

Chile Earthquake: Hearing Their Cry

I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock. Psalm 40:1-2a

Story by Debra Smith

Photos by Mabel Torres, unless otherwise noted



Pastor Edgardo Torres of CC Temuco, Chile, shares God's Word with people in Puerto Saavedra who lost family members in February's 8.8 earthquake.

Four Ministries Reach Out

Calvary Chapel Temuco

The devastated families, gathered under a dreary gray sky, listened somberly. "Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust" (Psalm 40:4), proclaimed Edgardo Torres, pastor of Calvary Chapel Temuco, Chile. An 8.8 magnitude earthquake nine days prior had caused a water tower to collapse, instantly destroying eight homes and killing several people in this small town called Puerto Saavedra. After collecting food, clothing, blankets, and household items, believers from CC Temuco had traveled west, toward the coast, to distribute relief.

Reports estimate that nearly 500 people were killed throughout the long slender nation of Chile. Erupting along the same plate boundary as the world's strongest quake ever measured, the Valdivia Earthquake of 1960, the

movement triggered tsunamis and warnings in nations as far as Japan. Several of Chile's 14 Calvary Chapels responded with physical and spiritual aid for the suffering. When CC Temuco arrived in Puerto Saavedra, escorted by police in order to prevent theft of the supplies, a crowd immediately gathered. The believers descended from the truck, and Pastor Edgardo began to encourage the group with Psalm 40:1-5.

"One of the most affected," Edgardo said, "was Maria Chambla. Maria's sister and her baby died on impact when the water tower fell on their house." Maria's brother-in-law and a 2-year-old boy were also hospitalized. Edgardo prayed with Maria, asking God to comfort her and use this suffering for good in her life. "She was very grateful that someone wanted to pray with her," Edgardo said.



Edgardo prays for Maria Chambla, who lost her sister and the sister's baby.

Calvary Chapel Bará

Downtown Santiago, Chile's capital, is home to CC Bará. "Since this is the oldest area of the city," explained Pastor Alberto Alamos, "we suffered many damages in our community." The believers were saddened by the harm to their children's ministry classrooms, which they had renovated last summer after much anticipation and fund-saving. "But we trust God," said Alberto, "and we are praying the Lord will provide the money needed for repairs, or opportunity to move to a different building."

The church had previously planned an outreach for Saturday, February 27—the very day the early-morning earthquake struck. At the ministry event, "We were going to share God's message with the children and their families," said Alberto, "but obviously we could not have it on that day." Instead, the believers held their outreach the next weekend. They shared the Gospel with the children using the wordless book: a book with no words, only colored pages with which the presenter explains concepts such as God's desire for humans to be with Him



Believers from CC Puerto Montt survey the earthquake damage in the town of Iloca, Chile. The destroyed home belonged to the grandparents of their friend Alex Toro.

in heaven (gold page), sin (dark page), and Christ's sacrifice on the cross (red page). The church also conducted puppet shows for the kids, prayed with them, told Bible stories, and painted their faces. Part of the event, commented Alberto, "was a very special moment when we could help the children recover from the fear they had when they remembered the earthquake."

To remind the youngsters later of the Gospel message they had learned, the believers led them in making bracelets with colored beads that corresponded to the pages of the wordless book. Meanwhile, others shared the Good News with the children's parents and invited the families to church on Sunday. "The way the people received us was very special," Alberto said. Additionally, the Christians were reminded of "how God has control of everything, and how His Gospel can be preached even in the most adverse circumstances."

Calvary Chapel Puerto Montt

Soon after the quake, members of CC Puerto Montt contacted their friend Alex Toro in the small town of Iloca. A believer who splits his year between working in the port city of Puerto Montt, where he fellowships at Calvary Chapel, and living with his family in Iloca, Alex was there when the disaster struck. Because this rural area near the epicenter was severely damaged, Puerto Montt congregants drove more than 400 miles north to Iloca with a bed, dishes, clothing, and money. After giving the



Pastor Raul Laguna of CC Puerto Montt prays for Waldo in Iloca. Waldo lost part of his home.

goods to Alex to distribute to his neighbors as needed, they walked around Iloca and prayed with anyone interested. Pastor Raul Laguna of Puerto Montt hopes to return to the area and plant churches or Bible study groups in Concepción, a nearby city of one and a half million—and the metropolis most severely damaged by the quake.

CC Bible College Chile

Ricardo and Mayra Plazas, the director and secretary of CC Bible College Chile, were southward on a retreat when the earthquake occurred. They felt the movement dramatically, but the upheaval there was not as destructive as back home in Santiago. "Praise God there were no injuries at the retreat center," said Mayra. "God had His hand on the whole group." The Plazas traveled through the epicenter on their way



Chile is on South America's lower tip, south of Peru.

home and were thankful, upon arrival, to find the Bible College still standing—though with significant damages. They have visited a small nearby town called Lo Moscoso, and they hope to return with Bible College students to help weatherproof temporary shelters for the many families who lost their homes. "These structures are definitely not fit for winter," said Mayra. "We want to take groups down to help work on them." ☺

Ministry report translations by Mayra Plazas

CC Bible College Chile

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