

“Pops the Question”

Uriel and Norma arrived at the outreach center in July of 2015 with their two-year-old son Ángel. For some time past, their on-again, off-again relationship only served to embitter Norma. At 23 years old, Uriel was immature, self-centered, unfaithful, unemployed, a college drop-out, irresponsible and showed minimal interest in his son. In other words: the typical jerk that shows up at our outreach center.



Though they completed the marriage course, Uriel rarely put anything into practice and Norma’s bitterness kept her from advancing. We skipped the children’s class and went directly into John. Both showed spiritual appetite for the gospel, even though Uriel expressed some strange religious beliefs. Once finished with John, we invited them to the Sunday studies. Norma consistently attended, brought Angel, read the Bible on her own, became a believer and grew in grace although handicapped by her bitterness. Uriel showed up on Sunday morning when soccer and sleeping-in did not interfere. Kathy and I encouraged her many times to separate from Uriel. She did for a while. She worked, finished her degree in economics, took care of Angel and paid the bills. During those first couple of years I probably wanted to wring Uriel’s neck about half-a-dozen times.

Now, in Uriel’s defense, his mother got pregnant on a one-night-stand and he has seen his father only three times in his life, the last of which occurred about fifteen years ago. So that warrants patience, mercy and love on our part. Over time Uriel began to mature. He returned to college, worked off-and-on and participated more with Angel’s childcare. His Sunday attendance improved and we felt more encouraged than ever. Then, the pandemic hit and momentum headed south.

Following five months of virtual Bible studies, we reopened the doors. But much to our chagrin, neither Uriel nor Norma returned. Kathy and I continued to reach out and pray. And it worked. They got bored staying at home and fighting all the time. They realized that Jesus is the truth and their only hope. Back they came, and into “Round Two” of the marriage class. Uriel, now much more mature and motivated, made great strides. Then came the child-raising study. Like sponges, they incorporated all they learned. Each Sunday the whole family arrived on time and Uriel’s weird religious beliefs disappeared. His participation in the study revealed a merciful Jesus at work in his heart. Kathy and I watched Uriel transform before our eyes; and not only us, but also his mother and her husband. He invited them and now they never miss. I then began a discipleship class with both couples and a single girl.

The discipleship class elevated Uriel to another level. Now he puts everything into practice. He genuinely loves Norma instead of just using her. He invests quality time with his son instead of only tolerating him. He now understands what it means to be a husband and father in Christ. He is set to graduate in a few months. He worked a good paying job until the contract ran out and is now looking for something else. He reads and receives Divine revelation from God's Word and shares it with us on Sunday mornings. He has an outreach with some adolescents at a local park they all frequent. And most importantly, his love freed Norma from her bitterness and won her confidence.

Last Sunday, following the Sunday morning study, in front of the congregation, Uriel spoke of a changed life. He then showed a short video featuring the three of them from moments in the past. The video concluded with the last picture: "Will you marry me?" He pulled of the surprise. Clueless until then, Norma began to cry, stood up, approached Uriel and said, "Yes I will". That earned applause from everyone and then a nice shiny ring. Following that, he explained that he wanted to pop the question in church, instead of the beach or in an expensive restaurant, because if not for Christ, this moment would never have arrived. It was at the church a shattered family arrived over six years ago, and at the church the Lord rebuilt a family from ruins, and it was only appropriate to ask her hand in marriage in front of the body of Christ.



Thank you, Jesus! And thank **you** who prayed for Uriel and Norma all these years. And don't stop now. My heart eventually sees them as our youth leaders. Uriel is an excellent teacher of the Word and a natural with adolescents.



In His Joy....Tim and Kathy Fox...Centro Familiar Guanajuato...December 8, 2021