



Fear Factor

It was the first night of *Encuentros con Jesús (Encounters with Jesus)*, our Spanish language Bible study, and the fear nagged at my head and heart – *what if no one shows up?* I was excited about introducing people to Jesus through the eyes of his beloved disciple and friend, John. My hope was they too would fall in love with Jesus as they watched him encounter and care for people and find their lives transformed by following him.

However, I also knew people are busy, and many are spiritually skeptical, seeing religion as just another side hustle. Which is why all our fliers and posters said clearly the study was free and there would be no offering or request for money.



It turns out my fears were unfounded—we had seven people that first night, men and women from four different countries (Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, and the USA). Our hour together flew by, and as we closed, I



held up a small legal pad, and said, “I’ll be praying for you this week, so if you have a specific prayer request you want me to take to Jesus, feel free to write it down.” I set the pad on a chair with a pen and chatted with people as they gathered coats and Bibles. That first night, three of the men shared prayer requests. The first one simply said,

“For my wife and two daughters who are in Guatemala.”

Felipe’s Dream

Felipe, who shared that request, hasn’t seen his family in person for over a year. He, and his brother Roberto, however, have come to every single Monday-night Bible study since then. They have also been taking both English and computer classes here at RPM. Most days they leave for work early in the morning and come straight from work to class. On Monday’s that means work, computer class, and then Bible study. I’ve never heard them complain. Instead, both are grateful for RPM and the chance to improve their lives by learning English and gaining computer literacy. Felipe has also requested political asylum and started the long and arduous legal path toward residency and citizenship. Jacky, our Director of Operations, has invested hours helping him with the process and translating many of the required legal documents.

Felipe’s dream is simple. He longs to secure his legal status and save enough money to bring his wife and daughters here so they can be together again as a family. That’s likely to take years, so this Christmas is going to be really hard for all of them.

Under those circumstances it would be easy to question God’s goodness, or even his presence; to ask, “Is God really with us?” Instead, Felipe and Roberto are encouraged by the Jesus they are encountering in the Gospel of John. A God who came to us as a fellow human, who came for the sick and the sinner, who came to love us

and to suffer with us and for us. Felipe commented recently, *"We need to remember that following a spiritual path can be difficult, but we also need to remember that Jesus himself invites us to study what he did in life and what he did for us."*

Both men have expressed their gratitude this year by giving back. They volunteered dozens of hours during our events, including our Fall coat drive. They helped us provide over 800 coats and an additional 1,200 warm winter apparel items to over 800 people. Then, one weekend they came in and transformed our dark and dingy women's bathroom, repainting walls, ceiling, doors, and trim, at no charge – a labor of love.



Roberto and Felipe

Give the Gift of Life Transformation

So, if you are looking to make a difference in the life of someone both for now and eternity, please consider a year-end gift to Roosevelt Park Ministries. We enrolled 286 students in our classes this year, and helped over 1800 unduplicated individuals, most of whom were minority and low income. So many of the people who come to us are immigrants who fled violence, poverty, and repression. They came seeking safety, security, and stability for themselves and their children. RPM has become their community, their bridge between cultures and languages, and their path to a brighter future. Our greatest joy is bringing help and hope to them.



Some ESL Level 1 students with instructor Carl and assistant Brielle (in back)

people like Felipe and Roberto, their fellow students, and their families. Together we can send the message this Christmas season that *God is indeed with us*. We are his hands and his feet, extending the care and love of Jesus to our multi-language, multi-cultural community.

But I'll be honest, we need your help to meet our budget for this year. A 60% growth in student enrollment combined with a drop in support in 2021-22 has left us with an urgent financial need as we close out this year. If you are one who has already given – *thank you so much!* Your generosity has encouraged our hearts. Every dollar you give allows us to pour into the lives of

Giving is easy. [Click here now to donate.](#) You can make a one-time donation or set up a monthly gift. Or call our office and give using your debit or credit card. Our office is open Monday – Thursday, from 9:30 am to 5 pm. If we can't answer the phone, leave a message and we'll call you back. You can also mail a check to our office at the address below. We love you, value you, and are so grateful for your friendship and support.

May the joy of Jesus, our Emmanuel, fill your soul, and flood your life with peace this Christmas season.

Feliz Navidad y mucho amor from all of us at RPM,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joel".

Joel B Groat, Exec. Dir.

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All donations to RPM are tax-deductible and received with gratitude.