



## Family Finds Hope and Haven in Caring CBS Community

Cristi was desperate. Her marriage was failing and her dreams were crumbling. Whom could she turn to? Whom could she trust?

She decided to risk confiding in her Aunt Alma and Uncle Mario, who both are followers of Jesus as well as Community Bible Study leaders in Mexico. They were eager to assist her.

To Cristi's very great surprise, her husband, Edgar, was quite willing to accept their help. He recognized that he had a lot of room to grow as a husband and father, and was eager to know about God and about what a good family should be.

Alma and Mario first prayed for Edgar and Cristi. They then counseled them. Eventually, they invited them to the CBS class at their church. Participating regularly in worship with their young daughter, Melani, Edgar and Cristi came to know Jesus as their Savior and they were baptized.

Home life radically changed for them as they grew in the Lord. Edgar's interest in the Word "cascaded in blessings for them as a family," she said, including the addition of a second child, Christopher.

However, little by little, their passion faded, and Sundays became a time to involve the children in a variety of recreational activities instead of attending church and their CBS class. Not surprisingly, the harmony at home also diminished. Once again the distance between Edgar and Cristi was growing, and the children could feel it.

### Hitting the bottom

Edgar, a lawyer, left his job at an import company to start his own business. It failed, along with other subsequent business ventures. Consequently, he became increasingly despondent and detached from God and his family. Eventually, he returned to old friendships and the destructive habits associated with them.

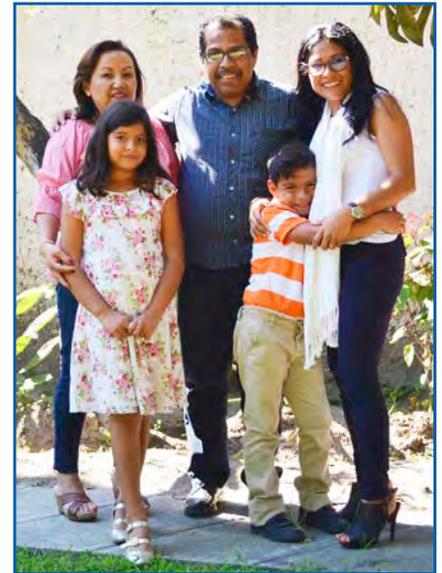
The situation at home disheartened Cristi to the point that she showed little interest when Melani begged her to read the Bible to her. Even as a young child, Melani could see what was happening to her family and began begging her mother to take her back to the church where her CBS class met.

Motivated by Melani's insistence to return to church, Cristi began to look for a worship community near their home for her and the children. Cristi tried several churches, but Melani continued to insist that she wanted to go back to "her" church. Edgar chose to remain distant from his family, choosing instead to attend the congregation where he was raised.

**Without the caring community they experienced in the CBS class with Alma and Mario, their home setting did not improve.**

Meanwhile, Edgar's employment struggles continued, along with the pressure to provide for his family. He decided to risk going to the United States to look for work, promising to send funds home on a regular basis. Rather than finding comfort in this, Cristi became concerned and perplexed.

Her apprehension was justified when she had no contact from Edgar for weeks after his departure. When she finally did hear about him, it came by way of a family member, who was calling to say that Edgar had been



Cristi and her children with Aunt Alma (top-left) and Uncle Mario (top-middle)

arrested on drug charges and sentenced to five years in prison.

Cristi felt deep shame and sadness. She was overwhelmed with the responsibility of two children and all of the financial obligations. She chose to suffer alone until she could bear it no more.

Finally she contacted Mario and Alma, who graciously embraced her and guided her back to the Lord and the study of the Word. Once again, Cristi experienced the joy of salvation and returned to her CBS class. Interestingly, Edgar urged her to go back there where they had begun their walk with the Lord.

## Difficult days but not alone

Cristi tears up when she shares the pain of what they went through after walking away from the Lord and His Word. These are still very difficult days for her family, however, she beams with a lovely smile when she shares all the things that she has learned about the Lord, His mercy, and His love. She also has a new love and appreciation for her husband and the father of her children.

According to 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT), “The kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow.”

Edgar is repentant and at the same time overwhelmed knowing that the church and his CBS community are praying for him. Some of them know his circumstances and they still care. His sentence has been reduced to two years, and one has past. Should the Lord will it, within a year the family will be back where it all began in their relationship with God.

While Cristi wishes Edgar’s sentence could be even shorter, she is content because she has found the Lord in her loneliness and has learned that He is her faithful provider.

**When doubts or questions arise, she says that her study of Red Sea to River Jordan always provides the answers.**

And little 8-year-old Melani is so happy because she is back at “her” church and “her” CBS class, where they sing and learn about God. As an even younger child, she once referred to her CBS classroom as the room where Jesus was.

**He still is.** His birth, which we celebrate at this time of year, **guarantees that He is not only with us, but within us wherever we are.** In sorrow or in joy, in good times and bad, we can count on His great love.

Edgar, Cristi, Melani, and Christopher are just one of the many families in Mexico and throughout the Americas who are encountering God’s love and mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation, within Community Bible Study’s caring communities. Transformed lives through the Word of God is what we are all about.

***As you consider your giving options among all the worthy ministries at the end of this year, would you please pray about a gift to help us reach more families in the Americas and around the world with life-changing Bible studies? Thank you!***



Cristi is no longer alone during these trying years. She has her family, her CBS community, and—most importantly—a thriving relationship with God who cares for her deeply.



Have a blessed Christmas!

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