

Heroes on the Mission Field

By Bob Young

Who are the heroes in our culture? Some identify sports figures as heroes. Others point to people like firefighters, disaster relief workers and military personnel. We appreciate people who do not hesitate to help others, no matter the personal cost.

Who are your heroes? You would probably add to the above list by citing personal heroes—family members, teachers, coworkers, and others who have had a great impact on your life.

I spend lots of time with heroes. In various places around the world, people have given up almost everything and committed their lives completely to seek the spiritual well-being of others. I am in contact with several older national missionaries who face intense financial struggles. They are among my heroes. Many Latin American church workers depend on secular employment or the employment of a spouse in order to survive. They serve without complaining and persevere beyond my expectations. They are my heroes.

I stay in their homes and eat at their tables. They often put us Christians and ministers in the U.S. to shame in the sacrifices they make. They eat things we would hardly consider eating. They do not have the basic things we take for granted. Many live in circumstances we North Americans would abhor. I walk miles with them (and ride the public transportation with them for longer trips) because they cannot afford a car. One gets used to concrete floors, open windows and doors, and cold showers. Meatless meals and rice three times a day begins to seem normal.

Sometimes others ask if they can accompany me on mission trips. My answer is always “yes” but I feel compelled to issue some warnings—you will not hear much if any English, the trip may not be easy, and the food and lodging will at times be minimal. Perhaps I am too discouraging. After all, it is an honor to meet the real heroes in this world, those who have given up much and paid a great price—so that others can know the love of Christ!