



GLOBAL SHORE

O P P O R T U N I T I E S

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This November, our first Grade 12 students graduate. Several of them have been with us since the beginning of our ministry, like Raúl. The story of Raúl and his brothers shows the hope we have for each student: that God would move in our students, in our community, and that those students would be built up into leaders who would transform Guatemala and change the world.

When Raúl first walked up the hill to CCAF six years ago, he was nervous. “I didn’t know anyone,” he remembers. “I didn’t talk with anyone. I felt really isolated.” But he knew that he was in the right place. “I always wanted to study here.”

The oldest of six boys, Raúl grew up in El Tizate, just down the street and around the corner from the school. When the first kindergarten class started, his younger brother enrolled. Our ministry built their family home, replacing scrap-metal walls with concrete, providing safety for their family. He saw Casa de la Luz (the first school building constructed by Global Shore Opportunities) spring up on the steep hill in town, with new classes starting each year. Two more of Raúl’s brothers enrolled in CCAF.

During this time, Raúl’s father died in a construction accident, leaving Raúl’s mother with her four sons. She began working long hours and was at home less and less often. She remarried, and Raúl’s last two brothers were born. When Raúl finished grade six his stepfather had left, and Raúl quickly became the caregiver for his younger siblings.



Raúl, left, with his brothers Mario and Henry

“He was really young, taking care of his brothers,” remembers Luis, one of our accounting staff. “Changing diapers, making food. He cooked rice, cooked beans, just this young kid, making tortillas, feeding his brothers.”

Raúl’s mother’s work was demanding, keeping her out of the house from early in the morning until late at night. Raúl stopped his schooling and stayed at home, caring for his siblings.

By 2013, four of Raúl’s five younger brothers were enrolled at CCAF. While the family struggled financially, their school expenses were always covered by the ministry. At CCAF, students in financial need are cared for. We’ve made a commitment that finances will not be the barrier that stops a student from receiving the education they need.

That year, CCAF started the first grade seven class, opening a middle school on their campus, and Raúl was one of those first grade seven students. He was

bigger than his classmates because of the years he'd taken off, but he started to integrate into the life of the school.



Raúl and his family; clockwise from top left: Daniel, Roselia, Henry, Raúl, Melvin, Angel and Mario

“No One Can Escape Me”

At first, Raúl had difficulty adjusting to the life of the school, and was often in trouble. “He misbehaved a lot,” Luis shared. “He was disorganized and had a really bad attitude. He was often in trouble in school. He thought people would hurt him, so he was always defensive.”

But things started to change in Raúl’s heart. One night he had a dream: “God had come and had taken his church, but left me behind. I was angry, and went into the empty street and yelled ‘Who is God?’ I saw this tall man, dressed in white, carrying a shining staff and suddenly, I couldn’t remain standing — I had to kneel. I started to cry, and the man said: ‘No one can escape me’ — then I woke up.”

When Raúl came to school the next morning, he shared his dream with Jervin, our school pastor, and Jervin invited him to church.

Over the next two years, Raúl attended church with Jervin, and started to grow in his faith. Remember-

ing this time, Raúl said: “I understood that having a relationship with God is not only saying that you know God, but actually having a relationship with God.”

Raúl kept caring for his brothers, and started to work at a bakery. “They barely paid him anything,” remembers Luis. “He’d be there all night and they’d give him some bread and maybe 10 or 20 Quetzales [about \$2]. It was barely anything, but because there was so much need in their family, he’d do it.”

Jervin was like a father to Raúl and his brothers. When two of Raúl’s brothers ran away, Raúl came to Jervin for help. For almost two weeks his brothers stayed away from home, only coming back when the house was empty to take food and change clothes. Finally, on a Saturday, Jervin and Raúl were searching nearby neighbourhoods and found the boys, chased them down, fed, clean and changed them, and brought them home to their mother.

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A Part of the Family

When Raúl was in grade nine, Jervin moved to Escuintla (an hour away) where he was pastoring a church, and Raúl couldn’t continue going to church with him. So, Raúl approached Luis, and asked if he could come to church with him. Luis was pastoring a church in Parramos, only about ten minutes away from the school.

Raúl remembers this time: “I went to the church in Parramos and fell in love with the church. I started to serve, to see how I should give myself more to the Lord. I think that it was the love of God in me and in the pastors, that drew us together like family. I started to think of them like parents.”

Raúl started to attend church in Parramos, and began helping Luis and his wife, Ileana, in the church. Since they lived in Tizate, Raúl would come over to their house. He became close with Luis’s children. Luis decided to hire Raúl to work on a farm he was managing. “He was working at the bakery through the whole week, five nights, and only earning 50 Q.



Raúl with Luis and Ileana's family: Isaac, Amsi, and baby Nathan.

Our desire is that students would encounter a life-changing God, and that our dedicated staff would mentor and lead our students in a radical transformation of their hearts and lives.

So I said to him: 'It's better if you work for me on Saturday and get 100 Q for the day's work.'

Luis thinks of Raúl as his son. "He's a part of our family, now. Where we go, he goes. I said to him: 'As my child, if you have a need, you can ask me, but like a child you have to have chores, too.' So he takes care of the garden at our house, and if he needs shoes or new clothes or something for school, we take care of it."

"He's our child, spiritually. The Lord considers him a part of our family, and we do too."

The Great Mercy of God

The story of Raúl and Luis is unique, but there are many students in our school who see our staff as spiritual leaders, as role models, as parents. Our desire is that students would encounter a life-changing God, and that our dedicated staff would mentor and lead our students in a radical transformation of their hearts and lives.

Raúl was rebellious and resistant, but became a son, a disciple of Christ. Now, in Parramos, he has the keys to the church. He takes care of the sound system, plays the drums, manages the small groups and is being mentored to take leadership of their new youth ministry.

When we asked Raúl about graduation, he said that it was a big step. "The truth is, if I hadn't gotten into this school, I'd be working right now, maybe with a wife, with kids already. Before coming into the school and getting to know the church, my mind wasn't focused on having a better future. Grow up, work, that's it. But now? It's not like that."

"I've already started the application to study in university. I want to work during the week and go to university on the weekends."

"My cousins only made it to grade nine, but now I'm at the point of graduating. This school has been a blessing for us because all six of us are in school: two of us in high school, two in middle school and two in elementary school."

"I want to thank the school for all the support that they've given me and my brothers. I think that God put us here. I think that the great mercy of God is over us, and he has used the school to bless us. I think that there's a lot of people who are in the same situation as our family, and want to do better but can't. Us, though? I don't know how to explain it. This school is a gift from God."



SUMMER TEAM UPDATE

Our Summer Program left Guatemala in mid-August and debriefed for a week in Ontario. Looking back, Lizzy realized the value of the work period. “Working on the asparagus farm gave me the chance to lay the groundwork of my faith. In Guatemala I built on that.” For Ella, her favourite part of the summer was VBS. “The kids were amazing—even if there were more than double the number of kids we thought there’d be. They didn’t care who you were: they would hug and climb all over you.” We’re grateful for each participant and how they pulled together for a memorable summer of ministry and growth.



YOU'RE WELCOME HERE!

God is doing a great work in Guatemala, and you're welcome to be a part of it! We have ten-day teams planned for January and October, and several openings in our schedule to host a group from your church or youth group, school or university. If you're interested in a longer commitment, consider joining our TEFL department for the 2019 school year (10 months) or a shorter stint as a department assistant (4 months or longer). Check our website for more information about either joining our TEFL department or bringing a team to partner with our ministry in Guatemala.



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