

# CROSSROAD **EXTRA**



## **A Different Way of Life**

by Stacy Ladenburger

William's unstable childhood in Tennessee lacked the love and acceptance he desperately desired. He lived with an aunt and uncle, then with his grandparents and then in a long line of temporary homes, from foster care to adolescent units to runaway shelters. "I was a problem child," he recalls, "with abusive people around me. I never had the things other kids had, so I grew up mad at the world, always fighting, wanting to fit in any way possible. I wanted to be liked, loved and known by others."

Driven by that longing, at age thirteen Will joined the Crips, a notorious and violent street gang.

Though Will did well in school, he did not take it seriously and stopped just before completing the graduation requirements. After a short stint at Job Corps (he was kicked out for fighting), he located and briefly lived with his mother, then moved out on his own. He was still a teenager.

Will's destructive behavior escalated. He started using hard drugs, drinking excessively and stealing.

Charges of aggravated assault, burglary and robbery piled up, and he landed in prison, where he remained for the entirety of his twenties.

When finally released, Will was hopeful. "Blind to the truth, thinking I could catch up with the Joneses and bounce back quick, I knew nothing about the second chance I was given. New life in 2007 swallowed me whole." Everyone he had once known was addicted to drugs, had moved away or was dead. He had no one to support him, nowhere to live and no direction.

Hope faded quickly. Will turned to what he knew—drugs and running the streets—as he tried to find his way in an unfamiliar world. "When I was on the streets last," he explains, "they had cordless phones and the ones you dial. They had VCRs then, not DVDs, and regular stereos, not iPods, iPhones, MP3 players. The clothing line was different; the computer system was different." As a returning citizen, he says, he was "alienated and lost, behind time."

He had no idea how to function as a free man. "All my life has been controlled by law and other people," he points out. "All I know is crime, being a violent drug user and being locked up."

It was nearly inevitable: only two years after his release, Will returned to prison.

But on a November day in 2010, Will explains, everything changed. "I asked God to come into my life and set me free from being alone and in total darkness, to take my mind to a

better place than all of this nonsense and show me a different way of life."

Will's girlfriend and a pen pal directed him to Crossroad Bible Institute. Earnest and eager to learn, he began his studies. With no visitors and infrequent mail, Will is extremely grateful for the lessons and letters from CBI.

Although years of his sentence remain, Will is preparing for reentry—leaving the gang, establishing new connections, making plans. He dreams of a home, a job, financial security and helping people in his community. "I'm trying very hard to do it, with God's help, the right way this time," he says.

Echoing Luke 12:3, Will reflects, "What goes on in the dark comes to light. I always hid in the darkness through false emotions, wanting the hardcore image, being a loud-mouth macho, throwing my weight around, living a lie. I see all this now."

But William no longer lives a lie. Instead, he lives in Christ, in whom he has found a different, and infinitely better, way of life.



Stacy serves as an Associate Editor in The Center for Advanced Studies at CBI

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# CBI Guatemala Prepares to Open

by Cynthia Williams

Along the verdant mountain ridges of Guatemala, small farms dot slopes and valleys where farmers plant, grow and harvest in the rich, fertile volcanic earth. In much the same way, the seed of a new CBI satellite campus has been planted in the hearts of prisoners and church members in this small Central American country.

During a recent visit to initiate the Crossroad Bible Institute program, the CBI Guatemala team and I met with a group of prisoners who have eagerly requested Bible study material. Work with this unique and often volatile group has been restricted and dangerous, and as a result, few have ventured into their world to bring Christ's love. Yet two local pastors, who will partner with CBI to implement the program in the prison, have gained the prisoners' trust by faithfully walking with them through deaths, earthquakes and family crises.

The potential students gathered in the prison courtyard and listened intently as they were told that through CBI, they would be able to study in an organized program that would include the support of Instructors and a graduation certificate. They nodded in agreement as the leader thanked CBI and said, "This is exactly what we have been hoping for!"

Earlier, church members who will serve as volunteer Instructors responded in the same way, saying that only through the changed hearts of the prisoners will their country be free from the ravaging effects of violence. Breaking through their fear and distrust, they courageously committed to help bring about that change.

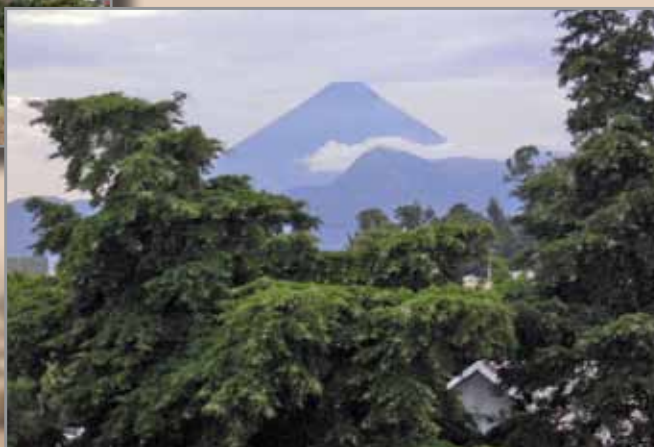
Before escorting the CBI Guatemala team to the iron gates leading out of the prison, the leader of the prisoners asked with a smile, "How soon can we begin studying the Bible with CBI?"

The season is right, the seed has been planted and we look to the Lord of the harvest to reap the fruits of changed lives in the prisons in Guatemala.

*Cynthia Williams serves as the Spanish and International Programs Coordinator at CBI*



*Cynthia with future CBI students in a Guatemalan prison*



# Taking Part in the Redemption Story



by H. David Schuringa with Stacy Ladenburger

With the Christmas season upon us, we remember anew the Messiah born on that Bethlehem night so long ago. Through the gift of His Son, God provided a Savior who would rescue His people from even the darkest of places—like broken homes, violent American street gangs and musty jail cells in the developing world.

Yet a long and difficult road follows that salvation. The odds are surely stacked against William, the CBI student from the feature story, especially considering his previous unsuccessful reentry, daunting recidivism rates and the lure of gang culture. And our friends in Guatemala have a whole host of obstacles standing in their way.

But thanks be to God, the Gospel story continues!

The birth of the Messiah was, of course, not the final page of the redemption narrative. The grand drama continued with Jesus' perfect life, His death, resurrection and ascension and, by God's grace, our own lives as brothers and sisters of Christ.

Your gifts to Crossroad Bible Institute make our participation in this story possible. Your partnership in 2011 has supported the growth of our student body, the service of our dedicated volunteers worldwide, the expansion of our offices, the development of new curriculum and so much more.

But many needs still cry out for our attention, and your partnership. Students like Will clamor for the assistance of our Reentry Program. International requests for the CBI program continue flooding the office, with several openings, such as that of CBI Guatemala, already pending. We have radio programs to broadcast and new curriculum to develop. And thousands of incarcerated men and women still wait in darkness to hear the good news of the Savior.

As 2011 draws to a close and a new year begins, Crossroad Bible Institute will remain dedicated to the mission of reaching God's people in prison with the truth of His Word and the love of His people.

We thank God for giving us a part to play in the great Gospel story, and we thank you for faithfully walking with us through your prayers, volunteer service and generous financial gifts.

May you have a truly blessed Christmas this year!

*Dr. Schuringa serves as the President of Crossroad Bible Institute*

*Christmas Greetings*  
from the CBI staff!

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