



FROM SANTIAGO TO ALL OF CHILE

BY JANET WALKER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM SCHIRMAN

Rudelindo Cortes was addicted to drugs and alcohol. He grew up in an impoverished, dysfunctional home in Chile, the oldest of six children and a victim of rape. In sixth grade, a classmate who was president of a communist youth group influenced him to join the cause.

“We had strong hate in our hearts,” Rudelindo says. “With my background, I was the perfect candidate to become a drug addict.”

After Rudelindo married Francisca, his hate and addiction intensified. In a drugged haze, he often abused his wife.

The couple’s second daughter, Daniela, was born with an illness for which there was no treatment. One day some friends stopped by Rudelindo’s pottery business and invited him to Los Andes Assembly of God, pastored by Eduardo Oyarzun. Los Andes is a city of 55,000 people about 80 miles north of Santiago, Chile’s capital.

Continued on page 24

FROM SANTIAGO TO ALL OF CHILE



"I thought maybe church could help me," Rudelindo says, "so I went."

On that Sunday, Pastor Oyarzun's text was John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (NIV).

The pastor's message was so specific, it was as though he was speaking personally to Rudelindo.

This guy knows everything about me, thought Rudelindo, and he responded to the salvation invitation. But he told the pastor he would give himself to God and give up drugs and alcohol only if God healed his daughter.

"Do you want to make a promise to the Lord?" asked the pastor. "The Lord will glorify himself and will heal your daughter."

In His mercy, God healed Daniela, and Rudelindo Cortes gave his life to Christ.

When the first Assemblies of God missionaries arrived in Santiago in 1941, they found few Chilean believers to help them proclaim the Pentecostal message. Local opposition made it difficult to rent buildings, prompting churches to

start as meetings in homes. As the number of U.S. missionaries grew, the work became stronger. At some of the first evangelistic meetings in Santiago and Valparaiso, a nearby city, thousands attended. Hundreds were saved and healed, and new churches were planted.

Steadily the work developed, and the Chile Assemblies of God was officially established in 1950 under missionary leadership. Three years later the first Bible school opened in Santiago, giving Chilean believers the opportunity to train for ministry.

Don and Jacquie Cartledge arrived in Chile in 1984 to serve among approximately 200 established churches and preaching points. During their 22 years of ministry, they have worked with Assemblies of God Bible schools in Santiago and Antofagasta, a city in northern Chile. In the process, they have helped mentor many Bible school students who now serve in full-time ministry.

Today more than 400 churches and preaching points serve communities along the 2,880-mile length of this narrow coastal nation. These congregations, led by Bible school graduates, connect hurting families with the gospel through a spectrum of outreaches.

Don gives one example. "Sergio Alfaro, pastor of People of God Church in the heart of Santiago, is one of the most passionate ministers in the area of evangelism that I know," he says. "He has a heart for the lost and a tremendous gift for bringing people into relationship with Christ."

Pastor Alfaro was a youth minister when Don and Jacquie first came to Chile. Since he began pastoring People of God Church, the Cartledges have assisted him from time to time in ministry by preaching and leading outreaches targeting men and married couples. With

David Dobson

FROM SANTIAGO TO ALLOF CHILE



"We're praying God will raise up a new generation of pastors and leaders."
— Don Cartledge

an extensive cell-group ministry, the church focuses on relationship building. It averages 450 in its worship services.

Jose Ferrada, general superintendent of the Chile fellowship, pastors Cathedral of Praise, a church of about 1,500 people.

"I've watched Jose's ministry and observed how the Lord uses him," Don says. "You can sense his passion, and the presence of the Lord is evident in his life."

Since God transformed Rudelindo Cortes' life, he has received Bible school training and now directs a drug rehabilitation center in Los Andes.

"My studies at the Bible school helped provide me with organizational skills, theological training and structure," Cortes says. "God has used people in my life like Brother Donald and Sister Jacquie. While I was in school, missionary Jim Mazurek also encouraged me. When I wanted to get up and leave because I didn't understand what I was trying to learn, he would tell me, 'Rudelindo, with your training you will be able to serve better.' He did not know how much his words ministered to me."

During the past two decades, the Corteses have ministered the message of Christ and His deliverance to about 3,000 young men and their families.

Sandro Latiz is one of them. When Latiz was a boy, his father's political views prompted him to move his family to Sweden. Latiz's drug and alcohol addiction began there when he was 14.

"In 1999, I decided to end my life," he says. "I had reached a point where I felt there was no escape from the drugs." He jumped from a building's seventh floor, breaking his back and suffering multiple injuries.

Seeing his son's desperate situation, Latiz's father took him back to Chile. There someone



introduced Latiz to Christ, and he entered the Corteses' rehabilitation program.

"I thank Pastor Cortes," Latiz says. "He is a servant of God who makes it possible for men like us to meet God and live with love. The unconditional love I received from Pastor Cortes and his family affected me so much that I want to invest in this ministry."

Another Bible school graduate, Pastor Hector Soto, came to the Lord at age 21 in a small Assemblies of God church on the outskirts of Santiago. After participating in several youth evangelism outreaches, he felt the call of God to ministry and entered Bible school.

At the same time, Chilean Assemblies of God leaders saw a growing opportunity for

FROM SANTIAGO TO ALL OF CHILE



Jacqui Cartledge (left) has led a variety of conferences across Chile.

ministry in the southern region of Chile near Puerto Aysen. When Soto graduated, they asked him and his wife, Berta, to help plant churches in this mostly unreached area.

“They sent us to the exact place God had laid on my heart,” Soto says. “After 13 years of church planting in this isolated region, I still continually need clarity that we are doing God’s purpose. The gospel meets much resistance here, partly due to the poor testimony of other Christians. People are involved in witchcraft here, and promiscuity abounds.”

Today trained Chilean ministers make up the entire leadership team of the national Fellowship. Missionaries assist the church in a number of areas, including training ministers, church planting and construction, youth ministry, Women’s Ministries, Global University, Latin America ChildCare schools and more.

Rudelindo Cortes is grateful to the U.S.

Assemblies of God for sending missionaries to Chile. “Your sacrifice is pleasing to God. Thank you for sending these servants and pastors who express passion for the lost and vision for teaching us how to reach Chileans for Christ. They lift our arms and encourage us.”

The Cartledges report the Chile Assemblies of God is entering a new stage of growth that could be explosive. They believe this is partly due to Chilean Christian youth who are catching a vision for reaching their generation for Christ. For the past few years, Jacquie has ministered to pastors’ kids through retreats and activities.

“I’ve watched young people’s hearts set aflame by the Holy Spirit’s work in their lives,” Don says. “We’re praying God will raise up a new generation of pastors and leaders, and that we will be a part of that. Last year in the Bible school, a group of young people reached the point where they were saying, ‘We’re willing to sell out. We’re willing to give it all and do what needs to be done to reach our generation in Chile.’ ”

The passion and vision of early missionaries in Santiago continues and is spreading to all of Chile — to the hearts of a new generation. **tpe**

JANET WALKER is an assistant editor of the *World Missions Edition* of *Today’s Pentecostal Evangel*.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.