



MAY 2007

TO DIE TWICE

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William with a young woman from his community. Women under 35 are in the 'most vulnerable' category for contracting the virus.

People often react negatively to things they don't understand. So it is with HIV and AIDS. Families and communities react with rejection and discrimination due to fear and lack of information when they are faced with a person carrying the virus.

William Garcia lives with his family in a tough neighborhood in Chinandega, a coastal town in Nicaragua. His younger brother was 17 when he was violated, contracted the HIV virus

and died of AIDS two years later. William related how his family was ostracized, made the object of cruel jokes and ridiculed unmercifully, to the point that his mother wanted to commit suicide. He recalled how they were told to 'stay in their house so they wouldn't contaminate the community.' Sadly, the reaction of the church was no different than that of the community. It came to the point where all of William's family publicly posted the negative results of their HIV tests on the wall of their home to dismiss the rumors that they all were carriers. William told me a person with HIV or AIDS dies twice, the first time is a social death which precedes the natural death. But William is not bitter; as a medical student he works and volunteers part-time with an organization dedicated to people living with HIV.

The incidence of HIV and AIDS in Nicaragua has not reached the epidemic proportions like those in Africa, but the trend is just as alarming. Four years ago there was one new case detected a week in Nicaragua; by 2007 the frequency has increased to one a day. Particularly high rates are found in areas close to border crossings and ports. Chinandega has both.

AIDS has carried a sexual stigma that churches do not want to deal with. This week we organized a workshop called "HIV/AIDS

facing the Church" for church leaders. Clearly the local church has a big role in modeling Biblical principles for healthy relationships, particularly with youth, and being an oasis in caring for those that contract the disease. The impact that HIV and AIDS has had in this community personally confronted us on the second day of the workshop. One of the participants received the devastating news that his brother had died from the disease.

I feel awkward writing this newsletter. I don't like prying into the lives of people regarding sensitive issues like HIV and AIDS. But there are dozens of stories that I could have written about. I shared William's story because he gave me permission and wanted it to be told. More than 40-million people around the world live with HIV. This fall CRWRC will be launching a massive campaign to fight HIV and AIDS. Please become informed and support this movement. As a global community, the Church can make a difference to fight against AIDS.



Designing and testing training materials

We will be traveling to Canada this summer. Part of our time is dedicated to visiting churches. We are also open to meeting with small groups, etc. Email us if you are interested in setting something up. Here's our schedule:

June 10: Brampton

June 17: Bethlehem, Thunder Bay

June 24: Emo

July 1: Ponoka, Alberta

July 8: Kelowna, BC

July 22: Hope and First, Thunder Bay

July 29: Dixon's Corners, Ottawa

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