don't need that. We need missionaries who will work shoulder to shoulder, like nationals, without any discrimination or inferior feeling, in the sense that they won't say that they're missionaries because "I come from the United States, and I am superior to the Latin Americans." That mentality has to end. It is true that some people in the world have had more opportunities to advance more than others, not because some of them are superior and others inferior, but just because of the opportunities that each one has.

But the missionaries who come here with willing hearts to work and try to meet the various needs that we have, and work together with us — they will be welcome. I think we do need them, and we welcome them, but with that mentality — the servant mentality. That mentality of recognizing the dignity that the national person has, and to work together with him.

What is your ministry like, and what is your congregation like?

Well, my ministry.... Sometimes it's better to have other people talk about yourself. But I have worked with World Vision, with Overseas Crusade. I was the president for many years of the Evangelical Confederation of Colombia. I founded a political participation movement called Christian Union, which has brought about profound changes within the life of this nation, especially in the relationship of the Church. I've

been a pastor for 33 years, and the Church and the whole country knows me pretty well. I am the director of the National Embassy of Jerusalem, which works for better relations with Jewish people. It is a pre-evangelistic work. We have another embassy in Jerusalem.

I work with Baptists, Charismatics, Pentecostals. So I believe that the surnames that we have are circumstantial. I think that the important thing is to know that we have all been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. So from that angle, I work with all the churches, with all the movements that have a doctrine founded on the Scriptures. I have a national ministry. I am a member of A.D. 2000, and am a member of many other organizations, such as the Lusanne Movement. I am a pastor. At this moment I am pastoring this church and I have some other churches under my charge, which I have to supervise in the city. I have a ministry to the Body of Christ.

What ministries does your church have? Does it work with the homeless children?

Our church has many different ministries. We have a mission ministry. We have another department in charge of home cell groups. And in the social realm, we have activities with unprotected children. We have a farm. This place is under our supervision. We have sixty children there. They have a house and food and everything that they might need. So we work especially in that social kind of work with children. I think that that's the most important point. In addition to that, we help the Prison Fraternity of Colombia. I work with the prisoners. We do what we can to help alleviate the pain and all that the prisoners go through in the prisons. So those are specifically the areas that we are working in.

Now I would like for you to talk about your congregation. What kind of social class do you work with? What age group? How many members does your church have?

The social class is middle class. Sometimes it's upper middle class. Some of our other congregations are of a lower class. As far as race goes, we're all natives — we're all Colombians. There are a few Americans in our church. The age groups go from

teenagers and children to about thirty or thirty-five years old. The vast majority of our churches consist mainly of young people. So we have a mixture of everything. We're not specializing in one specific area. We work in an integrating way.

And how many members do you have in this congregation?

In this congregation, I have around 700 members.

What other Christian entities do you know of that work to meet the needs of the Colombian people?

Well, there is World Vision, which I think is the principal one. There are also other entities which have been working in different areas with drug addicts and prostitutes. There are entities working with small businesses. There are other entities such as *Operación Bendición* which is trying to give a good service to the needy people and the poor people.

We're now going to talk about Operación Bendición and Desafío. Tell me how effective Operación Bendición has been here in Bogotá.

Operación Bendición has done a very beautiful job — a very wonderful job with the health brigades that they do on a regular basis. They're very good. The centers that they have where the street children go and eat or wash themselves. The farm that they have in Funsá. Their work is very, very important. I believe that they're doing a beautiful work ... what they're planning to do with the hospital. They're all good works and I'd just like to encourage them to continue doing so.

I would like to see these ministries, such as *Operación Bendición*, more involved with the Church. Until now I think their job has been beautiful and has been very nice. I have no feeling against it. All I say is that I'd like to see the Church more involved with *Operación Bendición's* work. I'd like to see them working together shoulder to shoulder so that if tomorrow for some reason *Operación Bendición* cannot continue working in Colombia — because you never know what's going to happen — that the work will continue. What if *Operación Bendición* stops working here? Then the work

that they've been doing will stop also. I would like to see them more involved in this work. I really have no answer how that should come about. I think that the Church would be willing in certain areas to work with them.

What else do you think that Operación Bendición could do to be more effective?

No, I would really say that to have more effectiveness, what they really need to do is just work together with the Church. They are doing an excellent job, and to ask more of them, I know that they are giving as much as they can. They are giving all the best they have to give. So it wouldn't be fair to ask them to give more. I really believe that they are doing a good job. But I do insist, though, that the Church involve itself more in the ministry that *Operación Bendición* is doing.

When you think about Operación Bendición, do you think about it as a local ministry, as a foreign ministry, or as a mixed ministry?

At this moment, I think of it as a foreign ministry. There's no doubt about that. When you talk about *Operación Bendición*, we always think about a foreign ministry, which is sustained by foreign contributions, no matter where they come from — from the 700 Club or the university of Pat Robertson or any other part. But I would really like to see, again, the Colombian Church more involved economically, and in every single area, with *Operación Bendición*.

What are the advantages or disadvantages that foreign ministries have?

I think that it does have its advantages, but I really think also that it's not good to be dependent on someone. Because when you depend on Dad, when Daddy dies, you're left in the air. It's like the boy who grows up and was depending on what Dad could do for him. The day when Dad cannot help anymore, the day that his dad dies, the child will rebel against things or die of hunger. But, anyway, *Operación Bendición* has done a wonderful job. I just insist that they need to work more in unity with the Church and be a little less dependent on foreign ministries, not because this is a bad thing, but because it will enrich their ministry much more.

Is there anything else you could add about Bogotá, Colombia? Do you think that I've forgotten an important question or anything?

No. I think that you've done a pretty good job coming from the angle that you're coming from. You've covered it pretty well. I just have to insist that we, as a Church ... that this gospel that we have in Colombia be directed specifically to the spiritual part of man, and that when we think of the body, we think of giving and not of developing the capacity of the person.

For example, I believe that works such as *Operación Bendición* are doing it. But what I want to emphasize is that it's very important to open workshops to train people in certain areas, so that those children who are receiving lunch, that these children later on become capable of learning an art, working, studying in order to be someone tomorrow.

Like the farm that you have?

Yes. Exactly. We teach them and we try to train them in different skills. We plan on opening workshops so that we can train them in different technical careers. Yes, we need to do this. Sometimes the projects and the social work that I discover in all the missions are very paternalistic. This is okay. It's not bad to start with. But they stay there, so if we don't want to have people for fifteen or twenty years coming every day and getting their lunch, getting their lunch, we need to hold these workshops and train them. And that way, in a few years' time he won't be saying, "They gave me my lunch," but "I earned my lunch. I worked for my lunch. I earned what I have right now."

Not simply that a beggar which we always have there, and we're able to give to him. This sometimes justifies poverty, because if there weren't any poor people, then there wouldn't be so many ministries. I really don't believe that we should justify poverty to sustain ministries. There will always be poor people, but we must work toward that poor person's being treated with dignity, and for their being able to

develop the capacity that they have, and tomorrow they will stop begging and will try to work for themselves and begin feeling like a useful person. Not to simply stop helping them, not to take the burden off our shoulders, but it's for him as an individual to feel useful in society, that he feel that he's valuable and he's a worthy person. He can feel that God gave him capacities which he can develop and in that way live better.

What do you think of this interview?

I think that you're going to do a very good job. And I hope that the Lord would help you to put all the thoughts together and write them all down. May God help you. I would like, if it's possible, when it's finished, to have a copy of it.

Pastor Manuel Kronfly from *Iglesia Cristiana Filadelfia*.

Describe what the spiritual environment is like in Bogotá.

We're talking now with Ted. We were talking about the impressions he had regarding Colombia and the situation we have here. He confessed that the image Colombia has on the outside is not very accurate. Sure, there's a certain amount of violence in Colombia, but it's the same as in other cities. You can live in peace, and in calm. You can live well. We also spoke about the spiritual environment within the Christian Church in Colombia. We were talking about how the Christian Church in Colombia is a healthy Church, a Church which knows what it wants, and knows where it's headed. And over all, it's a Church that knows what it has.

We, as a Church, know that we can count on the presence of the Lord and the power of the Lord. And with the presence and the power of the Lord, we can know the hope which not only Colombia has, but every nation has in the Lord Jesus Christ — this is in the spiritual hope. As we, as Christians, place within each person's heart the presence and image of the Lord, we're going to have a new nation. We're going to have new people. We're going to have new societies that get better with each day.

But I believe that in Colombia there's a revival in the faith. People have a hunger and thirst for the Word. They're searching for the Lord. And I think also that at this time we, as Christians, must move to help those who are in need.

There have been other movements which haven't been Christian — metaphysics, New Age, witchcraft. And people want to fill the emptiness they have inside with these things — these other religions and cults which are being offered. I believe that we're in a time when the Christian Church in Colombia must stand up, must lift itself up, must fulfill its spiritual function and fill the emptiness that society has.

Catholicism is strong here. There are also cults, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, which are strong here. What does the Church do against this?

Yesterday I was talking with a Catholic theologian who is very wrapped up in Liberation Theology. You're telling me that the dominant religion here is the Catholic religion. The big religion here is the Catholic religion, which up until a year ago was the official religion of Colombia. Here in Colombia everybody is Catholic. All of them are Catholics.

But we, as Christians, can't compete with the Catholics within the parameters of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in these days is wrapped up in social help, in material help. They want to meet the material needs of man, and that has gotten them involved with politics, and has gotten them involved with many other things, which has led them to stop caring for the spiritual side of man. I think that the Catholic Church at this time has ceased functioning in its spiritual role regarding people. I think that the Catholic Church, as a Christian Church, which it really is, in a manner of speaking, has fallen behind the moving of the Holy Spirit.

The Evangelical Christian Church in Colombia has gone forward, and is meeting people's needs. So we, unlike the Catholic Church, are dealing with the person's heart. We don't give fish. We teach how to fish. We don't merely provide for people's material needs. We try to provide for the spiritual needs, bringing the person to the Lord, and it's the Lord who renews, who transforms, and who provides for the person.

Now, we as a Church also want to move within the arena of works. James says well that faith without works is worthless. We, as a church — this church in which we are currently — try to collect seven food offerings each week. We invite people who are in need, who can't afford to buy their own merchandise. We bring it to the church, we preach the gospel in the church, and at the end of the meeting, we give out the goods. The objective is the Lord. The objective is not the merchandise. The objective is not to fill the stomach, but rather fill the heart.

I think that as the Evangelical Christian Church, we're not competing against the traditional Catholic Church. I think that in these days we're simply moving in ways

completely different ways from theirs. The Catholic Church wants to meet one need, and we're meeting the spiritual need which the Catholic Church is not able to meet.

But in no point are we trying to compete. We don't say that we're better or that they're better, that they're bigger and we're smaller. No. We're arriving at the person's heart. The function of the Evangelical Christian Church is to preach the Lord. We preach the Lord.

In Bogotá there are spiritual and material needs. What other needs are there, such as social or cultural needs?

Very well. It's the same as in all the cities of the world. Colombia, especially Bogotá, which is where we live, has many needs. We could talk now of insecurity, of societal change. I believe that all of this — this whole phenomenon — is not only found in Colombia, not only in Bogotá, but in the whole earth. It must be that human beings have lost their morality. There is no longer any morality in human beings. We can, however, recover morality through the Lord Jesus.

If it's a society which moves in the spiritual realm, if it's a society which has as its lord the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be no violence, there will be no traffic jams, there will be no robberies, you're not going to have insecurity. You're not going to see any lack at all. You're not going to see dishonesty in public officials. Each person will stop thinking merely of himself. We will have a change in our society. We will return to moral health, healthy thoughts within every person. But *we* can't do this. The one who can do it is the Lord. So through coming to the Lord, he'll carry the burden.

We said at the beginning that the Colombian Church is a healthy Church. Those who are in this Church are healthy people. This Church is like a garden of roses found within a barren land, which can perfume, give aroma, which can make society happy. This is the Colombian Church. There are needs. There are many needs — economic needs, there's poverty, a lack of education, a lack of culture in people, a lack of a good

conscience to live in society, a lack of security because there *is* insecurity, a lack of education among those who live in the streets.

Here, for example, when a car driver climbs up an incline he feels as if he were fighting against everyone. And the pedestrian thinks that he is the whole world's enemy. So the pedestrian gets in the way of this car, and the driver ends up on top of the pedestrian. There's just a lack of education among those who go around on the streets. Here in Colombia it's totally different from what you have in the United States. People who go about the streets in the United States are educated. The drivers there know how to drive; they are prudent. The pedestrian, who goes about by foot, knows where he can cross and he knows that he has to go to the corner to cross. So in this — in the environment of the street — there's a lack of education.

There's a lot lacking. Many things. But I believe that little by little we're getting better. I think that the Church in Colombia is fulfilling its purpose. We are men of faith. When we speak of necessities, we have to speak of the Church. We have to speak of the role which the Church plays in this society. And we're fulfilling our role. We are doing what we have to do, and we're leaving for the Lord to do what he's got to do.

Do you want to see more missionaries from the United States, from Germany, New Zealand, or are there enough?

No, there are never enough. I think that all the help the Colombian Christian Church can receive is welcome. Oh, that many missionaries would come from the United States, New Zealand, Germany, England! And oh, that many missionaries would leave from Colombia for other regions. Colombia at this time is sending missionaries to the Arab countries. At this time we have missionaries working among the Muslim culture, something which the United States isn't able to do. And which England cannot do. So all the help that we could receive from the outside is welcome. And all the help that we can send from Colombia to the outside is a blessing as well.

I think that it's an interchange. I don't think that it's only receiving, and I don't think it's only giving. He who receives can give. And he who is giving is doing so because he's receiving. We want to give, but in order to give we have to receive. Many times we ask for help. It's evident in this church, for example, that this is a church that needs help. We've received help. Blessed be the Lord, we've received help, but we've been able to help as well. We're raising up missionaries. We're working also with the social work. We're bringing merchandise to those who don't have enough. We've visiting people....

I think that all of the help that we are able to receive from the outside, from the United States — oh, that many missionaries come! I'm not fearful of people who come from outside the country. Oh, that we'd receive much blessing from the United States, and from England, New Zealand, Germany, and Europe in general! I think that the Christian Church in Colombia is an open Church. There's no fear of people who come from the outside. There's no fear or jealousy. The Christian Church is the same Church as is in the United States. And it's the same Church which is in Germany.

So if a missionary were to come from the United States to the Church in Colombia, he'd arrive at *his* Church because the Church is one. If a missionary from Colombia were to go to a German Church, he goes to *his* Church because the Church is one. The Church is of the Lord. The Church is not the Church of the United States. It's not the Church of Colombia. It's not the Church of Germany. Neither is it the Church of Pastor So and So or Missionary So and So. The Church is the Church of the Lord.

So I'm telling you that the Church in Colombia is a healthy Church, because the Church in Colombia knows that it's the Church of the Lord. If a missionary were to come from the United States, he would be welcomed with arms wide open — in the same way that we've felt loved in other places as well. Oh that many missionaries would come!

Specifically, do you want to see doctors, or teachers, or singers, or mime troupes, or preachers? What would you like to see?

Personally, in my judgment, the Church needs teachers — preachers who preach the Word. The Word of God is what changes people. The Word of God is what creates renewed minds in people. Of course, there are many ways to preach the Word. There are mimes. There are singers. But we need more of the Word. We need to receive more of the Word, and we need more teachers of the Word. The Word of God is what makes its way into the heart. If you receive the Word of God, the preaching of the Word, that Word stays in your heart. You forget the rest. You'll forget the singer. You'll forget about the mime troupe. But you don't forget the Word.

Look, I've been with the Lord 20 years, working for the Lord. And 20 years ago I began to hear and listen to preachers, teachers from the United States. And believe me, I have the preaching of the Word in my mind, and I have the image of the preacher in front of my eyes, because it's the Word which stays. The Word of God stays.

We need teachers. Oh that teachers would come! I tell you that this is my judgment. Here in Colombia teachers are being raised up, but the harvest is great and the workers few. Oh that many teachers would come, who sow the Word among us! The rest are welcome — the singers, the mimes, everyone. But in this world the teachers of the Word are more welcome.

Let's speak of the congregation now. What ministries are there, and what is the congregation like?

In this church?

Yes.

Very well. This church is a new church. As a new church it is just beginning to see missionaries raised up. I founded the church. I'm the church's pastor. I'm also a teacher — I teach in various theological seminaries. So there's this ministry of pastor-teacher. There are evangelists — those who move in the evangelistic field, not

necessarily within the Church, but in the street outside the door speaking at a personal level person by person. In addition, there's a woman who, among the five ministries established by the Lord, is the church's prophet. She's a woman of God. She a woman who has an impressive spiritual balance. She's a woman with a great amount of the Lord's discernment. And many times she's the person the Lord uses in the course of making decisions in the church. So there's the prophet.

There's the ministry of praise, a very beautiful ministry in this church. The church's strength is in adoration. We move a great deal in praise and worship in this church. Within this ministry of adoration, the Lord moves through prophetic song. The Lord moves through the "new song." There's prophecy within the same adoration. If there's a need, we lay hands on people. During this same adoration, there are healings, restoration. The ministry of adoration and praise is a very beautiful ministry.

There's also the ministry of counseling. There's a group of people who have the duty of personally calling church members on the phone. They're conscious of who comes and who doesn't come. There's also the children's ministry. We're initiating a Sunday school for little children. There's the ministry of social works as well. We work with merchandise, with poor people.

But if your question is specifically regarding the five ministries, well, there's a prophet.... We aren't sending any missionaries because we haven't got the economic resources. There are evangelists, who move within this city. There's the pastor. There's the teacher. And the prophet.

Let's see. And the church — more or less, what's the social class, the ages, races, denomination?

No. We aren't able to talk of an average age. We aren't able to speak of a social level. I can talk to you about this church. I can say that older people come. I can say to you that children come. I can tell you that youth come. All kinds come. Now, the social

level of this church, according to what I can see, is upper-middle class. Upper-middle. This church is situated in a fairly classy suburb. This church is situated in one of Bogotá's elegant suburbs. And so people come from around this area.

So I could say that this is an upper-middle class church, although for us there are no classes. We don't work with classes. If beggars come, they're welcome. If workers or bus drivers come, they're welcome. Everyone's welcome. People from this area's social class come as well. People from the southern suburbs come here, and they're received. People from the northern suburbs come here. People from the upper class are received as well. But here we're all equal. Here everyone is equal. Elderly people are equal to children. And the one from the upper class is equal to the one from the lower social class, because in the Lord there is neither age, nor class. We've done this in this church.

Now, we want to begin working with groups of children. We're not doing this yet. I think that the Lord is using the youth at this time as the Church's motor. We need many young people. We need to rescue youth from the hands of the Devil. I think that the world is offering very attractive things to the youth. And I think that by the way we offer attractive things regarding the Lord to the youth, we can rescue them from the devil's clutches. We want to work with the youth. We want these same youth be the preachers who in turn work with other youth. That they place themselves in this field to rescue other youth from the Devil.

Well, now I'd like to talk about Operación Bendición-Desafío. In what ways is Operación Bendición-Desafío effective? Are there any ways?

Yes. *Desafío. Operación Bendición.* Lindsay Christie. They're moving in quite a large field. And I think that for the Christian Church in Colombia, *Desafío-Operación Bendición* has been as its name says — a blessing operation. I think that the Christian Church has been strengthened greatly through the work of *Desafío*. I think that *Desafío* has met the need of the Church. How has it supplied these needs? Promoting

churches. How has it supplied these needs? Its publicly announcing the activities of various churches: “This church is doing this. This church is doing that.”

“Now we,” they say, “are going to do this for the church.” So they begin creating activities, they start health brigades, they start publishing studies of quite good quality in their periodical. And this is taken to the entire Christian Church. And the Christian Church is receiving this work of *Desafío*.

Let's see. Some pastors have commented about some weaknesses that Operación Bendición has. There are weaknesses; it's not perfect. What can Operación Bendición do to become more effective?

Very well. Weaknesses? We all have them. There's no perfect church. There's no perfect organization. We all have weaknesses and we have the right to have them because we're human.

Some talk of weaknesses in the area of administration — that they don't know how to conduct things; that they don't know how to direct the resources. They talk of weaknesses encountered in regards to people. Many times people arrive there — I've heard the complaints — and they don't feel very well attended to.

But I think that we all have weaknesses. I think that we have the right to have them as well because we're human. I think that along the way the defects become corrected. Weaknesses don't bother me much. The blessing preoccupy my thinking more. We have to think about the blessings. We have to consider the good that's happening. I think that the good is greater than the bad.

And to be more effective, do you have any ideas or commentaries?

To be more effective ... No. I think that within their limitations — because they are limited — that they're effective. Now, in order to be more effective more resources are needed. In order to be more effective a greater number of people is needed to work. In order to be more effective they need more ministries within the ministry. But I think that all this is coming along pretty well already. It's growing. It's being

completed. They're executing their work well. And they're meeting the needs of the Church. In order to be more effective you've got to pray more for them. We've got to pray more for them.

When you think about Operación Bendición, do you think of it as a foreign ministry, a local ministry ...

No. I think of the Colombian Church. I think about the Christian Church of Colombia. I think of the Lord's Christian Church. I think that foreigners who are blessing the Church, while they bless the Church are themselves being blessed as well. But I believe that the Colombian Church makes up 80 percent of the participation within *Operación Bendición*.

I think that it's the Church that's being blessed. There's no jealousy. We don't have any jealousy regarding where they come from — that they come from outside, or that they have to come from within the country. We are able to work together, because the objective is not Colombia. The objective isn't the United States. The only objective is the Lord. And together we can work for the Lord. And if a North American comes to work with the Christian Church in Colombia, the Colombian Church is for the Lord. And they're going to help us reach the Lord.

The objective is the Lord. The objective isn't the nation. We have to bring the nation to the Lord, and bring the Lord to the nation. That is, bring Colombia to the Lord. Bring the Lord to Colombia. And if people from outside the country come to help us achieve this goal, they're welcome, because the Church's objective is the Lord. The Lord is the Lord of the Church.

This is a normal view among the pastors here, or among the people here?

I believe so. I believe so.

Well, is there anything more that you can tell me regarding the atmosphere here, the Church's struggle?

Yes. At this time the Church in Colombia is going through a time of transition. It's going through a time of change. We could say now that the official church in Colombia has always been the Catholic Church. Now, it's been a year since the Constitution's change, maybe two years, that the door's been opened for the Evangelical Christian Church. We're able to say that while we've not got the same resources, we do have the same conditions. That's created a certain jealousy within the Roman Catholic Church. And so, in some ways we've felt attacked.

In some ways the Roman Catholic Church has wanted to challenge the Evangelical Christian Church. We've felt confrontation. They've published articles trying to minimize the Evangelical Church. They've had articles written in magazines and newspapers. They've also had news programs on the radio trying to destroy the reputation of the Christian Church in Colombia. So in some ways, in a way we're struggling against this. We, as a healthy Church, as a good Church, as the Church of the Lord, want to project a good image to our country. When people talk of the Christian Church in Colombia, we want that they talk of a good Church. That they talk about an honest Church. That they talk of a healthy Church. That they speak of a holy Church. And over all, that they speak of a model Church because the model is the Lord.

Yes, we have needs in these days. Yes, we're confronting this change. Now, we have to ask the Lord for a lot of wisdom to know how we're to go on, how we're going to behave at this time. The doors have been opened for us. The political sphere has been opened up to us as well. We've become involved with this. We have senators. We have representatives. We've got consuls. So we've got to ask the Lord for wisdom to know how to conduct ourselves in the political realm, and how we're going to manage ourselves in light of these social and spiritual circumstances which have presented themselves to us in regards the Roman Catholic Church.

Now, Satanism in Colombia is arising in a big way. There are Satanic cults. We're being confronted by these as well. There's a lot of witchcraft, and we're confronted with this as well. We understand that there are vigils and fasts by witches. Here in Colombia they come together with the only objective being to direct their vigils and fasts in such a way that the Christian Church in Colombia falls and the pastors which the Lord has raised up to guide his Church fall into sin. So we've got to be prepared for this as well. We've got to be aware of what's happening. We need the Lord's wisdom. We need the power of the Holy Spirit. We need friends who can help us.

I'm thinking something. In the United States there are many times when Catholics work together with Evangelicals against abortion, in the area of morality and government. Are we going to see Catholics and Evangelicals working together here in Colombia?

Oh, that we could arrive at that! In the end the only two Christian Churches which there are in the entire world are the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church. We're split at certain points. That is to say, we have disagreements regarding the Lord. Many times we differ a little in our way of acting, but we are both Christian Churches. Oh, that we could arrive at that! If you're asking me my personal judgment I see that it's difficult. I see the breach opening more daily. I see that every day, although there are many points that unite us, I see that every day the smallest points that separate us are becoming greater.

Now, if you ask me my personal opinion, in the spiritual arena, I wouldn't want to work with the Roman Catholic Church. I would like to work within biblical parameters. That's my judgment. My judgment. If the Catholic Church grows closer to the Lord, within biblical parameters, if they believe in the Lord as the Bible says, and if they work for the Lord as the Bible says, and not as a Roman Catholic hierarchy says, I would work with the Catholic Church. But while things continue as they are, I wouldn't want

to. Now, if only it were possible! Some are seeking to become united. Some are trying to become only one for the Lord. Some are trying to ransom many people for the Lord.

Well, I don't have any more questions. What do you think of the interview?

Very interesting questions. Questions that help open our eyes to our reality as well. I think it would be great to confront other pastors with this so their eyes might become opened to the reality in which we are living, and that they'd become conscious of what we have. Now, I don't think only that for us as a Church it's a blessing. I think that it's good, as well, that you take the image we have to the United States. You know how to project in the United States what the Church in Colombia is like. I'm happy that you've come. I'm happy that you spent two months. If you could only stay longer so you might better understand what the Church in Colombia is like. Speak well of us. The Christian Church in Colombia is a healthy Church. And it's a holy Church.

Thank you.

With pleasure.

Pastor Colin Crawford from *Iglesia Filadelfia*.

My first question has to do with the spiritual environment here in Bogotá.

In Bogotá.... I would describe Bogotá as in a time of revival. Bogotá is a city where the churches are growing. There's a lot of activity. And because of some of the political changes that have occurred recently, there's even more liberty to preach. I would say that the spiritual atmosphere in Bogotá in this moment is very good.

That doesn't mean to say that the devil's given up. I believe he's still very active. And we believe that probably there will be a lot of opposition from the Roman Catholic Church soon, precisely because of the political changes that have occurred in the last two years. I believe there's going to be a lot of opposition from the Roman Catholic Church.

But right now we're in a good time in Colombia, and Bogotá is experiencing a time of revival.

Now, some of the problems are obvious — the economic problems.... What other problems are there — cultural? social problems?

Well, I think the problem with.... One of the biggest problems in Bogotá is the immigration from the country areas into the city. This causes problems for a city like Bogotá. It's not so structured as some other large cities in the world. So there's a strain put on public services in the city — housing and all of the other public services in the city.

This immigration has been caused by the violence, terrorism in the country areas. It's precisely there where the *guerrilleros* are in control and where they hold their activity. So you get this violence in the countryside which creates this problem of people leaving the countryside, coming into the cities, straining the public services in the cities. And not only that, when they leave the countryside to come into the city, then they're not producing. And so this causes the prices to go up.

So it's all linked. I think all of the problems are linked to violence and terrorism in Colombia. I think the main problem in Colombia is terrorism and all of these other problems are byproducts of that main problem, which is violence and terrorism in Colombia.

I want to ask a couple of questions about missionaries that come here. I use the word "missionary" meaning people from other countries who are serving Christ cross-culturally. Do you want to see more missionaries come to Bogotá?

I personally believe that the time for missionaries in Bogotá and in Colombia — unless they come in a very specialized capacity — I think the time is over when missionaries come into a city like Bogotá, or even Colombia. Colombia is sending missionaries to other countries! That doesn't mean to say, of course, that we can't receive missionaries, because God sends missionaries to one country, and from that country sends to another. But I feel that the national Church has come of age and the national Church is able to do the work that needs to be done here in Colombia.

Now, I'm not saying that God won't send any missionaries to Colombia, but I think they'll have to be very specialized. I don't think we need missionaries who are going to come in to start a church. I think that's the task of the local churches, or the local Christians. But, for example, they could come in and do a very specialized ministry. Television will be opening soon. I believe that there's an opening there for missionaries to work in that area. There could be other areas where they could work.

The problem is that so often you see someone up in the United States — a church in the United States or Great Britain or some other part of the world — their church wants to start a church. I don't think that's what we need now. We need people to come in who are going to contribute in areas where there's a need. And I would say that that's one of the needs — in television. Although we have people now who have already been in television and have been able to work in that ministry....

Let me shift it now to Operation Blessing. What do you know about Operation Blessing, locally, in Bogotá?

Well, I know a lot about it because I'm very friendly with Lindsay, and Lindsay's a member of our church. So I know that there's such a thing as Operation Blessing and it's being used to bless a lot of people.

Some of the things that they have are, as you probably know, are schools, and feeding people, housing some people temporarily, a farm out in Funsa. Some of the other pastors I've spoken with have given suggestions as to how they might become more effective. Do you have any ideas as to how Operation Blessing might become more effective locally?

Well, I think that Operation Blessing — and I think they're already doing this — must work with the local churches in the different areas where they're working with the poor people. I believe they're already doing that. Perhaps they could do it a little bit more. That would be one way to be more effective. And make known what is being done. So often local churches don't know what missions are doing or what's happening when outside help comes in. But from what I understand, I believe that Operation Blessing is a blessing, which is what it should be.

When you think of Operation Blessing locally, do you think of a local mission agency, or a foreign, or a mesclado....

Well, I don't think people know much about what Operation Blessing is. It's just Operation Blessing, and it blesses people. And so I don't think they are really aware of whether it's outside help or inside help. I think it's just that people get blessed. It's not the only — by any manner of means — it's not the only organization that's doing this work. There are an awful lot of other organizations that are blessing in schools and in the area of *indigentes* and all of this. So it's not the only organization. I know you're interested in that because it's supported by CBN and that area. But they're doing a good work. I would think that that would be the attitude of most pastors.

Is there anything that you can add that might prepare a missionary or a pastor, a local pastor, or CBN in Virginia Beach in their encounter with Bogotá?

Well, I think Bogotá is a bundle of contradictions. I don't think people expect to see a city so large, so diverse. I mean, you've been, obviously, visiting the Calle de Cartucho, where Operation Blessing has a center. That's completely different from Ciudad Bolívar, for example. Where you're sitting looking out the window right now — I mean this could be Virginia Beach over the road there, you see? I mean there's an upper class here in the city.

So there's so many contradictions in Bogotá. It's a modern city, and it's not a modern city. Here there's peace, but in other parts of the city, there's violence. There could be bombs at any moment, you know? So there's a lot of contradictions in Bogotá. I think they've got to be prepared for that when they come. I think most of the time, when people come to Bogotá, they think they're coming to the jungle. Well, it's not the jungle. The biggest problem in Bogotá is the traffic jams. That's the biggest problem. You know, there's so much traffic and there's very little structure for that traffic.

When I think of some of the leaders of the spiritual community in town, I think of you, and I think of Dario Silva, Hector Pardo, Cesar Castellanos, Lindsay Christie. Both you and Lindsay are from out of the country. Is there any ...

No, because both Lindsay and myself — I would say that we've so identified with the Colombian people that they look on us as Colombians. And I am a Colombian citizen. I'm a counselor in the city and will go to the congress next year, I hope, if I get elected. And we haven't come in.... Our church is not a mission church. It's a local church, which starts local churches. So we've never had a missions structure. And really, I think we've so identified with the Colombian national church that we're accepted as national leaders. So they don't really think of us as foreigners. Of course our accent gives us away and all that. I've been here more than thirty years, and I think

that Lindsay's been here about thirty years. So that's a long time to be in a country. I mean, how long do you have to be in a country to be one with the country?

So I would say that the two people that you just mentioned are exceptions to the rule. We never go home. When we go outside the country, it's for meetings. But we don't go home for a year furlough. We live here. Lindsay's family are married to Colombians. I mean, this is our home. We live here. I don't think Lindsay thinks of himself as a New Zealander. I don't think of myself as Scottish. We think of ourselves as Colombians.

My final question is, "Could you describe for me the congregation that you're pastoring and ministries that are supported by it?"

Yes. Our congregation is a kind of middle class congregation — tending to upper-middle class. We've started from that congregation, in the last less than ten years, about eight other congregations in the city, which are independent, local churches. We have two schools for poor children. One has 620 children in the north of the city. It's a primary school. Now we're building a high school for the same amount of children. We have a school in our church for poor children — about 350 children in that school. We have a school for deaf children — about 100 deaf children in that school. We have a house for girls who have been on drugs, which is a function of this ministry. We have a prison ministry, which works in three of the large prisons in the city. We have work with the children of prostitutes, a home for those children where they are received and cared for by the church.

We'll be signing a *convenio* with the district, with the city, in the Calle de Cartucho. We're going to manage and control a health center that the city has built a block away from Operation Blessing. And so we'll have medical care, dental care, a communal dining room — you know, attention to those people. We'll be working very closely with Operation Blessing. This is a *convenio* between our associations and the

city. We have a medical center which is for poor people. We're building a second medical center where the school is.

So there's a lot of social work. We're really very much involved in social work. We're in touch with Sweden, of course. We're from the Swedish Pentecostal church, and so we have programs from the Swedish government. And so this is where our funds come from for a lot of the social work which we're doing.

And about how many are in the congregation?

About 3500 in the main congregation, and in the other congregations it varies from 200 to 1000.

Those are all my questions. I appreciate your time.

Okay. Well I hope that will help you.

Appendix B: Ted Slater's personal journal.

The following journal traces my seven-week-long service in Bogotá, Colombia. In it I describe what I accomplished, my observations, and my feelings. It is my intention that this journal aid its readers in gaining a better understanding of the work of *Operación Bendición* in Bogotá, and the Colombian environment, and one person's experiences in that environment.

It is natural to judge the value of such a cross-cultural experience on its fruit, on its apparent effectiveness. It should really be unnecessary to repeat the following:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,” says the Lord.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”

and Jesus' saying, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” With our Lord's discernment, however, the information included in the following accounts should make it clearer how we might better serve him in Colombia, with our finances and with our human resources. If I were pressed to give my opinion of my being sent to Colombia during seven weeks of summer, 1993, I would say that it was clearly within our Lord's will for me to go, and that he was able to use my presence there for his glory and for the advancement of his kingdom.

In regards to Operation Blessing's center in Colombia (which I've called by its Spanish name, *Operación Bendición*), I would emphasize that the work appears to live up to its name. From my observations, from talks I've had with native Bogotanos, and from interviews I conducted with 15 Colombian pastors, the ministry is seen as a blessing to Colombia. Its periodicals, its health brigades, its counselors, its radio studio, its schools, its soup kitchen, and its personnel all function to better the lives of Colombians, both physically and spiritually. *Operación Bendición* is often seen not as a foreign mission agency's outreach, but as a national, or somewhat mixed, ministry. This

makes the ministry of *OB* in Bogotá somewhat more approachable, and seem less patronizing, than some other ministries.

After conducting many interviews and observing first-hand the day-to-day operation of *OB*'s work in Bogotá, I make the following recommendations. Several pastors made comments about *OB*'s apparent lack of integration with local congregations. Congregations in general don't feel welcome to become actively involved with the ministry, they said. People see *Operación Bendición* in Bogotá as a ministry directed by a few strong leaders, rather than being conducted as an effort of the Christian community. Several pastors recommended more decentralization and unity with area congregations. I'm not able to make any suggestions as to exactly how this might be accomplished. One pastor, however, said that instead of *OB* reaching directly to the multitudes, it should focus more on training and equipping ministers, who in turn reach out personally to their congregations of 100 or 200 adults. I must add, though, that disunity didn't appear to me to be a major problem.

A second recommendation is in regards to money. "It's better to teach a man how to fish than to give him a fish," two people I interviewed told me. This approach clears up problems of unhealthy dependence and low self-esteem brought on by a cycle of begging. By becoming able to support oneself and one's family, for example, a person might also become better integrated into the Kingdom of God. In order to fish, however, one needs the tools of a fisher — a net or a hook and line.

Specifically, the figurative hooks and lines that I would recommend acquiring for *Desafío*, *Operación Bendición*'s monthly periodical, include the following: software such as the PageMaker 5.0 upgrade, a Macintosh program which organizes more than 200 entries (their current capability) and sends faxes through a modem which they currently have, discs with ClickArt images, and perhaps a drawing program such as Aldus Freehand; hardware such as a new drum for their laser printer (which they may have already secured); magazines or books with reproducible color photographs to be

used in *Desafío* and *Fortaleciéndonos en Dios*; and Spanish-language manuals and skilled personnel to train employees how best to utilize their equipment and gain a better understanding of newspaper design and style.

Again, I appreciate Operation Blessing’s providing this opportunity for me to serve in Colombia. At this point, if its directors were to ask me to return during the summer of 1994 to serve the Lord and the people of Colombia, I would say yes. I found the work and the relationships very rewarding.

Although the following journal entries are at times quite personal, I have no problem with its being reproduced and distributed as those involved with Operation Blessing deem appropriate.

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July 13, 1993.

I’ve arrived in Bogotá after a long day in the air and at terminals. I met up with some very normal looking Hare Krishnas (or some other Eastern cult), and spoke with one of them. When she discovered I was a Christian, I was shocked at her negative response — she called me a fanatic. (“Who’s handing out materials in an airport?” I asked her.) Her attitude change — from friendly to cold — threw me for a loop.

Lindsay picked me up at the airport. Carlos helped us out, carrying some of my luggage. The wait to get my passport stamped took more than an hour — three planes arrived simultaneously and over 500 people were in about five lines. Oof. Customs went remarkably easy, though. They didn’t even open my bags.

I’m living with Francisco and Luz Marina García for now. They don’t have a maid as do many middle class Bogotanos, always have hot running water, and Francisco greeted me at the door barefoot. They’re extremely hospitable and appear to be very sincere, loving Christians. They have two kids, Natalia and Juan Francisco.

I feel somewhat apprehensive, uneasy, a little scared. It feels like a dream being here. The language comes easily, which is nice. I pray that those who said they'd pray for me do. I need folks to intercede for me.

July 15.

A few years ago I vowed (informally, but quite seriously) never to travel to another country without a close friend or wife. I remember why I said that now. If there were a person from the same culture as me with whom to discuss new things, someone to show new stuff and places to (and someone to drag me to new adventures), someone to comfort and comfort me, that would help me to focus, I think. As it is, my thoughts tend toward home, and on intriguing cultural differences.

I saw lots of things today — *gamines* (homeless kids), *locos* (apparently-crazy people), *la pobreza* (poverty). The language is coming very easily. *Me falta el vocabulario*, *pero* the structure comes quickly. I'm able to form sentences easily, especially during the morning and afternoon. My head is swimming with Spanish.

There's a prophecy going around Colombia, I understand, that this country will be delivered from its misery and that from this country many missionaries will go out into all the world. Our Lord has so many plans for so many countries and peoples.

I'm awakened in the morning by the *señora* who asks me if I'd like a *tinto*. I like this custom of *tinto* (strong instant coffee) given after a night's sleep or after an afternoon *siesta*. It's a *rito* I'll probably continue to observe.

Colombians seem to like sugar, oil, and caffeine in most of their foods. Cilantro, too.

July 16.

I'm feeling very unutilized. I spend most of my time in a van or car, or eating, or sitting around laughing with new friends. I really don't know what is expected of me, if I'm in the way, if I ask too many questions, etc. I'm really not too sure of what I can do here, other than observe and report back to Virginia Beach.

One of *Operación Bendición*'s schools received a 97 percent mark in a recent governmental review — among the best in the city, apparently. It lost points in part because it has no grassy area on its property. It's been given the okay to teach up to fifth grade. Denise Christie is quite excited, as are others.

The ministry here goes through nearly \$2000 per week and Lindsay told me that he wonders where it all comes from. The schools seem to be a very good thing — there are several here and they are intended to serve the children of area *guerrillas* and *cartoneros*. The way to change the country is not through enforcement of laws or fighting the evil with guns and words, but the Holy Spirit changes people's behavior as he renews their lives. This country's situation will change as the Spirit changes people's hearts. There is really no other practicable way to fix Colombia.

I wonder why CBN sends Regent students here for six weeks. They spend much money and go through a lot of trouble to get students here, but why? Perhaps I'm here to recount to the United States what happens here in Bogotá. The Spirit, through CBN, brought me here. He's got a reason for my being here.

I have so many questions, am interested in cultural differences, differences in feelings, aspirations of my new friends.

Martha Isabel and Jorge Avendaño get area businesses to donate food or other things to *Operación Bendición* to distribute to the children at *Operación Bendición* schools. They recently got 590,000 pesos worth of cookies — that's nearly \$790 worth of food.

July 17.

One of the employees, Martha Isabel, was on a bus and the guy behind her was masturbating and wiped his hand on her back as she left the bus. She had been praying. Martha Isabel recovered quickly from the bus incident. I asked her about it yesterday and she said she's not been affected by it; just another sick encounter in a sick

city. It seems to me that an American girl would be more affected by such a sexual violation.

Both Natalia's and her father's eyes twitch back and forth slightly — about two rounds per second. The 6-year-old's head sometimes moves to compensate for her eyes' vibrating. Neither Luz Marina's nor Juan's eyes move like that.

Juan watches TV too much, it seems, and the family encourages him to. While the rest of the family eats lunch, he's in the bedroom watching the tube. Natalia joins him halfway through her lunch. And they have the volume quite high. Those laugh tracks are worse than the Chinese water torture. Colombian actors seem amateurish and melodramatic in comparison to ones from the U.S.A.

Yesterday Jorge and I went to a supermarket, like Sam's Club in the U.S., and there was a table set up to sample milk, coffee, and other things. They also had whisky which was served in little paper cups. The drinking age is supposedly 18, but it's not enforced at all. Can you imagine whisky being offered at a sample station in a Food Lion or Kmart?

I gave a pack of gum, Bubble Yum, to Carlos and one to Jorge, friends of Juanito. They finished both of them within two hours and came back asking for more. I gave each a pack of Extra. When they opened them, they let the wrappers slip from their hands to the ground. They seemed not to care about the garbage in the yard. I asked them if someone else was to pick up their garbage from the ground and they said yes.

I'm interested to see how the Christian faith is acted out here. This family, the Garcías, have phrases which they say, "*Gloria a Dios*" and "*Amén.*" They don't seem to discipline the children much, but they do seem awful sweet. Meanwhile the TV drones on with vocally-overacted voiced-over American shows. Overly dramatic Colombian voices, such as I've heard on TV here, grate on my ears like fingernails on a chalkboard.

I'm sore in places: my back, the muscles from my rump to the back of my knee, my lungs. Part is due, I'm sure, to the altitude, but the pollution may be responsible for some of it.

Life in the U.S. flows so much smoother for me than life here in Colombia. The U.S. culture is so innate that I don't even think about it. Here, however, I tire of the differences — in language and in culture.

Meanwhile the television drones on....

Folks seem to drink instant coffee more than brewed coffee here in Colombia. Even in the stores it's not as common as the instant coffee. I'm told that the "cream of the crop," the first-fruits of Colombian agricultural products, gets exported while everything of lesser quality is sold internally. As a sort of confirmation of this, phrases written on coffee bags warn of penalties for exporting coffee meant only for internal consumption.

Some of the people at work sing to themselves and to God. Martha Isabel was talking with God on the bus while the man was doing his thing behind her.

The loneliness I feel for U.S. women is not intolerable. I wonder what it would be like to be married and live in another culture. With the wrong woman, frightening; but with God's woman, heavenly. The arts are a great way of touching people deeply with the gospel, I was thinking on the plane here. I have several plays I'd like to develop; acting is a great way of making real Scripture that is hard to picture — such as Mary and Martha in Luke 10 or God's killing the animal to provide clothing for Adam and Eve. The reason I didn't change paragraphs is because I wonder if God has an artistic woman in his ideal plans for me, or if there's a different woman for me. Or none.

Luz and her uncle, Jorge, shook hands (after an initial embrace) during their conversation as they stood by the door of the *apartamento*. They held each other's

wrists for about 10 seconds and then about 30 seconds later held each other's thumbs, as kids in the States do. It seemed natural and affectionate for both.

July 18.

I wake to the sound of the TV at 7:50 a.m. No, in truth, my alarm went off before that, but the television set is the first sound to fill the house.

Yesterday Francisco told me that it's been prophesied that his family is to be the model Christian family in Colombia. In addition, they believe that they will be senders of many missionaries and will go overseas themselves. Prophecies are often "Our country will be the most used by God," "Our family will be the model family," "Our people will...." I'm tempted to be cynical, but I'll fight to maintain an open mind.

It's Sunday morning, and I'm in the church building now — *Fe en Acción*. I was told that the meeting began at 10 a.m., but it started at 10:45, after we were here about 10 minutes. We've just finished singing for just over an hour. By the time we were done we had raised our hands in praise, danced (and had a dance lesson by the pastor), and twirled ("*remolineando*," we sang) with other worshipers. The spirit of praise was sweet and joyful. Exuberant, yet not disrespectful or trite.

The message is very biblical — Bible exposition rather than purely emotional pabulum (ouch). From Isaiah 6:1-8 we find that God is holy, he exists *en medio de la* praise and glory, we find the fruit of sin, and a plan for salvation. Thirty minutes in the presence of God, the pastor points out, *vale más que* years in Bible school without his presence.

I've been consistently introduced as a missionary, and when I'm labeled such, I feel awkward, and defensive. I consider myself a student and servant. After all, aren't Christians all meant to be missionaries — those who offer the gospel of Christ to those in other cultural groups or sub-groups?

July 19.

These Bogotá roads and auto suspensions are terrible.

People don't often cover their mouths when they cough. Since I don't want the hacking cold that little Natalia has, I feel frustrated with her for coughing on me.

There's a great deal of sensuality here — pornography sold in the markets, women (many, even Christians) in miniskirts, women treated as sex objects on TV (blatantly, serving no purpose but to titillate). It may be linked to the expressiveness that I've witnessed among many Latin Americans, and their Roman Catholic, rather than Protestant, background.

As we entered an underground garage, hard-hatted men checked the car over with mirrors and electronic devices, looking for bombs in the trunk, within the wheel wells. One had exploded a few months ago, causing much destruction. I expect we'll see more such procedures performed in the States since the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York.

Francisco helped his wife with the dished tonight. He's soft spoken, but is prepared to denounce as "diabolical" what he deems wrong. We watched a talk show tonight which dealt with body piercing — nose rings, tongue pierces, nipple rings, etc. "*Puro diabólico*," we agreed as we watched, spellbound.

Luz Marina, in the middle of the program, said she hasn't gone to more than four movies in the many years she'd been a Christian. I asked myself if movies here could be any worse than Colombian TV.

The whole family, four of them, all sleep in the same bed. Interesting. Everyone sleeping in one bed is an interesting thing. In one sense, it provides a bond which would tighten the family. Physical contact with the children and with the parents, pleasant chatter, laughing together. On the other hand, I wonder how the parents express themselves intimately with each other. Melqui tells me that it's more the result of meager economics than a choice to express affection.

Another night falling asleep to the sound of TV music and dialog....

July 20.

Awaking to the sound of channel flipping and Superman.

The *Día de la Independencia*. We didn't leave the house early enough to see the parade. Superman had Francisco and the kids in his iron grip.

We did go to the gold museum, however. Interestingly, each of us had a headache from that point until we prayed and read Scripture. The museum was filled with indigenous art, most of it idols and gods. There were several mummified bodies, thought to be of priests. The family believes that the demons who the ancient peoples sacrificed to were responsible for the headaches. Which is not an unreasonable conclusion.

It's 4:30 p.m. and the TV's on. Again.

Melqui seems like a really neat guy. Melqui is short for Melquisedec, the Salem priest without beginning or end mentioned in the *Antiquo Testamento*. We chatted and ate the other day, yesterday. I've got 36 days left in Colombia. I've got to make the best of it, experiencing dynamically what our Lord is doing here in South America. Soon I'll be home and realize all the opportunities I missed out on.

It is tempting to return to Virginia and get a job and a house and a wife and retire and die safe. So many paths and responsibilities....

July 22.

Melqui has been showing me the ropes: telling me about customs, helping me find good work to do, chatting with me about his life, listening to me trying to find the right words. He said that *Latinoamericanos* tend not to plan their lives out as Americans do because their future is not as secure as *gringos*'. I plan to teach English in Spain for several years, earn a doctoral degree and later teach in a state university, involving myself with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. He's not been able to do the same (make long term plans), but relies on God for week to week leading. The American culture would denounce this way as irresponsible or immature. He's

recounted to me how God has used this approach to his glory, however. It's a real challenge, comparing our approaches and figuring out which one is better for me.

I've made a form on the computer, to be kept on disk instead of being printed out in hard copy, for Melqui. With the form he'll be able to keep track of videos, who has them and when they're due back, and so on. I've entered in the statistics of about 30 people so far, which videos they've borrowed, and so on. It's tough, though, because Colombians (I think *Latinos* in general) are very creative with their writing style. There's little consistency. A's and M's rarely look like they do in the States; they look like D's and three vertical lines. It's been giving me a headache (I'm not exaggerating) trying to figure it out. Furthermore, Feb. 9, 1990 can be written 2-9-90, 9-2-90, II-9-90, and 9-II-90. There seem to be no set rules.

I'm feeling better, however, about working here. The people are becoming less Colombians and more friends and men and women of flesh and blood and dreams and feelings.

July 23.

When I'm speaking with people here in the Spanish mode I'm limited by my vocabulary. Even the thoughts which go through my head are limited. I find it difficult to communicate ideas of significance because the words just aren't there. As a result, when I'm with international students back in the States, whose first language is not English, I must understand that they may not be able to communicate accurately their feelings and thoughts — they may not even address them. But they are there; the words just may not be.

It's not that they can't express their thoughts well — the thoughts may not even be there because the words and images, the building blocks of external and internal communication, aren't there. Perhaps those who go to other countries, and then return to the country of their mother tongue, have problems communicating because

they haven't been thinking and communicating at the level which they had been before leaving their country in the first place.

Lindsay Christie, the director of *Operación Bendición* in Bogotá, is encouraging. In México, I feared my boss and felt uncomfortable when I was with him. Not so much here with Lindsay. He has been arranging the layout of the new *Club 700* center in Bogotá. He's been meeting with employees to discuss their areas and to get their feedback. I'm under the impression that folks here see *Operación Bendición* as a Colombian entity and *Club 700* as a foreign mission agency's ministry.

I've also helped Gloria Piedra with some translation of materials from English to Spanish for publication in *Club 700* periodicals. She's a sincere woman, in her 50s, but dogmatically set in *her* ways. So much so that I've had a few light confrontations with her.

One of the leading pastors in Bogotá, according to Lindsay, is visiting Lindsay today for confession and to be held accountable. He says it's very serious. Lindsay is considered by many to be an authority in Bogotá, and although he was born in New Zealand, he's considered by those who know him to be truly Colombian.

July 24.

According to a pastor I spoke with today, former president George Bush was involved in witchcraft. Luz Marina told me that Kiss' song "Hotel California" is diabolical. Some facts get mixed up when they travel through six countries. I suppose it's easy to confuse George Bush with Nancy Reagan and Kiss with the Eagles.

A place where we ate lunch, *Los Pirámides*, sold stuffed chicken heads (including neck and gobbler things). Though tempted to try one, I reluctantly chose a chicken *empanada* instead.

July 25.

I should mention some of the things I've done at *Desafío*. I helped unfold the children's periodical (there were stacks and stacks of *Los Valientes*) so it would fit into

another periodical. That took us two days. On July 23 I returned to the office with Melqui at around 6 p.m. in time to help some of the others bring *Desafío*, which means Challenge, from the printer's to the office.

I posed a question to a group of the workers, during our trip to the printer's: "What is the first sacrifice alluded to in the Bible?" After some guessing, I asked them what the first sin accomplished (among other things). Instead of being comfortable with their nudity, Adam and Eve felt shame for their nakedness. They made clothes, but God made them new clothes. From animal skins. The first sacrifice.

Bogotá is known in Latin America as the Athens of South America because of the people's desire for higher learning and the high-quality schools. Because of the Latin American mentality of week-to-week, however, development appears to be slow.

For every one person looking for work, ten companies look for employees, according to a woman at a job placement agency. I've been told that it is quite difficult to secure the papers one needs to gain work here. An unemployed man who asked me for some pesos told me this, as did several people from the office.

Martha Isabel brought me a cup of coffee on Friday. I felt so cared for — it was a different kind of experience, not at all unpleasant. Later that night she was weeping because she felt unappreciated (I believe). I wanted to comfort her, so I sat next to her. I didn't know what was appropriate, so that was all I did.

Melqui told me on Friday night, "God doesn't want the good for you [merely], but the excellent." We ate hamburgers with green tomatoes at *El Corral*, which were excellent.

July 26.

A motorcyclist from the States would have to prepare himself for the L.A. perception of motorcyclists. Here they aren't permitted their own lane as cars are. They are cut off. They can, however, slip in between cars, ignoring lanes themselves.

Motorcyclists don't wear helmets, in general. The roads are poor and pot-holed, so a motorcycle ride wouldn't be awful relaxing, I don't imagine.

I walked in a dangerous *barrio* with Melqui last night, saw my third prostitute and the third person to urinate in public, and my umpteenth *cartonero* and beggar. Saw a moonie wearing a toga and funny hair, too.

Instead of attending this month's medical brigade, I joined some of the family's relatives to swim at a very ritzy club. I was a bit confused as to what was expected of me, but later found out that I had made a pretty serious mistake. Lindsay was pretty preoccupied with a student's father's murder, and so there was some miscommunication between the two of us.

So much gaudy visual art — to the point of being pollution. The buses, the stores, the houses — everything is painted eye-grabbingly. In contrast, the U.S.A. is more focused in its commercial expression.

I like the customs of drinking coffee, and kissing a friend's cheek upon greeting.

July 27.

Yesterday at work we packed *Desafío* into packages of 1, 5, 10, and 15 to prepare them for today's mailing. The charge is 200 pesos (25¢) each, which I doubt covers the cost of manufacturing and packaging and mailing. It's not uncommon for congregations to put off paying for their newspapers for months or indefinitely, I'm told. It's tiring work, but it's made enjoyable by the comradery at the office. I'm reminded of the playfulness of the other coffee bean pickers in México: their whistling, shouting, laughing. In work, Colombians tend to focus more on relationships than on accomplishing a work goal.

July 28.

Yesterday I drove the van from the *OB* center to the post office. There we sorted packages according to weight and whether they were land, air, or international mail. We spent from 11:30 a.m. to about 4 p.m. there. I got a bit short with a woman at the

post office who said that the price of mailing, which was surprisingly high, was not a whole lot of money for an *Americano* such as myself. Diana taught me the *San Juanero*, a fun traditional dance, in the aisles of the post office. On the way home, I drove the van a bit close to a bus and smacked the right side mirror against it, causing it to bend against the van. The people in the van warned me to get far ahead of the bus as quickly as I could, which I did without too much coaxing.

July 30.

I get along well with all the workers here, who are within five years of my age. Diana says to me, “*No eres coqueto. Eres galán*” — “You’re not a flirt, you’re a gallant, a gentleman.” The others tell me that they get along very well with me; that I’m among the best of the *gringos* who’s come here.

Some of them joked with me, calling me a *bobo*, a fool, for being so eager to appease people here by giving them stuff (e.g., a shirt of mine, food, M & M’s), and wanting to pay for their lunch, etc. Oscar, however, told me that few *gringos* guard their hearts against the avarice of selfishness. “You’re one who has,” he told me.

The workers tell me that those who come down not knowing Spanish are *aburrido*, boring, and that it’s difficult for them to communicate regarding work that needs to be done. In addition, close relationships, which are central in the Latin American world, are impossible without verbal communication. I recommend that a knowledge of Spanish be a prerequisite to serving here.

July 31.

Yesterday I worked from 9 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., delivering *Desafío* to various churches and religious leaders in Bogotá. The last one was at 10:20 p.m. We got the people out of bed by chucking a pack of newspapers through a gate and against their door. Rude? Mmm ... yeah.

When we arrived at the office that night, we joined the rest of the workers, including Lindsay and his wife, in their 6 p.m.-to-midnight prayer meeting. After

that, I drove the van home, dropping several people off at their homes on the way. I didn't hit any buses. Don Alvaro took over at the driver's seat when I left the van to come into my Colombian family's house.

I spoke with Tom, the owner of *Aruba*, the store across the street. We talked regarding his experiences in other countries, including Nepal, Colombia, the States, Germany, Italy, etc. He told me he was an atheist, but he seems so moral; I wonder why he's concerned with trying to be good. He's heard first-hand from believers of various religions about their faith, so when the conversation turned to religion, I was cautious — “as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove.” I was careful to avoid Christianese, but did use the word “blessed” to describe myself because I could think of no better word. I told him that my purpose was basically to serve the one who made me, to be a friend of God and a friend of others. Because I've been blessed so much, I in turn aim to bless others, cross-culturally when those opportunities exist. What greater blessing can I give but to offer others the opportunity to be reconciled with their creator through Jesus?

I listened a lot, hearing his feelings about TV preachers, who often seem to treat the gospel as a commodity and God's blessing as something which is purchased with money or words. One of his relatives, who is a Christian, told him he was going to hell if he didn't accept Jesus, a blunt simplification which turned him off drastically. I've prayed for Tom, plan to visit him several times, and wonder if our meeting each other was arranged divinely. Of course it was.

Late in our conversation he told me of his loneliness, his fascination with mystery, his frustration with life as a store owner in Bogotá, and other things. If I were to stay here long, I'm sure Tom and his Colombian wife Alejandra would be good friends; I've grown to care for them. My perception of our relationship is that it is not conditional — I'm not befriending him in order to get him saved. Although I pray that a positive relationship commence between him and God soon, I'm not judging the success of our

friendship on its immediate results. This is the kind of person I believe our Lord has called me to befriend. My love for him mustn't be conditional, as the love of airport Hare Krishnas is.

I shaved off my beard and mustache of two years so I wouldn't scratch those I greet in the morning and say farewell to at the end of a day. We greet with a kiss on the cheek. In a sense, the beard was something I could hide behind.

Aug. 1.

Jairo, Jairito, Melba, Clara Valencia, Patricia and I are going to *El Bosque*, a club. I sunburned my back, ate grilled steak and chicken and an ice cream. I spent some time swimming and relaxing in the saunas and Turkish baths. Feel invigorated, like a new man.

Aug. 2.

I've been reading the manual for a financial computer program Lindsay received from someone. I'm also helping Melqui tear down the current radio studio so we can move it to the new house.

Tonight I'm in one of Martha Isabel's university classes, an accounting class, where I met a Christian who lived six years in Australia. The building is poorly constructed, of unfinished brick. The stairways are dimly lit, the ceiling is white stucco, the chairs are those of a U.S. grade school, the warped wooden door is mounted lopsided in its frame, the professor's table is flimsy, as big as a small foosball table. A single fluorescent bulb struggles to illuminate the room; wires dangle from a hole in the ceiling where a second one should be.

Thirty-five students are cramped shoulder to shoulder, knee to back into a room the size of the greenhouse room at Wendy's or Burger King. Although class is scheduled from 6:30 to 8 p.m., the professor rambled in at 6:45 and students still pass into the crowded room at 7 p.m. It's now 7:15 and the professor hasn't said a word to the class. He finally begins at 7:25. When the top edge of the door is touching its

frame, the bottom is a good four inches from it. I've had nightmares about college classes which aren't much different from this. A dog's yelp echoes from a trashy *barrio* street a ways down the mountain from the classroom's open window. We leave at 7:40 p.m. after a grueling 15 minutes of lecture.

The 8 p.m. class starts at 8:15. The professor speaks English, but with an accent. "Let's recontinue," he says. The professor is fun, but pronounces words a bit off.

I helped with the class, participating some in the conversations. We chatted afterwards, Danny and I, and he asked me to join in the class tomorrow. He asked me to help him teach it with him and I agreed.

After the bus dropped me at home, I walked across the street to chat with Tom.

I was thinking today about a statistic I heard, that the vast majority of people are saved when under 14 years old. Those over 14 who aren't Christians are much, much less likely to accept Jesus than those under 14. Therefore, some say, we should concentrate on the younger ones, who appear to be easier picking. But perhaps they are the ones to convert because the message is presented in a way only children would believe, with simplicity and hypocrisy and contradiction, the witnesses not having thought out their faith thoroughly or practiced it with integrity.

What we need is not to concentrate less on the 14+ age bracket, but to be mature and wise in our faith, acting it out with sincerity and integrity. Like the folks in the Bible.

I saw two 10-year-olds who looked like they were 35 — scraggly greasy hair, dirty ragged clothes, dark hard faces. *Gamines*. Drugs. Violence.

I saw a crazy man come off of a bus. He was bellowing, screaming at nobody in particular. Jesus lived and died for ones such as him. Thought about such people as he struggled for breath on the cross.

There appears to be no black-white racism. At least the light-skinned people I talk with say it's not a problem as it is in the States.

The women here are so attractive and they're easy to befriend. I'm not sure what they see in me, why they don't mind spending time with me.

Aug. 4.

Yesterday I taught English for about 20 minutes in a local university. The professor, Daniel, asked me to record 750 sentences for him to use later in class, which I've agreed to do. He wanted the voice of a native speaker, rather than his heavily accented voice. We talked about going out for a coffee after class sometime.

This morning Francisco told me that God told him he'd be going to and from many countries, as a missionary. He said God would provide him lots and lots of American money to support missionaries and to buy a nice vehicle in which to transport them. He plans on fasting for a while to hear God's voice more distinctly.

Francisco doesn't strike me as someone God would use in this way. When one uses the little he has with wisdom, the Lord often provides more for that person to use wisely. But I don't trust Francisco completely, not even in small financial matters. I'm hesitant. He showed me a ring and offered it to me for \$300. Later his wife offered it to me for \$150. When he stopped into Tom's *tienda* to buy something, he left with his purchases saying, with a serious, intense, eerie look on his face, "God bless you." Love that is so self-conscious, that draws such attention to itself, comes across as awkward.

Other things about Francisco — his and his son's unhealthy addiction to TV, for example (waking and being lulled to sleep by the tube, even on Sunday mornings) — make me question his believing that the Lord would use him in such a prominent way. The Lord, however, has chosen to use me, a very inferior vessel, to accomplish his will — sometimes in prominent ways. The Lord's ways (and man's ways) are befuddling to me.

A few days ago I was in a store eating fried chicken, potatoes, and vegetables when a woman in her 50s came up to my table. She asked me if I would give her my chicken bones and chicken skin. I gave her the rest of my chicken. She thanked me, without

looking me in the eye, and went to the next table, consolidating half-empty cups of Pepsi and scraps of food. How sad, to be past middle age and needing to beg food for yourself and your family.

I saw two huge lines again today, third day in a row, on the way to work. People waiting to pay into social security and people waiting to collect their pension, according to Francisco. Another person said that the lines were for housing applications. Huge lines — perhaps 250 people, more than a block long.

Yesterday I saw women outside a Catholic church — a beautiful work of stone architecture — selling candles and lottery tickets.

Yesterday a group of people came to the office here to borrow the counseling room for a prayer meeting. After expelling a woman from the room for having makeup and earrings, they began praying — shouting, stomping, bellowing, clapping. I can't help but think of the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:28, trying to get their god to move by shouting, dancing, and cutting themselves. I think of prayer more as communication between people and their creator, as the disciples chatted with their friend Jesus around a fire eating fish after sunset. Again, I'm in no position to condemn their manner of prayer, since I'm no expert on prayer.

August 6.

I remember someone telling me about a machine in Japan that looks like a priest, and which performs certain priestly tasks. I've met some people here who seem to act out their faith in the same way — like machines rather than people of flesh and blood and feelings and life.

Angela and I visited a Catholic cathedral yesterday. She commented about the confessional, as well as the statues, apparently condemning it all. We began a discussion about confession which lasted an hour. We jumped from James (“confess your sins to one another”), to Psalm, and to Acts. It was an enjoyable, animated discussion.

I found out yesterday that two *gamines* held a knife to Angela's face last month, demanding her ring. This morning Francisco and his wife prayed for a man who was kidnapped for ransom by guerrillas. In the newspaper, I saw a bloodied face on the front page. So it goes. People insist that Colombia isn't as dangerous as is believed outside the country, but it's difficult to believe otherwise in light of the facts. True, this country is not in the midst of all-out war, but it's certainly much more dangerous than, for example, Virginia or Upper Michigan.

I taught Patti and some of the others a few tricks in the PageMaker program which they weren't utilizing: master pages, page number markers to number pages automatically, defining styles so that body copy is imported in the periodical's correct style, and paragraph styles which automatically indent paragraphs and draw lines above and below it, if that is desired.

Aug. 8.

I joke (only half-jokingly) with Juanito, saying that he's addicted to TV as some are addicted to drugs. He laughs and says, "No." Sometimes he clicks off the TV and works on his studies.

Last night I went to a big mall, Unicentro, had a cheese sandwich, a chocolate-peanut cluster, and a beer. The Colombian beer is quite good — better than most of what one might find on the shelves of American grocery stores. After waiting for a bus for an hour and a half, I took one that dropped me off on a side street two blocks from my street (calle 129). I ran furiously to that main street, through darkened dirt alleys, past knife-wielding muggers and drug dealers, dodging gangsters with sawed-off shotguns and wicked looking eyes, leaping over cavernous potholes and uncovered manholes, my eyes and thoughts on the oasis of safety to be found on calle 129. I ran and prayed intently, selfishly, for my safety, looking behind, to the right, to the left, around.

When I got to the house I sat down to eat my cold dinner of lunchmeat and rice. I sat still for 20 minutes with food on my spoon, just feeling, just breathing and thinking of the day, Bogotá, myself; feeling unfulfilled, a little lonely, wanting someone to sit on a warm couch with me and chat, or not chat. Someone to say, “I understand, Ted.”

The people here pronounce “pizza” as /pipsa/ rather than /pitsa/. Some pronounce it /piksa/. The Spanish /t/ is very soft, pronounced interdently rather than alveolarly. The people unconsciously recognize that they need a slightly aspirated oral stop, so they choose either /p/ or /k/ over their soft /t/.

I’m not sure if I dislike more the potholes or Francisco’s erratic driving trying to avoid them.

I went with the family to pick up Juanito from his grandma’s house. One of the brothers there, about 35 years old, played chess with me and won (for the third time). After the game, he talked at me for 20 minutes, finishing every other sentence with a “¿Sí o no?” It’s as if he’s saying, “Am I not right?” 10 times a minute. Whew.

A girl was in the house, a philosophy student from a local university. She was here with a friend who’s a relative of the family. I got to talking with her about philosophy, about Hegel and Marx mostly. The parents, Francisco and Luz Marina, joined in the discussion. Francisco’s face was so serious, so angry. And he didn’t address the girl’s valid questions. He just talked, without listening to the girl, clobbering her figuratively with the Bible. Their theology is pretty good, and Marina has a good balance of scripture knowledge and experiential knowledge.

Some people here often don’t listen and discuss. They preach, not waiting for feedback. Some of what is said is valuable, such as the heart pictures depicting various Christian counseling approaches which Luz Marina just showed me (“pure revelation”). But much is just preaching. Talking and arguing so that I’ll agree with them. The parents preached their “atheist” guest into submission this afternoon. She had little opportunity to say “no” to the “¿sí o no?” that was put to her.

Half of the curtains in Bogotá are little more than gauze. Ninety percent of the curtains in this apartment complex are see-through. It makes me wonder how see-through my curtains are; who's seen me change into my pajamas?

Food in the refrigerator isn't covered and foods that say "keep refrigerated" are left on the dining room table overnight. I sometimes put stuff back into the refrigerator. I'm careful to open and close the fridge, since I've shocked myself half a dozen times on the door. I've learned to grab the door, momentarily, by the painted parts.

A knock came to the office door early in the morning, before 9 a.m. The man I let in the door slipped quickly past me, falling to his knees in a little alcove at the base of the stairway, and began praying in earnest. As I was to find out a bit later, he had experienced some numbness in his shoulder and sought out a shelter in which to pray. He chose the *Operación Bendición* office. He considered it a house of God, a house of prayer.

Apparently the woman who left the prayer group on account of her earrings did so of her own accord after being told to remove them. Perhaps it was pride on her part. Perhaps it was unnecessary legalism on the requestor's part. What would I have done? Hmm. If she were my wife, I'd join her, support her. If I were the woman, though, I'm not sure if I'd submit to the man or stay and pray with pieces of metal in my lobes. I think a lot would depend on the spirit of the man asking me to remove the earrings. I'd need the Lord's discernment.

Time keeps slipping by as I try to grasp that I'm in Bogotá, Colombia, South America. I find myself struggling with the same things I struggle with at home. Being on the "mission field" doesn't exempt me from the temptations to lust, be cynical, be spiritually lazy. If anything, the foreign environment makes it easier to be disobedient, I've found. I do enjoy the opportunities to talk with people who aren't Christians. The

most significant discussions include ones in which we discuss Jesus and his involvement with people, his creation.

I wonder what kind of husband I'll be. I hope my wife-to-be is praying for me. Imagine life with a woman of God's choosing (Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord") — waking with her; working, playing, praying, wrestling, cooking, disciplining children, making love, camping, chatting, reading, arguing, discovering new things together. I pray it's the blessing God's planned it to be, not the curse I've often (too often) seen it to be. Better is some loneliness as a single adult than misery as a married man, so I've heard. It is true that "hope deferred make the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life" (from Proverbs 13:12). But the marriage arranged by one's Creator.... Mmm. It'll take some work to live up to the idealistic dreams I have.

Aug. 9.

The car wouldn't start this morning. It seems that all the gas evaporated from the tank. The air filter cover is attached with a hex nut rather than a wingnut (I think that's what that thing is called). The front hood of this car doesn't stay open, by either a spring mechanism or an iron rod. Francisco has to hold it open with his shoulder as he unscrews the bolt with a pair of pliers. He headed off with a half gallon milk carton to get gasoline.

It's a standard drive car, the stick poking out where the radio should be. The side windows slide from front to back, like the plexiglass door of a bathroom shower stall. The windshield wipers are little more than a piano octave long — tiny things. The doors are kept from overextending when opened by seatbelt-like fabric, and the seatbelts themselves are fastened to the car's frame, never used. Renault has made little more than a Colombian-manufactured Yugo. I understand that last year was the final year of these little things' production.

Let me call it culture shock. Its symptoms are cynicism, some anger. I need to let off steam.

I just got back from the university. I have a theory. Instead of planning and preparing for their futures, most Colombians expect stuff to be given them or they weasel it from others. Ouch. Maybe I'm a little rough on Colombians.

I made two tapes for the English professor (750 phrases which I carefully pronounced, two times each). When he asked me to do it, I thought it was a favor being asked of a friend. I'm feeling now that he was using me — as the people in the office suspected. He'll be selling them along with a booklet he put together.

Isabel, a friend from the office, is dating a guy who's not a Christian. She's ready to marry the fellow. I warned her about the danger of marrying someone who doesn't care about God, and she smiled. (I couldn't help but think of the phrase, "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without good sense" from Proverbs 11:22). I asked her why she was smiling about committing a sin (disobeying God's clear directives), and she said she had been dating him for eight years. I couldn't possibly understand. Maybe not.

I met two girls at the university and they talked about a recent party — eight fifths of strong alcohol among 15 people, dancing in the *calle*, and so on. The one girl reads tarot cards, learned from a witch, but considers witchcraft very bad. "It's just a game. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't." They talked of the pretty girls in Colombia, the great food, the variety of climates, the pride of the Venezuelans, the scorn of the Americans toward Colombians. Although physically Colombian women are extraordinarily attractive, in general, I'm starting to be repulsed by their fickleness and vanity. I don't care so much for the fatty, oily, sugary food — Mexican food and my cooking are better. Variety of climates? — two hours from here one doesn't need a sweater. Great. Give me four seasons any day over cool all year around and two hours away hot all year around.

I bought a compact disc by Jerry Rivera, a 19-year-old who's in the same category as singer Gloria Estefan. When I told the people at the office, they were astounded. "There are subliminal messages on it," they said. I asked how they knew that. No evidence. I asked them about the lyrics and they said some of them were bad. For example? No examples. But besides, they said, that's the kind of music they play in night clubs. Guilty by association.

How odd culture shock is. Even Ted, Mr. I-Appreciate-Other-Cultures, is affected by it. Part of it is my limited Spanish vocabulary, I think. It's not God's will that I be cynical. Let us find out how my Lord wants me to respond to these experiences.

I spent a full day, until after 6 p.m., working on the new radio studio, removing and saving old nails from old 2 x 4s, sawing the lumber to fit the right dimensions, nailing the planks into place. It really is rewarding work.

A couple of times I missed the bent recycled nail and hit the warped and pocked head of the hammer against my fingers. I pounded the next few nails a little harder than necessary, venting frustration. Grr.

Aug. 11.

I went to the bank today with Carlitos to cash a check for 1 million pesos (about \$1500). They took his ID, snapped a photo of him, and had him wait 10 minutes. The truth is, it was easier than I was thinking it might be.

One of the tellers had plastic bands, about 10 inches long, wrapped around her wrists, covering part of her blouses' sleeves. Carlitos tells me that it is to protect her clothing from wear and tear which might occur as a result of having it rub against the counter. He says some workers in federal offices use them also.

Notes from yesterday — some of the university students appear not to care about their studies. Martha Isabel didn't show up at school for half of her classes last week and didn't hand in her week's assignment. She doesn't study. Other students said that from Friday to Monday, they expect to party, not study. It seems that students start

out strong in the early grades with their textbooks and homework, but by the time they reach college, textbooks are expensive and scarce, and study habits have trailed off. Again, this may be demonstrative of the Latin American mentality — not preparing so much for the future because it seems so uncertain. Is this fatalism? Are we U.S. Americans products of a Protestant work ethic and mentality?

The alphabet of Latin America is somewhat different from ours in the States. It's not worse, or corrupted, just different. The letter A is written like a D. And our number 1 is written here like a L. The serifs are exaggerated, the flairs accentuated. I've seen esthetics supersede function in many things, including forms of communication (the alphabet, signatures, advertisements, signs, sides of buses).

Several times Angela has said "It's not my fault" when something goes wrong, instead of asking, "How can I help?" The times she was defensive it was obvious she was innocent. I doubt that this says anything about Colombians. It just says something about Angela.

When a seat opens up on a crowded bus, people have stood over them, as if guarding them, rather than sitting in them. I'm not sure if they're just following examples set by parents, or if they don't want to give the message, "I'm tired from standing!" or if they want the seat to cool down and lose traces of the previous sitter's occupation.

I heard a while back of an experiment performed in a submarine. Apparently the men were having a hard time adjusting to their beds after the previous sleep shift let out (sailors take 8-hour sleep shifts, three men using each bunk during a 24-hour period). The reason for the difficulty, it turns out, was that body heat from the previous occupant remained trapped in the mattress, making the next sleeper feel as if he were sleeping in someone else's bed. Some entrepreneur designed beds from a material which didn't retain body heat for very long, and the problem was solved. So perhaps the idea that the bus riders don't want to feel the previous person's heat is not

unreasonable. Melqui confirmed this, later on, and added that people also are waiting for germs to die or dissipate. Regardless, it's somewhat frustrating seeing an open seat, which I can't sit in, which I want to sit in.

One of the girls at the school said she doesn't like blacks. "They smell funny. And I smell funny after I'm with them," she said.

Luz Marina told me that there's a saying which one repeats after a long hard day at work: "I worked like a negro." She added, then, "Funny saying, since blacks are known for their laziness."

Aug. 12.

Yesterday, after the really cynical day, I awoke with Steven Curtis Chapman's "The Great Adventure" going through my head. What an encouraging song ("Saddle up your horses, we've got a trail to blaze into the wild blue yonder with God's amazing grace. We've got to follow our leader into the great unknown. This life is like no other. This is the great adventure.")— just what I needed. Very early this morning, one of Out of the Grey's songs ("He is not silent. He is not whispering. We are not quiet — we just aren't listening.") was going through my head. I awoke at 3 a.m. or so with that song. I believe these songs are being brought to mind by the Holy Spirit. One is so encouraging and one so convicting, as if they pierce right to my soul. Both songs are so appropriate for right now.

Aug. 14.

Lindsay came to the new office yesterday with four men from New Zealand, his homeland. There were two carpenters, a plumber, and a man who is older than the others, a man who has had a great deal of experience running retreats for problem children. Lindsay showed them around the house, including the new studio, and then took them to the school in Cartucho — I accompanied them. As we were on our way to Cartucho, at about 5 p.m., Lindsay took us all to eat chicken. After Cartucho, he dropped me off at the *Operación Bendición* home where Carlos lives. Every weekday

Carlos serves soup and bread to the street people. A mime group from Florida was there and performed for indigents for about 30 minutes.

When the pastor-leader of the group prayed, he used the phrase “Father God” as if it were a punctuation mark — once or twice each sentence. I wonder if he talks with other people like that, or only his Creator.

None of the mimes spoke Spanish. (One spoke a little bit.) One of the street girls, 12-year-old Jennifer, sniffed glue from time to time during the presentation. She turned to a mime who sat next to her, the pastor’s son, and asked him his name and if he spoke Spanish. He tried to ignore her, once in a while giving her an unexpected sneer, as if he didn’t want her bugging him. She was disrupting his ministering, after all. What a message he was sending.

Later, his dad spoke with the girl in shattered Spanish. Using wrong words and grammar, he spoke as if he were the girl’s pal. She said something about sniffing glue, *chupar pegamento*, and he thought she had said something about chocolate. He joked with Jennifer about chocolate for a while, until he got bored, the girl giggling at him for reasons other than his humor. When I had had enough of the miscommunication, I explained to the pastor what the girl had really said. After he left, the girl smiled and asked her friend, “Did you understand him? I didn’t understand a thing he said.” I imagine he felt that sincerity and good intentions were enough, but in this case they weren’t. He will probably have some good anecdotes for his church back in Florida, though.

That evening I joined the group for chicken, and then walked to Carrera Caracas to hitch a bus home. It was late, 10:30 p.m., and I was alone at 23rd street, a dangerous area with prostitutes and cartoneros. This is living on the edge.

I chatted with Melqui about the pastor’s son’s attitude and he told me that his was a typical response for gringos — they come with good intentions, but when faced with the ugly reality of Bogotá (and reality can certainly appear ugly in Bogotá) they often

retreat into themselves and relate to natives as if they were TV characters or holograms. They go home then and recount their experiences of ministering to street kids and *cartoneros* in South America.

Today I'm on a youth retreat which Melqui invited me on. We were to leave at 6:30 a.m., but the bus didn't move till after 9 a.m. Even Melqui was frustrated with that. We stopped several times on the way, making the three-and-a-half hour trip in five brief hours.

Aug. 15.

Still at the youth retreat, in the mountains several hours north of Bogotá.

Cold shower. Short phrase. Only three syllables. If it were embedded in a paragraph, one would skip easily over it without grasping the chilling reality of it — of passing from a warm blanket to a shower of ice. Refreshing.

Bogotanos seem to be very expressive — in their interpersonal communication and in their worship. It seems to be appropriate, neither unfocused nor cacophonous (there's a \$10 word).

I met a girl here, 18 years old, and had a wonderful conversation with her. We walked around the wasteland behind the camp, chatting about God's creation, the Indian burial mounds in the hills which surround the camp, romance, cultural differences, careers. What a beautiful woman, a lover of nature and its Creator. My emotions felt as if they were resting in a relaxing hot tub, warm and peaceful. Cristina's smile is gentle and her eyes full of compassion and sincerity.

Although I enjoy singing praise to the Lord in Spanish, there's something more intimate about communicating in my mother tongue of English. It's tough talking about significant things in Spanish — I lack the vocabulary and stumble over grammar. I understand more clearly now the importance of having Scripture and worship songs in one's mother tongue. Although, for example, certain Mexicans speak Spanish in

addition to their mother tongue of, say, Totonac, a Totonac version of the Bible might reach deeper into their hearts.

This afternoon a woman preached about the Holy Spirit and his healing love. She suggested that those who felt lonely or troubled come to the front for prayer. Paul speaks very little Spanish, is experiencing marital problems (he's married to a Colombian woman who's also 24 years old), and was robbed of \$70 by two policemen last week against a wall. I asked him if he wanted to go forward and he said yes. I prayed for him and shortly another man came to him and prayed fervently over him, also laying hands on him, for a good 10 minutes. Paul's body shook as he cried, the Lord ministering healing to his broken heart. He's been showing signs of depression during the weekend — sleeping a lot, not smiling or communicating much, some cynicism and lack of hope.

As I prayed during a time of worship and prayer I looked over to the Colombian man to my left. He was weeping, eyes closed and head in his hands, blood streaming through his fingers into a large puddle on the floor. At first I thought of stigmata, bleeding from the hands as Jesus did. He didn't seem to realize he was bleeding so profusely. I brought a roll of toilet paper from the bathroom and helped him clean up, and he was grateful. He later explained that the bleeding wasn't so mysterious, that when he was young he awoke at night, his sheets soaked in blood. It's happened only a few times since. He's an artist and works with iron and stone.

A girl is here from Germany also. There are 150-some Colombians (16-28 years old), two gringos (Paul and I), and one German woman. She's helping Paul by translating the messages from Spanish into English. I'd like to help, but I have trouble shifting from Spanish to English quickly. It's as if I'm transferring an immense lexicon from one place to another, plugging and unplugging this immense volume of words and grammatical rules. She speaks German, English, Spanish, Italian, and who knows what else.

Aug. 16.

Last night we had a bonfire. We sang praises to our Lord and prayed from about midnight until 1 a.m. At about 3 a.m., after about two hours in bed, all the women — about 50 or 60 — came to the men's bedrooms and sang two songs, serenading us. It was incredible, as if they were singing with one voice. The words had to do with their wanting us to come out to visit with them and let them see our mussed-up hair.

The theme of this camp has to do with the Holy Spirit — his personality, his functions, his working among and within us now. Last night a woman spoke of prophets as seers, people with a vision from God. Several times people have had opportunities to practice prophecy, and have been encouraged to recount visions they've had during worship services and explain to individuals what they sense the Lord impressing on their hearts.

Today, this morning, we sang praises in a roofless patio within the main complex. What liberty I felt as I contemplated and responded to the magnificence of the mercy and love of our Lord. I was freed to move my hands and arms, bounce a bit, sing in various languages and even shout (not very loudly, but louder than I normally speak).

Aug. 17.

On the way home last night I asked the girls on the bus if they'd repeat the serenade songs which they had sung the night before so I could record it. They agreed and sang it for me and the guys on the bus. That started a competition between the men and women on the bus which lasted nearly an hour. From the back of the bus the guys would sing to the girls and then, from the front of the bus, the girls would sing to the guys.

Later in the evening, when I talked with Tom at his store, he asked me if that event seemed unusual for any reason. I said yes, Americans from the States don't serenade each other. He added that we also don't have a base of songs of that type which everybody knows. That type of expression is not recognized as part of our U.S. culture.

When I got home last night at 9:30 p.m., I went into Francisco and Luz Marina's bedroom to say hi. I faced away from the television, which was showing an explicit pornographic scene. I'm not sure if it was merely a 15-second sex scene in an otherwise quality program or if the whole show were pornographic. I retreated to my room to sleep before much more of the program had passed.

It's such a common sight that I forget to write about it — people picking through rubbish and garbage piles. Last night a man was digging through the stuff that was picked up this morning. He was on one side of a fence and a guard was staring at him from the darkness on the other side of the fence.

Natalia has had a cough for about a month. She's been given palm oil, but not been taken to the physician, despite their being provided free to those on the \$3-per-month national health care plan.

At the camp there was a man, maybe 21 years old, who had the face of a joyful, happy Tom Cruise and the body of my nephew Mike — misformed arms, legs, hips. He was always smiling, touching lovingly and sincerely. When we talked, he'd put his arm around me, sometimes putting a hand on my belly, full of joy and compassion.

I've found that some people get attached to me very easily. Cristina at the camp, for example, wrote me a note saying, "You're a marvelous person, and very sweet. In the short time that we've known each other I've grown to care about you a lot. You are a very special friend." When we sang a song together, she put her arm around me. She seemed to seek me out, to sit with me during preaching and singing. Our hugs were more than mere ritual.

This readiness to love is unusual, not just in comparison with the relative reluctance of Americans to demonstrate affection, but also when compared with what Lindsay said about Colombians. He noted that Colombians tend to consider others "guilty until proven innocent." (For this reason, in part, U.S. citizens are easy to rob, their being trusting and gullible toward Colombian con-men.)

Other “telegrams” I received during the weekend retreat include (written in English by an attractive young Colombian woman, Marcela), “Hello Ted: You’re a very kind person. And I felt very happy to know you. Have a nice travel.” Another says, “Although I met you just a few days ago, you are very special. I pray that you press on with your plans in the work of God. Blessings.” I received 11 such notes from *amigos* and *amigas* over the weekend.

Edith told me a week or so ago that I’m the first guy she’s met who uses hair spray. I’ve met others, though, including Julio the costeño at camp, who put stuff in their hair to tame it. Her observations are interesting. I wonder if it interferes with my relationship with Colombians. I doubt it.

The country is broken into regions. People from these regions include costeños (who are seen as brash, loud, playful), paisos (who speak with a Castilian-like lisp). Blacks from the Atlantic coast are seen as lazy while those from the Pacific coast are seen as industrious.

Again this morning I was greeted by the loud TV preacher. If I didn’t understand his words, I’d believe he was ranting mad (read “insane”). He shouts and runs on and on, speaking quickly and angrily. Whew! Maybe the family needs that kind of harsh preaching to atone for last night’s sensual program. (Francisco and Luz Marina said that they slept very little last night, partly because of the movie, awakened by the Lord to pray, they said.)

I’ve been complimented by Colombians on my simple manner of dressing. Cristina said that it’s not as self-conscious as many Colombians’ manner of dress. Many women, for example, dress up and put on makeup before going out in public. At work I’ve found that many of the female employees put on lipstick and other makeup at about 5:30 p.m., shortly before they head home.

In addition, I’ve been complimented on my outgoing, bold, “extroverted” personality. Apparently many gringos close up, feeling insecure and consequently

disassociating themselves from those whom they came to serve. Although in the States I have my swings of introversion and extroversion, here I tend toward the latter, for reason I don't quite understand.

I've also been complimented on my lack of attitude that "the U.S. culture is the best." Instead of comparing the States with Colombia, I try to accept and appreciate the ways of these people. That attitude does not go unnoticed.

Aug. 18.

I'm finding myself able to express myself physically with more ease than I had been able to in the States. I can touch people to express my care and comfortableness with them; I can play with Francisco and Luz Marina's kids, tickling and playing with their noses, feet, hair. I kiss the women on the cheek in greeting, a thing which is sexual in nature (I don't kiss men's cheeks), but innocent, not erotic. I'm able to communicate better now that I can express things with touch as well as with words. And people who I touch don't flinch or pull back in rejection. Both giver and receiver of touch seem to thrive on it.

My dad's court hearing ended yesterday. According to tonight's phone call, everything went as well as it could have. My dad, who acts out his faith in Jesus in word and in his actions (at home, at work, in the community), was fired a while back and got word that he might lose his medical license (he's a physician). After exhausting all his options, and consulting a lawyer he obtained by calling Regent's Law School, he filed a lawsuit. He's in my prayers and thoughts. I can't think of a more painful trial, except for his divorce 15-some years ago.

It's my brother's birthday. *Feliz cumpleaños.*

I'm in the process of buying \$525 worth of emeralds. I'm a bit nervous that I'm throwing my money away, and that they might use my credit card number somehow illegally. My father invested money in cows once — cows which were to have given birth to big calves through artificial insemination. Like father, like son.

Last night I made spaghetti for Tom, his wife Alejandra, and Diana from work. Tom, a Canadian, ate all his and the rest of his wife's. The two Colombian women didn't eat much of theirs. How different tongues are. They said they loved it, but that they weren't accustomed to so much garlic (which I barely tasted). I used some 1978 red wine in the sauce (it cost 1350 pesos — less than \$2). It was only fair, since I couldn't locate oregano and had only fair beef.

I accompanied Diana to her house in a taxi, a 30-minute ride. We sat close together and chatted. I intentionally didn't put my arm around her, although the moment called for it (remember the expressive Colombian culture). I had asked Tom, who has called himself an atheist, if he'd let me pray before we ate, and he said that that would be great. He lent me 10,000 pesos (about \$12) to pay for the taxi. After dropping Diana off at her house, I took the taxi back to Tom's store and walked to my apartment, which is just across the street.

Tonight Francisco almost crashed his car. He swerved to avoid one of the 15 million Bogotano potholes, into the path of a car passing us from behind. It screeched its breaks. It was a close one. The driver yelled at us as he drove up alongside our Renault. We've all heard stories of people being shot dead in Bogotá for driving poorly. So it goes. Just outside my apartment a husband and father was shot several times because he pulled out in front of someone. So it goes. Francisco's daughter, Natalia, described it in detail.

I gather Bogotá is more of a matriarchal society, judging from conversations and observations at home and in others' homes.

I arrived at work (30 minutes from my apartment) at 7 a.m. and worked till 5 p.m., without breaking for lunch, on the computer today. I'm helping to lay out *Desafío, Operación Bendición's* monthly newsletter. Lindsay complimented me today, which is encouraging. He told me I've adjusted well and that I've been a help in their time of much need. The truth is, the timing for my being here seems to be very good,

what with the moving of offices, the newspaper, the construction and all. I really enjoy editing and planning the newspaper — that was my undergraduate minor and I worked several years on my university newspaper and some time with the city rag. Time flew today. It really did.

I may be preaching on Saturday at a friend's church, and plan to go to church and the zoo with Cristina on Sunday. *No soy coqueto; soy galán.* I'm a gentleman. I can hear Diana's "No, Ted."

Angela joked about being robbed today, during a phone conversation confirming an interview I have with a pastor tomorrow. When I found out it was a joke I almost hung up on her. I wonder why I was so flustered....

Aug. 20.

To fulfill the requirements of a course I'm currently taking at Regent University, I must interview 15 pastors regarding the spiritual environment in Bogotá. I've scheduled seven so far, but four fell through, and one of the seven terminated the interview halfway through because he was in a hurry.

Part of the problem lies with those who are helping me to schedule the interviews, but sometimes the pastors just don't show up. Yesterday, for example, I was to meet a pastor at 7:30 a.m. at the new office. I was there at 7:30 a.m., but he turned up at 8:30 a.m. — for a different meeting. A week ago I showed up to a 10:30 a.m. interview at 10:30 a.m., but the pastor was away on an errand and returned an hour later. This is a real challenge getting these interviews. In fact, I dreamed about it last night and awoke thinking about it.

I stopped in a Catholic cathedral yesterday, saw the architecture, the statues, and listened to the pipe organ. The organist, oddly enough, was playing Lionel Richie's song, "Hello." The song, if I remember correctly, is about a man who falls for somebody without knowing that person's name or much about that person. How appropriate, I told myself, for a Catholic church in Colombia. Ironic.

I wonder if the prophecies Francisco and Luz Marina received regarding their prominent position in the future were false. Or if they've misinterpreted true prophecies. Or maybe our Lord is preparing to pull something intended to confound the wise. (Can you find the huge assumption located at the end of the previous sentence?).

Aug. 21.

“Sencillo, humilde, poco malgenio, se adapta facilmente a las circunstancias,” says Gloria Avendaño; these are qualities they see in me which they appreciate: simplicity, humility, maintaining a good attitude, adapting easily to circumstances. Future visitors to Colombia would be wise, I'd think, to pray for these qualities and to practice them. I'd suggest that those who come to Colombia think of themselves as servants, students, rather than as American missionaries who can help out the foreigners.

Two nights ago I spent three or four hours with Cristina, a girl I met at the youth camp from last weekend. At 6 p.m., after work, she took me to the pastor of a small (60-member) congregation, so I could interview him. Although he tended to speak in generalizations, the interview went well. Apparently half of the congregation are new Christians, many having come to the Lord through his witness.

Afterwards, we went for a walk, stopped in a Catholic church (the one where the organist was playing Lionel Richie's song “Hello”), and then went to a mall for pizza. We talked about our faith in Jesus, our both being virgins (she was surprised that a 26-year-old *Norteamericano* could still be a virgin), and our favorite Scripture passages. She said it is better to remain single than to be married to the wrong person. A hard truth.

Three red vans are parked outside our apartment, in our parking lot. Today someone was killed with a big knife, just outside my window. So it goes. The police are cleaning up and investigating.

The TV's on now, again. The laugh track sounds like a herd of gobbling turkeys. Such exaggerated laughing for such lame attempts at humor. Pathetic.

Aug. 23.

What a day. I spent pretty much the whole day, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., with Cristina, the short girl I met at last weekend's youth retreat. We went to church, Monserrati (a Catholic church atop a mountain; we ascended by cable car), a park, a movie (we didn't have enough money, so we didn't actually get into the theater), and visited a mass at a church downtown. We had a water fight in the park. I lost.

About five healthy, strong male beggars asked me for money. They seemed to single me out, because of my *gringo*-ness. Although they didn't stink, they were all pretty dirty. I get to feel defensive — "Why pick on me?" I'd ask silently. "I've got no paying job either. I've got little to offer you."

Aug. 23.

The interviews are going pretty rough. Those who help me arrange them consistently exaggerate. "I've got three interviews lined up," they'd say and I'd get one. Last week I had one set up for 7:30 a.m. and the pastor arrived an hour late, and consequently had other engagements. Last Friday I was to meet Angela at the new office at 4:15 p.m. to go to an interview. We didn't actually leave the house until an hour later. I've got to be quite diligent, to the point of being aggressive, in order to get these things completed.

People here pray before meals. They consistently pray out loud, whether they're praying as a group or as individuals. The prayers seem to me a relic of their Catholic heritage. They're short, nearly always pretty much the same, said as a Catholic might repeat the *Pater Noster* or their rosary by rote. It's as if they're thinking, "Let's get this thing over with so I can eat." Several times I've been praying before a meal, quietly, and my Colombian friends interrupt in vocal prayer, assuming that I'm waiting for someone else to pray; that I'm not praying.

Maybe five times I've been in a bus when people enter through the back door with a big load. If the bus is filled, they pass their money up through the crowded bus, from person to person, until the money arrives at the bus driver. The change is then passed from person to person until it reaches the passenger. What trust, no?

Last Saturday *Operación Bendición* conducted an *abrigada* — a health brigade at *Lucero Alto*, a lower-class suburb. There were half a dozen barbers, three dentists, and four physicians. Although the bus was to have picked me up at 7:30 a.m. from the office, it arrived at 8:30. (I'm slow — I should have assumed such, hmm?) Anyway, the brigade seemed a success. One of the pastors I've interviewed said that often the medicines given to clients are in turn sold a few blocks away to drug dealers. I'm not sure of any other way of conducting the brigades, though, to ensure that those who need medication receive it and those who don't aren't able to profit from their deception.

Fredy dressed up as a clown, Botoncito, and entertained the kids. There must have been nearly 100 kids, with their parents.

Aug. 24.

"Do you like black people?" Francisco asked me.

"I've got some friends who have black skin," I replied.

"I don't," he said with a smile. He may have been joking.

Aug. 25.

I'm really not sure how it happens, but nearly every time I ride a bus, I leave dirtier than I had been upon entering. Grease stains on my fingers, army green paint on my pants, dirt on my sleeves. It can't be avoided.

There's a sticker on the inside wall of the bus: *Aquí somos Católicos y no vamos a cambiar de religión! Por favor no insista. Gracias. Católicos fueron nuestros padres. Católicos seremos para siempre.* "We're Catholics here and we're not going to change

our religion! Please don't try to change us. Thank you. Our parents were Catholics. We'll be Catholics forever."

I've seen the Egyptian "Isis" symbol in several places in the city. I'm not sure if those who draw them have chosen the symbol consciously or if they just like the way it looks. I'm not sure what it means, but it probably has something to do with an Egyptian goddess, Isis or something.

Last night I made spaghetti for three of the four New Zealanders who are in town for three months. They're trained in carpentry and plumbing; they're fixing up the house and will work on the school in Cartucho and the boys' farm in Funsá. One of the men has had experience counseling abused children, which includes the majority of street kids here. Angela told me of her experience as a camp counselor at a retreat in Funsá. One of the girls in her cabin talked in her sleep, saying, "Daddy, get off of me! You're hurting me!" Another girl had welts on her skin from beatings.

But back to the spaghetti. Since we bought Colombian pasta, it was like glue soup. It was a miserable experience, saved only by the garlic in the tomato sauce. I've been told by others only to buy imported spaghetti, and now I understand their reasoning.

If things had gone as planned, I would have been home by now. Things, however, have gone better than expected, I'm told by Lindsay, and so he's asked me to stay a week more. I accepted at once.

Desafío, Operación Bendición's monthly periodical, needs a lot of work to be up to American standards. I've been able to help out by teaching the women doing layout how to better utilize their program, PageMaker. Now it seems they need to be taught about page design — the graphic design aspect. I plan to draw up a stylebook of some sort for them in the next few days. In addition, I will be sending information and photo books (which they really need) here once I return to the States.

I've been able to help design some of the pages, including the front page. The periodical needs some sort of unification, some way to present the information in a

more organized, less cluttered manner. I've suggested standardizing column widths — instead of five columns on one page and six or three on another, maintain five columns on all pages.

It strikes me as remarkable that for quite a while I had intended to work with foreign mission agencies, to help them modernize their publication departments. I'm doing now during this short-term project what I sensed God calling me to do a year ago as a career. It's difficult to know how to respond, other than in gratefulness that the Lord involves himself so intimately with me, letting me in on what he has for me before carrying it out.

Yesterday I saw a man and a Doberman. The man was clawing through a pile of rubbish, bags of trash, putting the food waste directly into his mouth. He didn't appear retarded or insane. It's hard to imagine someone in his right mind — a man with flesh, blood, dreams, fears, feelings just like mine — humiliating himself in such a way just to feed his belly.

The Doberman's fur was shiny and the animal walked very sophisticatedly. Its master walked the dog right by the man. I've seen people digging through garbage looking for food several times, and twice people have taken the scraps I left after eating at a restaurant.

Many Colombians (Melqui has confirmed this) have neurotic light bulb problems. When I arrived here at Francisco and Luz Marina's house there weren't any lights in the hall or in the sink room for the first week (I bought two as a gift after week one). At the old office there are fewer and fewer bulbs daily, which is really inconvenient at night when it's time to go home. There are four bathrooms, for example, and none of them has a single light bulb. To my *Americano* mind, it makes absolutely no sense. At the new office there were no bulbs, and few light fixtures, when we first moved in. Now about half of the receptacles have bulbs, which cost less than 50¢ each.

People also purchase things one at a time, rather than in bulk — one cigarette (extremely common), one roll of toilet paper, two eggs. This seems to reinforce the theory that Bogotanos don't plan so much for the future, but take each day or week as it comes. Tom, the Canadian store owner, has told me that people call in the mornings to have two eggs and a bag of milk delivered. They just wait until it's needed instead of planning nine hours in advance.

It's surprising how I can communicate so fluently in Spanish, considering I first began studying the language when I was 15 years old. Our Lord is good.

Aug. 26.

A pastor I interviewed said that one of *Operación Bendición's* main weaknesses is in the leadership. He pointed out that Lindsay appears to be directing *Operación Bendición* as a father, perhaps patronizingly. He also added that his son-in-law Jorge lacks a merciful heart, and that several valuable members of the *OB* team have left as a result. The pastor seemed truly concerned about the leadership — Lindsay's lack of solid, loving leadership team members. Jorge, he said, does a lot but despite his dynamism accomplishes very little. I'd like to disagree with that statement, since I'm on the inside, but I really can't.

Aug. 27.

Last night I went with Cristina to a Bible meeting at a small church. We planned to stay from 7:30 p.m. until 8:15 p.m. Wouldn't you figure it started at 8:15? We planned to sit in the back so that we could leave early to join Melqui and the New Zealanders at *Tio Tom's*, a restaurant which has a mechanical bull. Well, one thing led to another and I ended up playing keyboard during the song service and consequently sat right in front until 10 p.m. I couldn't leave. The message, supported by many Bible passages, was about asking of God and his being faithful and eager to respond — just what Cristina was needing to hear.

Afterwards we ate *arepas* and yoghurt and then went to wait for my bus. None showed up. I ended up taking a taxi home at 11:30 p.m., for 2,500 pesos.

Yesterday I helped extensively with *Desafío*, helping Patricia and Edith lay out pages and helping Lindsay's daughter Missy reformat a 30-page text which dealt with health and food. The interview I had yesterday was heavy — I had planned on a 30-minute talk, but it ended up being more than one and a half hours.

I went with Jorge, Melqui, and one of the New Zealanders to the bank today, to get some money. On the way back, I bought a burger at *El Corral* and began to eat it in the car. During the trip, I didn't really notice Jorge's getting colder and less friendly. At the house, Melqui pulled me aside and told me a quote found in Colombia: "Those who eat alone, die alone."

I feel some that I've been losing my nationalistic pride. There are things about Colombia that I'll really miss, I think, including the people and the lifestyle. The lifestyle has more of a feminine outlook, I think — not harshly goal-oriented or capitalistic as we tend to be in the States. Instead, people tend to savor the moments, generally taking conflicts gracefully as they come.

Aug. 28.

Yesterday I went to Jurassic Park (the movie, not the island) with Cristina. It was in English with Spanish subtitles. About half the time I let my eyes sink to the bottom of the screen to read the words there, rather than just watch and listen. Audience response here was more dynamic than I found it to be in the States. Viewers laughed and yelped *en mass*.

I'm at a mall now, at *Unicentro*. There's a big 70s-fashion movement here. Many of the women wear tight striped pants which flare out at the heel. Some of the frilly shirts also flare out at the cuff, 70s-style. Dogs are allowed in malls here, apparently. I've seen several, in various malls.

I'm feeling pretty melancholic. Colombia feels so distant, unreal, right now. Cristina used a term which means "mirage" to describe our friendship. It seems real all right, but will be only memories within a few days. I can't help but feel as if I'm an observer here, looking on, serving when I can, but remaining detached. Even my close friendships with Melqui and Cristina seem so exterior. I think I've been strongly affected by Colombia, perhaps only temporarily, but I still feel as if I'm on the outside looking in. How I want to experience this country and culture and people. I'd love to dive in, swim and splash around, but feel as if I'm strapped to the deck of a boat. I wonder if this is normal.

Jesus. The Jewish culture, although he spent 30-some years in it, might have felt foreign to him as well. Grief and melancholy he might have felt far from the purity of his home. Has he really felt sorry for having had made man? Sorry that he'd be sending his offspring to this fallen world to redeem it? Sorry that Jesus would be stripped of clothes, dignity, and flesh? Such severe mercy for mankind.

I think I'll miss this culture. Now I'm missing certain aspects of my home culture. Soon I'll be missing aspects of this culture. What an odd position to be in. Not at ease in either place. Maybe this is just a phase. Maybe not.

Aug. 31.

I haven't felt like writing for a few days, but it's time to put down some of my ideas and observations.

I awoke last night at 3 or 4 a.m., thinking about my responsibilities in Bogotá. I sorted through some of the thoughts and feelings, remembered the four or five dreams I had been having that night, and discussed these things with the Lord.

What silent anguish. Bogotá has forced its way into my heart — at times gently, at times violently — and soon it would be taken away from me. It's not a mental anguish, which can be easily analyzed, but an emotional one, most acute in the early hours of

this morning. And it's not so much that I'll miss the details of this culture and its people; it's something deeper, broader, more profound.

Yesterday I found out that *Desafío* was formatted on the computer with the page size too small by a centimeter. All the work we (including *I*) had done had to be shifted some, which resulted in some inconsistencies in the layout. That was upsetting. I think I'm more of a perfectionist than those who do the layout here. For example, I struggle to get consistent leading and point sizes within a story, the tops of the columns even, and so on, but they don't seem to concern themselves so much with these minute things.

I've been spending more time with Cristina, learning more about her and, through her, learning more about Bogotanos. She's excited about her studying English at Colombo, and seems to be learning quickly.

The New Zealanders are doing great work — and doing it quickly and efficiently. They've built walls, counseling work stations, installed doors and windows, and made shelves and cabinets. They've arrived at the right time. They've been frustrated some by their inability to just go to the store to pick up materials. It's common to spend the whole day looking from store to store for the right plywood, the right lumber, the right styrofoam.

I'm at a pastor's convention as I write. The speakers are addressing subjects such as constitutional law (the new Colombian constitution is less than two years old), matrimones, and cemeteries. I've got my interview with Colin Crawford at 11 a.m.-ish. He's from Scotland, but has been a pastor here for years. He's one of the leading pastors here. Others include Dario Silva, Cesar Castellanos, and Hector Pardo.

According to the news, thirteen police officers were killed over the weekend by Communist guerrillas. So it goes.

My plane leaves in 20 hours. It leaves at 9:15 a.m., according to my ticket, but Francisco said it will actually take off at 10 or 10:30 a.m. I don't know whether to believe him or not, but I plan on arriving at 7:30 a.m. or so.

A music group has an old song with the following lyrics:

Time stand still — I'm not looking back, but I want to look around me now.
See more of the people and the places that surround me now.
Freeze this moment a little bit longer.
Make each sensation a little bit stronger.
Experience slips away.

Make each impression a little bit stronger.
Freeze this motion a little bit longer.
The innocence slips away.

I let my past go too fast. No time to pause.
If I could slow it all down like some captain whose ship runs aground —
I can wait until the tide comes around.
Summer's going fast, nights growing colder.
Children growing up, old friends growing older.
Experience slips away.

I can relate clearly with those tragic words. It all seems to be going by much too fast, becoming more of a blur than individual experiences with individuals and events.

Sept. 1.

What peculiar grief. I begin to analyze it and its intensity lessens. I put this experience in context — two short months out of many years, and it should seem relatively insignificant. It should. Indeed, if I were to explain it to others, this painful departure would seem only to be the necessary conclusion of a two-month cross-cultural service. And the only way to recount my experiences is through words, which people naturally tend to analyze, rather than feel.

I'm in the position of a minority of people, though, in that I've got a Friend who understands thoroughly my thoughts, and more importantly, my feelings. Complete empathy.

I've cried several times in the last few days, last night at my going-away party, and this afternoon as I said goodbye to Cristina and hugged her, maybe for the last time on this planet. Last night the group of *Operación Bendición* employees, my friends, prayed for me and we sang together, likely for the last time on this planet.

I arrived at the airport at 8 a.m. because there was a huge traffic jam — which occurs every morning from 6:30 a.m. until 10 p.m. My plane was scheduled to take off at 9:15 a.m., and when a woman with a badge at American Airlines told me I was too late to board, my stomach fell to the floor, figuratively. My head and arms felt light and tingly. As it turned out, I was able to get the next flight, at 12:45 p.m., and will make it into Raleigh after a stop in Miami.

What seems to be most painful is the realization that I'm leaving behind broken hearts and friends I won't see until we're together in heaven.

I feel good about the work I've done, the relationships I've been a part of, and look forward to the other ways I plan to help the folks at *Operación Bendición* in Bogotá. I plan to send music cassettes to Melqui for Bogotá's *Operación Bendición* promotional video, and I plan to send information to Grace to help out with page layout. I'll also send clown paint to Fredy and Gloria.

And I thought this would just be a two-month excursion in South America....

Appendix C: A few linguistic differences between Colombian and Mexican Spanish, and English.

<i>In Colombia</i>	<i>In México</i>	<i>In English</i>
¿Qué más?	¿Qué tal?	What's up?
balón	pelota	ball
banano	platano	banana
chao	adios	bye
chévere	bueno	neat, great, super
chino	---	darling, cutey
esfero	pluma	pen
estilo Americano	---	Dutch treat
gaseosa	refresco	soda pop
harto	mucho	a lot
lavarse la boca	cepillar los dientes	brush your teeth
mantequilla maní	crema de cacuate	peanut butter
mi nombre es ...	me llamo ...	my name is ...
momentico	momentito	just a moment
pachillo	taza	cup
plata	dinero	money
poner crespo	---	to become angry
porfa, de:li:	por favor, delicioso	please, delicious
sardino (a)	muchacho (a)	kid

Appendix D: A review of various aspects of Colombian culture which are different from those of the North American culture.

In order to better participate in the Colombian culture, instead of merely study it or work in it, I prepared myself by learning some of the differences between our U.S. culture and theirs. According to Gorden (1992), interacting with the Colombians with “goodwill and intelligence are often helpful but not enough.” Facility in the foreign language, he went on to say, “is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee cross-cultural communication.” Often, “seemingly trivial misunderstandings ... lead to basic mutual misperceptions and generate hostility or alienation” (p. 3). Gorden (1992) stresses, “communication depends upon more than language” (p. 4).

Following is a list of many of the customs peculiar to the Colombian, or Latin American culture.

The Bathroom

- Hang your towel on the patio clothes line in the sun or in your bedroom, not on the towel rod in the bathroom. It is not customary in Colombia to use a washcloth.
- Try to leave the bathroom door and bedroom door open, unless it must be closed for privacy. If you *must* use the bathroom to shave or wash articles of clothing, leave the door open. Don't knock on the door if someone else is in it — they'll open the door when they're done using it.
- Don't leave your toothbrush, your bar of soap, shaving equipment, shampoo, or other toiletries in the bathroom. These are all “personal items” and should be packed back to your room after use.
- Never use the “communal towel” in the bathroom. Use your own towel, not the “communal towel,” as it is for the children's use only.

- Normally, one showers in the morning, but consider taking a shower in the evening if your host family prefers this for you. Make the shower very brief, since hot water heaters tend to be very small in Latin America. It is proper to ask the maid to light the water heater before showering, unless it's left on permanently. If nobody's showering after you, verify that the heater is turned off, if that is the family's custom. Try not to miss a day, since Bogotanos have good hygiene and expect their company to have good hygiene as well.
- Always wear pajamas, slippers, and bathrobe to and from the shower.

The Bedroom

- Don't expect someone else to make your bed for you. Make your bed daily, in the manner that the host family makes their beds.
- It's okay to "invade" the parents' bedroom to watch television if invited. If not expressly invited, ask the hosts' permission first.
- Expect to do most of the "visiting" in a bedroom (although the living room or parlor are acceptable places to formally entertain guests). The bedrooms in Colombia are not merely places to sleep, but are peaceful oases in which to socialize with family and friends.

The Living Room and Dining Room

- The downstairs is more formal than the upstairs. Attire should reflect this difference.
- Breakfast is often served over a two-hour period, rather than at a specific time.
- Expect lunch, *el almuerzo*, to be served between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. and dinner to begin late in the evening.

Customs of Courtesy

- Gorden (1992) notes a remark from an adviser to Americans traveling in Colombia: "The only time [you] don't shake hands on greeting someone is when both hands are broken" (p. 104). In addition, after getting to know a person of the opposite

sex a bit, it is customary to kiss that person on the cheek upon greeting or saying farewell.

- Don't throw things to people, such as papers, food, or office items. Instead, hand them gently to the person. Throwing things is considered rude and uncivilized.
- Shake hands more frequently, with more people (more than 20 if you're attending a big party), and on more occasions. A woman shakes a woman's forearm, rather than her hand. A man shakes a man's hand less vigorously than we do in the United States.
- For gifts or favors of some significance, don't just say "Thanks." Express appreciation more profusely than is customary in the States.
- Greet people often. Seek out both hosts and guests, and say "Hello" to them, with a handshake, when entering the home. Say "Goodbye" to them when leaving it. Instead of *adiós*, longer phrases such as *Mucho gusto de verte*, *Que estés muy bien*, and *Saludos en tu casa* are better when taking one's leave.
- Use *usted* verb forms more often than *tú* forms, in general. Use titles, such as *señor* and *don*, when addressing people.

General Rules

- Don't walk around the home in bare feet; instead, wear slippers. Feet are seen as dirty things, and should be covered and kept off of furniture. Only those in the lowest class go about without some type of foot covering.
- Plan to arrive at least 45 minutes late for certain informal gatherings (e.g., parties), but be punctual for business meetings.
- Keep both hands above the dinner table (don't put your left hand on your lap).
- Allow the maid, which most of the middle class families have, to do her job of cooking, washing dishes and clothes, and shopping. They don't shine shoes or make beds, however. The maid generally stays in the kitchen, and rarely goes

upstairs. Try not to treat the maid, who is from a lower social class, as a friend, but respectfully as an employee; address her as *usted* rather than as *tú*.

- The Colombians rarely go out “Dutch treat.” Instead, the person who does the inviting usually pays for the food / movie / entertainment. When you don’t pay for others, it’s called “estilo americano” rather than “Dutch treat.” Women rarely are expected to pay, even if they initiated the purchasing of goods or services.

Appendix E: Strategy for *Plan America for Christ*, the Christian fellowship at America University, whose leader is Juan Llorente [see interview starting on p.]. Translated from Spanish by Ted Slater.

Introduction

It is very important that every believer understand clearly what his or her objective is as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. Before the Lord returned to the presence of the Heavenly Father he, among other things, emphasized to his disciples that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth.

If our objective as believers isn't to be light in the midst of darkness, then it is difficult to act out our Christian faith. Light cannot be hidden beneath a table or bushel, but must be placed in a highly visible place. The Lord Jesus Christ said that the way you could recognize real Christians was by their fruit. After all, is it possible to get pears from a jalapeño pepper plant? The good tree gives good fruit in its time and the bad tree gives bad fruit.

In the parable of the Sower the Lord Jesus Christ explained four classes of people who were sown the Word of the Lord. The first are those who hear the message of the Kingdom and don't understand it. They are like the seed that fell in the road; the evil one comes and takes the message that had been placed in their hearts. The seed that fell among the rocks represents those who hear the message and receive it with enthusiasm; but because they don't have sufficient root, they don't remain firm. When, because of the message, they suffer trials or persecution, they lose their faith. The third seed, which ended up among the thorns, represents those who hear the message, but the activities of this world consume their thoughts and the love of riches deceives them. All this weakens the message and prohibits them from bearing fruit.

But the seed sown in good earth represents those who hear the message and understand it and give a good harvest. Some of these are like ears of grain that produce

100 grains per seed; others are like those that produce 70 and others like those the produce 30 (see Matthew 13:19-23).

The Apostle Paul said that in everything you do, do it all for the glory of God. So, if the Lord chooses to place us in the university, it is because by studying we are glorifying him. So we must strive to be excellent students, not forgetting our principal objective as servants of Christ: to be ambassadors here in the earth. It is best not to look primarily at the visible things, but rather at the things which are invisible, because the visible things are temporal, while the things that are invisible are eternal. So let's put our hands to the plow, because truly the harvest is great but the workers few.

Short-term objectives

- To form groups of no more than five people, preferably who are in the same area of study; the reason being that they can encourage each other as fellow believers who are in the same major and semester.
- This group of five people will take a day during the week to meet for a time of no more than one hour.
- The groups of five people called "Bible Groups" will have a time of getting to know each other well until the first week of April. This time is called the time of *Koinonia* (which in Greek signifies "communion").
- After the time of *Koinonia* we will make an invitation, through the use of pamphlets spread throughout the university, to those believers who want to work with us and the believers who are in their first semester and don't know about our work.
- The basic study consists of seven lessons which could be given to the new people before or after the time of *Koinonia* .
- During the time of *Koinonia* visitors will not be accepted, since it is a time exclusively for believers; visiting must take place during the time after *Koinonia* .

- The basic study is one-on-one; that is, tutor and student alone.
- The student completes the lessons at home and gets together with the tutor once a week to clear up any doubts. This meeting will last at most an hour and at least a half hour.
- Each Bible Group has a leader called a “Servant,” who is autonomous in making decisions, and an assistant called an “Apprentice.”
- By the end of the semester the Bible Group must grow to a size of ten people, which must divide into two groups of five people each for the following semester. Each group will be led by two “Servants” — these are the Servant and the respective Apprentice of the previous Bible Group. These two Servants in time will name two Apprentices.
- The new believers will preferably be involved in the same church as the people who shared with them, at least for a time of six months, until they acquire a little maturity, after which they will be allowed to make their own decision because of the question of distance, enjoyment, etc.

Appendix F: Operation Blessing's mission statements for 1984 and 1988 (Hanson, 1990, pp. 65-66).

Operation Blessing — Original Mission Statement: 1984

Operation Blessing is a nondenominational outreach and referral ministry of CBN which endeavors to meet verified emergency needs of qualified individuals and families within limits of available resources and in accordance with Operation Blessing policies. Scriptural priority is given to assisting the household of faith. Assistance is not limited to persons of particular denominations and, where otherwise appropriate, may be extended to nonbelievers. Where possible, needs are met by matching gifts of goods or services with needs. Where financial assistance is provided, efforts are made to match Operation Blessing financial help with matching funds from a cooperating church, other organizations, or sponsoring individual or individuals. Prayer and counseling, as well as referral to other helping agencies, where needs are beyond the resources or scope of Operation Blessing, are also aspects of this ministry.

Operation Blessing International Relief and Development Corporation — Mission Statement: 1988

The mission of the Operation Blessing International Relief and Development Corporation is to give generous assistance to human need and suffering in the United States and in selected countries throughout the world.

It will endeavor to meet verified emergency needs of individuals, families and communities within the limits of available resources and established policies.

Scriptural priority will be given to assisting the household of faith, but help will not be limited to persons of particular denominations, and assistance will be extended to unbelievers as an expression of Christ's love to all.

Needs will be met with donated goods and services; by providing funding; by matching funds with churches, other ministries, agencies or community resources; or by other cooperative efforts with other organizations.

Further, Operation Blessing will develop creative renewable resource projects in order to multiply available help and effect long-term solutions to help break the cycle of poverty.

Spiritual ministry will be an integral part of all Operation Blessing efforts. While extending a helping hand in Christ's name to meet physical needs, it will endeavor to bring people to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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