

"Will someone give me their testimony?" No one has ever asked me that before. We were sitting in Marta's tiny living room. She and her husband Carlos were members of a couple's prayer group that Tonio, a local missionary, had started. Marta had just shared an important story with us. About two years ago during one of their group meetings, Tonio asked if anyone could take in a couple with a new baby. Tonio said he didn't really know anything about the family except that they were coming and they needed a home. Tonio cautioned that taking them in might be a real problem, all the details were unknown, but would anyone be willing to share what they had with someone else who needed help? Marta and Carlos went home and thought long and hard about the new little family. They talked it out and at the next meeting said they would invite the newcomers into their home and treat them like family. "Are you sure?", asked Tonio. Yes, they were sure. "Good," said Tonio, "because they are out in the truck." The whole group went outside and Tonio opened the truck door. Inside were three statues—Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus! Tonio hadn't been trying to trick the prayer group - just get them to examine their hearts. Those statues are now treasured symbols in Marta & Carlos' home. But that wasn't the end of Marta's story. A few days later, a young niece was turned out by her parents because she was pregnant. Marta and Carlos had just prepared themselves to take in a family with a baby, and so they welcomed their niece with open arms. "Isn't she precious?," said Marta, smiling at a little girl who was peeking shyly out of the kitchen doorway. "Perhaps we would not have welcomed our niece if Tonio had not helped us prepare our hearts." After sharing this personal story of God working in her life, Marta wanted one of us visiting missionaries to give her our testimony. *She considered a testimony something of great value and worth sharing.* Like I said, not a question or exchange we were used to! I wonder what our society would be like if people talked openly and frequently about their faith.

"Who wants to give their witness talk tonight?" This question was asked every evening as we missionaries prepared for the day's visit to the ranchos. We had known that giving a witness talk during the prayer services was part of the mission trip. Some of our team members were going to be going *wwwwaaayyy* outside their comfort zones!! No physical arm-twisting was involved, but some evenings it was close. One night on the ride to the rancho John and I sat next to one of our students who had reluctantly agreed to share his testimony that night. He was one of the quiet members of our group and he nervously told us he had no idea what he was going to say.

Later that night he stood in front a group of poor Mexican people and fellow missionaries who were giving him their full attention, swallowed hard and testified. He said that he has a brother that can't seem to make good choices. The family has experienced many heartaches because of this sibling's actions. "And yet," he said, "my parents have never stopped loving him." He described several instances when it would have been easy - understandable even - for his parents to give up. He said he had learned a lot about God by watching his parents. "If I want to know what unconditional love is," he said, "all I have to do is look at my parents."

I ask everyone who reads this to pray for troubled young people and families, and for missionaries.