

# Fractured Pasts... Changing Futures

Healing broken family relationships, rescuing teens from desperate futures—God has used CBSI to change lives in the Americas for more than 30 years.

**“It was through a CBSI study that God started to restore the relationship with my mother; it was a difficult and fractured relationship since I was a kid.”**

Emilia Mier, a CBSI participant in La Cosecha, Mexico, recently shared these words. The journey to this restoration was not easy for Emilia. Though she had experienced God’s love through the gospel and learned much about the New Testament, it took some seven years for her to experience heart change and life transformation.



Emilia

When Emilia’s first pastor moved to another ministry, a new pastor took over in his place, and God put in her new shepherd’s heart the decision to implement CBSI every Sunday. She confesses that at the beginning, she honestly did not like the change. She was not used to the CBSI way of studying the Bible. She even refused to go at first—in spite of folks in her church encouraging her to be part of a CBSI small group.

Still, Emilia kept praying and asking the Lord to show her His will for her life. One day, she sensed God responding to her: He wanted her to stay in her church and serve.

While she knew it was the right thing to do, service was hard for Emilia—she had been sick for more than 16 years. Yet God continued to impress upon her that no matter what her health condition was, He wanted her to actively serve in His kingdom. So she obeyed, even when she was not completely convinced or comfortable taking that step of obedience.

One of those steps was attending a CBSI group and studying God’s Word at home. Much to her surprise, she loved it! The group was studying the book of Daniel, and God touched her heart—so much so that every time she was doing her lesson, she could not stop crying.

She shares, “I learned so much about God’s faithfulness to Daniel and his friends. I was inspired by the way Daniel prayed to God, and I wanted to pray like that. I wanted to have that kind of relationship with the Lord. I wanted to remain faithful to God just as Daniel did.”

Emilia goes on to say that after almost seven years of being a Christian, she finally comprehended what salvation is.

Soon God led her to repentance and to ask for forgiveness for her past mistakes—and she received it. Consequently, she was able to say, “For the first time in many, many years, I was able to have a better relationship with my mom. It is still a work in progress, but I trust the Lord will finish His work in us.”

## Lives Changing In El Salvador

Let me share briefly about CBSI life transformation in another part of the Americas through the *Cambia Tu Vida* (*Change Your Life*) project. The government of El Salvador created this project for males who live in orphanages,



## AMERICAS REGION

### Exploring

Connecting with key leaders; analyzing ministry needs; planning launch

### Pioneering

Translating lessons; training national leaders to start classes; nurturing relationships

### Maturing

Pilot studies operating well; classes growing and expanding into new areas; training additional leaders.

### Thriving

Nationals equipped and leading the way; national trainers multiply and sustain CBSI impact.

have been abused, and who do not have any support or opportunity to study.

El Salvador is the second-most-violent country on the American continent, and many young men who live there face similar obstacles. The country is plagued with violence, sexual abuse, homicides, gangs, family breakups, and drugs.

Government officials are often at their wits' end trying to find ways to turn these young lives around. So the government-appointed director of *Cambia Tu Vida* eagerly shared the opportunity with CBSI leaders. The leaders began with 50 students. The response was incredible—rarely did any participants miss the weekly gatherings. Instead, with Bibles in hand, they enthusiastically showed up wanting to know more about God. And as the participants have matured, many have expressed a strong desire to volunteer—even personally visiting other churches and urging their leaders to start CBS Bible studies!

### Strong Roots and Continued Growth

Thirty years ago, the first Spanish-language CBSI class started in Lima, Peru. It was one of the very first classes outside the USA. So it was a joyful time in May when CBSI leaders gathered from around Peru and the United States to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Lima class. Some of the participants who attended that very first class were present for the commemoration—and they are *still* faithfully attending the thriving Lima study today.

"It was an honor to celebrate the Lord's work in Peru with our wonderful CBS family there. The ministry is strong and filled with Christ-filled leadership! Their love for Jesus, the Bible and each other is contagious. Their earnest and forward-looking missional mindset is inspiring!"

—Kimm Carr, Executive Director

"What a privilege to get to participate in this special occasion and meet so many dear CBS participants from different regions of Peru. I was blessed by their commitment, sincerity, and joy."

—Maddie Wachtler, Director of Communications



Jose, left, is one of the young men involved in the *Cambia Tu Vida* program in El Salvador (pictured with Raul, Area Regional Director for Central America). He is thankful for CBSI and his leaders because studying the Bible "helps me in my entire life ... we have learned that God loves us."

The theme chosen by CBSI leaders for the celebration was "*Firm in Our Roots, Extending Our Wings.*" They wanted to convey that while it was significant to mark the 30-year milestone, it was also important to focus on the future of CBSI Peru. One of the leaders wrote, "While a strong nostalgic and thankful spirit permeated the 30th celebration, there was a sense of wonder and anticipation about the unfolding of the Lord's plans for the future."

Did you notice all the past ... present ... future references above? Whether we are talking about the ministry of CBSI as a whole in Peru or individual lives in El Salvador and Mexico, God is at work using deeply personal histories—even painful ones—to shape beautiful and powerful narratives yet to be written. William Shakespeare once wrote, "What's past is prologue." By faith, we hope the same for CBSI Americas!

There is so much yet to do, which is why we need your prayers—prayers thanking God for His amazing work done through His children in the Americas, and prayers for what is yet to come. Obviously, if the Lord leads you to contribute to the significant financial needs of the Americas Region, those gifts will be gratefully welcomed and wisely used.

Thank you!

Keith Spartzak, International Director

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