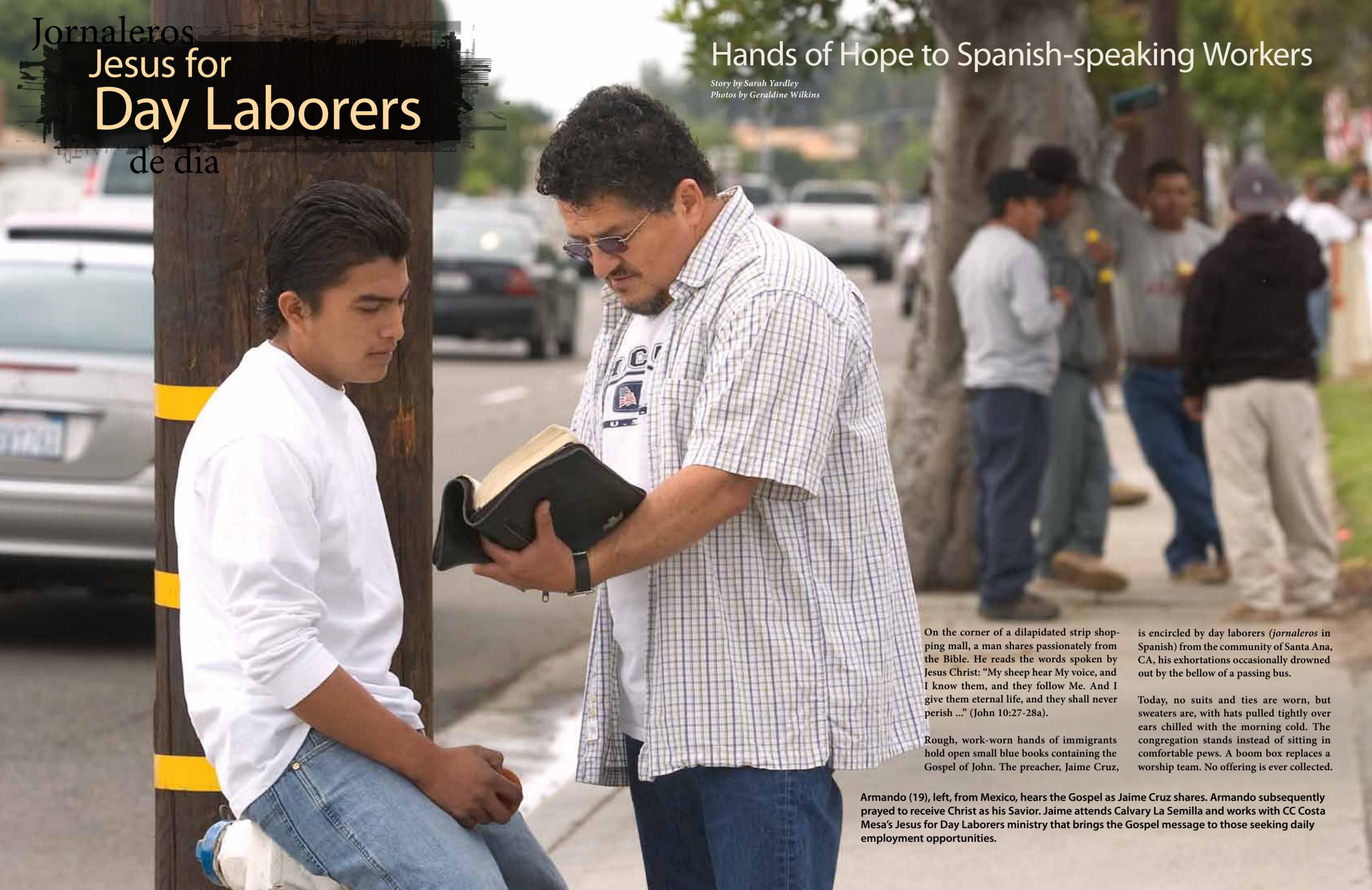


Jornaleros Jesus for Day Laborers

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Hands of Hope to Spanish-speaking Workers

Story by Sarah Yardley
Photos by Geraldine Wilkins



On the corner of a dilapidated strip shopping mall, a man shares passionately from the Bible. He reads the words spoken by Jesus Christ: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish ..." (John 10:27-28a).

Rough, work-worn hands of immigrants hold open small blue books containing the Gospel of John. The preacher, Jaime Cruz,

is encircled by day laborers (*jornaleros* in Spanish) from the community of Santa Ana, CA, his exhortations occasionally drowned out by the bellow of a passing bus.

Today, no suits and ties are worn, but sweaters are, with hats pulled tightly over ears chilled with the morning cold. The congregation stands instead of sitting in comfortable pews. A boom box replaces a worship team. No offering is ever collected.

Armando (19), left, from Mexico, hears the Gospel as Jaime Cruz shares. Armando subsequently prayed to receive Christ as his Savior. Jaime attends Calvary La Semilla and works with CC Costa Mesa's Jesus for Day Laborers ministry that brings the Gospel message to those seeking daily employment opportunities.

A man on a bike rides by during the teaching. He stops to listen without dismounting and leaves quickly as the last words of the closing prayer are spoken.

It's an untraditional church for men who might not visit a church building. Spanish-speaking evangelists from CC Costa Mesa take the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to these humble workers who wait in hopeful anticipation of a job for the day and cash for their efforts. The men from Calvary Chapel pray that their personal outreach will help lead these workers to a far greater eternal reward than a day's meager pay.

"These men need to come into contact with the Word of God. They don't come to us for the bread or the bananas; they come to hear the message of hope," shares Jaime.

One of the men hungry to hear the Gospel on the street corner that day was José. When he was only 12 years old, José and his brother left their family behind in Guatemala and came to the United States to seek out new opportunities. For 12 years, he has traveled throughout the States, finding work anywhere he could: Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, and now, California.

Although he has never visited a formal church, he comes faithfully each week to the



Edward Krause, the ministry leader, teaches from the Gospel of John.

street corner at McFadden and Standard to hear the men share the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

"This is my church," José says, nodding toward the orange coffee dispenser and the totes of fruit and sweet bread. This week, he even brought a friend named Eduardo to his "church" for the first time.

José's story is similar to many others. Years of hard work and separation from family



Each Saturday morning, men listen to a teaching from the Gospel of John and then a salvation message while they wait for opportunities for work. Some have made professions of faith. The ministry leaders return to the same location for a period of time in order to build relationships.

create a culture where the men never miss the chance to make a few extra dollars. They stand at a street corner for hours, waiting for someone to offer them a job. The outreach to the day laborers uses that time to share a message of hope. After the 30-minute message, the ministry leaders engage the men in counseling and one-on-one prayer. Anyone who desires a Bible receives one, and as the music continues to play in the background, conversation centers around the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In each discussion, the men are invited to church, but few accept the offer.

Although there is a desire to see the men involved in a church fellowship, Edward Krause, who leads the ministry, expressed the heart behind the ministry, which is found in 2 Corinthians 5:18, "Now all things

are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation." While church attendance has not occurred regularly, there are many testimonies to the power of lives changed by Jesus Christ.

In the early days of the outreach, Edward and Jaime spent 21 weeks sharing the Good News at a location by the railroad tracks. At first, the men were unreceptive to the teaching. They came while high on drugs, with foul mouths, to eat more than to listen.

"We go to a hostile environment with an unpopular message for a just cause," said Edward. Ministry on the streets is rarely easy and never comfortable. Even the men receiving the benefits of the food and teaching occasionally question the motives.

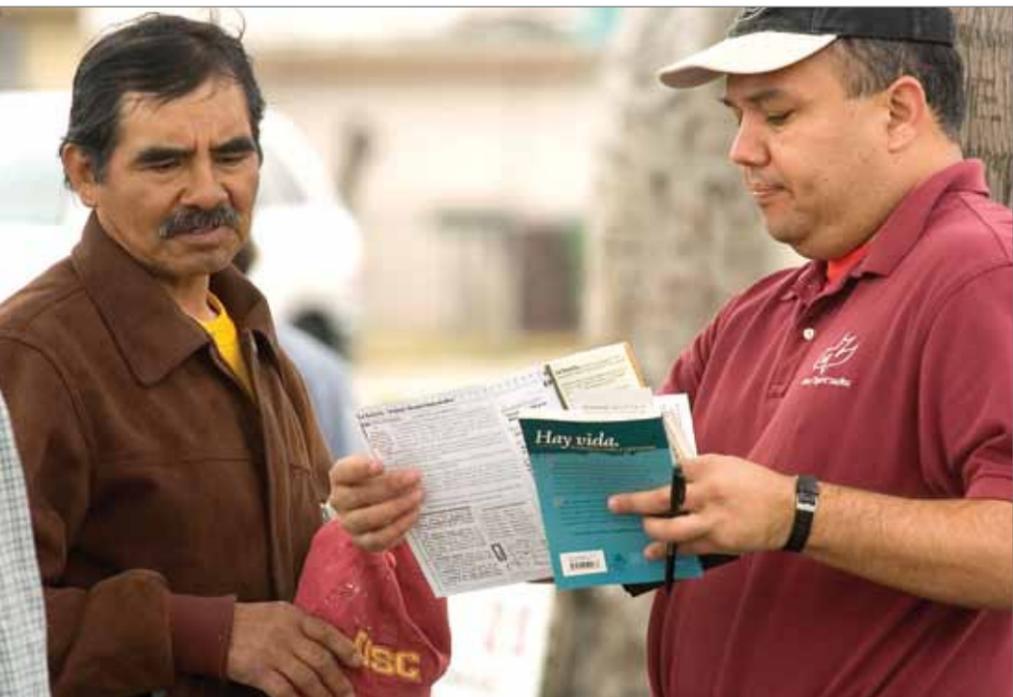
"Why are you doing this?" they query. "Times are depressing; there is very little work. Why do you still come to meet with us and bring us food?" The answer, in the words of Edward, is simple, "We come because we are touched by God, and He wants to have a relationship with you."

The men leading the outreach were not always so touched by God with a desire to reach the day laborers. For many years, Edward taught Sunday school at a church in Santa Ana. One day, as he taught his class, a fellow teacher approached him, saying, "Eduardo? You're Spanish speaking, aren't you? Have you ever thought of ministering to the day laborers in Laguna Beach?"

Edward's answer was simple: "No."

From that point forward, it seemed the Lord continued to bring to mind the thought of sharing the Gospel with these men, until he was finally ready to go on his first outreach. Ten years later, Edward has now graduated from the School of Ministry at CC Costa Mesa (his spiritual boot camp) and spends almost every Saturday with the jornaleros. In his words, "There are many needs around the world, but we need to be faithful wherever God is calling us."

The need for faithfulness is continual. Occasionally, there are miraculous transformations, but more often, the changes are gradual, over lengthy periods of time. Near the start of their ministry, one man in particular was very quiet during the messages. He always listened attentively and said very little. But over time, as he heard the Word of God, his life and appearance changed



Ed shares the location and service times from a church bulletin with a man.



“Sometimes we find our ministry because God calls us to it, and sometimes we find our calling when we do the work of the ministry.”

Edward Krause

Cory Johnson, left, of CC Costa Mesa, greets a man who listened to the study.

until he was a different man completely and accepted Christ as his Savior.

At another time, a fast transformation took place in Laguna Beach as Edward and another Christian shared with a man sitting under a tree. The effects of drinking were evident in the man’s slurred voice, sunken red eyes, and bitter breath. As they prayed with the man, in their words, “The Holy Spirit cleaned house!” The man’s eyes seemed to light up, and immediately he was rid of any outward signs that he had been drunk just a few moments before.

Each Saturday brings new opportunities for the life-changing power of the Gospel to reach the day laborers. “We take the boat where we think the fish will bite,” exclaimed Edward. Sharing the good news with the day laborers is not glamorous or comfortable, but in the words of one of the workers, “Sometimes we find our ministry because God calls us to it, and sometimes we find our calling when we do the work of the ministry.” For Edward and Jaime, the calling is clear.

“Jesus knows each of you by name ... He knows your hurts ... He knows your problems.” The words of Jaime Cruz echo through the quiet morning air. Having experienced God’s faithfulness for themselves, Edward and Jaime can be found any given Saturday on a street corner in Santa Ana, preaching the Gospel of grace to a poor and shunned people. ☺



Jaime serves refreshments before the Bible study. José left, and Carlos, accepted Christ as their Savior after the Bible study. Ed writes a contact number on a tract.

Hands of Hope—CC Costa Mesa

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