

## FULL CIRCLE - WATCHING GOD WORK ACROSS GENERATIONS IN GUATEMALA

The other day, as I was at a Cadaniño center, a young boy came into our after-school program.

*"Hi Timothy!"* he said excitedly as he walked in.

A few of the other students nearby looked confused and immediately asked him, *"How do you know Timothy?"*

Without hesitation, he smiled and said, *"Oh, he's friends with my mom. I've been to his house before."*

**That young boy, whom we'll call Jay, is the son of a former student we first met many years ago as a young girl living in an orphanage in Guatemala. For privacy reasons, we'll call her Cici.**

A little later that afternoon, I walked upstairs and noticed Jay sitting with his math homework open in front of him. He stared down at the pages, looking completely stumped, unsure of how to solve the problems in front of him.

So I sat down beside him and together, we slowly worked through the assignment on place values, one question at a time. I began asking him questions, helping him think through the problems, and walking him through how to complete the homework he needed to turn in to school the next day.

**And somewhere in the middle of that tutoring session, I found myself reflecting on just how much had changed over the last 23 years.**

When Sharie and I first came to Guatemala, we believed God had called us to walk alongside vulnerable children living in orphanages. And for over a decade, that is exactly what we did.

- We taught Bible classes.
- We led youth groups.
- We taught English.
- We taught computer classes.
- We taught cooking classes.
- We taught carpentry classes.
- We mentored teenagers.



TIM TEACHING CLASSES TO KIDS IN ORPHANAGES OVER 20 YEARS AGO



**We spent countless hours teaching, mentoring, and encouraging children in orphanages, trying to help them develop the skills, confidence, and support they would need to have a chance at building stable and successful lives despite the instability, abandonment, trauma, and loss they had experienced.**

**Those years shaped us in profound ways. We built deep relationships with many of the children we served. We celebrated milestones with them, prayed with them, cried with them, and watched them grow up as they navigated incredibly difficult circumstances.**

**But if we are honest, those years were also hard in ways that are difficult to fully explain.**

We poured our lives into those children, but many of the important factors needed to help them truly thrive were beyond our control.

We did not run the orphanages and we could not control the instability that many children experienced. Children were often moved from place to place with many children's homes under-resourced and understaffed.

And many of the systems surrounding these children were simply not designed to provide the long-term support and stability needed to help them flourish as adults.

- We could teach.
- We could encourage.
- We could disciple.
- We could love deeply.

But there were limits to what we could do within systems we did not control.

**Over time, we watched those young people launch into adulthood and build their lives. Some graduated from university, built careers, got married, and created healthy families of their own.**

**Others struggled to break the cycles of brokenness into which they had been born.**

Many carried their wounds and instability into adulthood, becoming overwhelmed young mothers simply trying to

survive while desperately hoping to give their children opportunities they themselves had never experienced and valiantly trying to give their kids a shot at a family life they had been denied.

**And honestly, there were seasons where that weighed heavily on us.** Because when you truly love children from hard places, you carry the burden of knowing that love alone cannot solve every problem. **But as I sat beside Jay, helping him work through his math homework, something struck me.**

**By the grace of God, the story did not end with his mother's childhood in an orphanage.**

**Today, Cici is no longer the vulnerable child sitting in one of our Bible classes.** She is a mother who loves her children and is fighting hard to give her son the brighter future within a family that she never had. **Her child is not growing up institutionalized her child is growing up connected to family.**

She values education and she wants a future for him. She wants him surrounded by encouragement, structure, discipleship, and support.

**And through Cadaniño, we now have the privilege of walking alongside her son in a way we simply could not twenty-some years ago.**

In many ways, sitting there tutoring Jay felt like watching the story come full circle.

*Years ago, we were ministering primarily to children already caught in crisis.*

**Today, through the Cadaniño ministry, we can work upstream to have a deeper impact in preventing children from being placed into protection. We can strengthen children while also strengthening families.** We can build long-term relationships with parents, reinforce education consistently, provide spiritual formation, create structure and accountability, teach technology and STEM skills, help in crisis, and walk alongside families before brokenness escalates into family separation, and give them skills and opportunities that can be truly life-changing.



Over time, God taught us something profound: **If we truly want to help vulnerable children in the long term, we must work upstream to strengthen families.**

**Looking back now, I can see that God was using those early years in orphan care to prepare us for the work He would eventually lead us into through Cadaniño.**

And sitting there beside Jay, helping him solve math problems at the Cadaniño center, I could not help but feel overwhelmed by God's faithfulness across generations.

**When we started out in Guatemala, we were simply trying to love vulnerable children well in the moment, and we did not yet understand that God was allowing us to become part of a much bigger story.**

**A story not just about helping children survive...but about helping families heal so they can thrive.**

**A story about children who once needed hope growing up to become parents, determined to give their own children opportunities they themselves never had.**

**A story about generational cycles slowly beginning to break.**

**And somehow, by God's grace, we now have the privilege of walking alongside both generations, helping move the needle one degree at a time, so each generation can have a shot at improving on the previous one.**

When we look around Cadaniño today, we can see the faithfulness of God unfolding across decades, and we are deeply grateful that He still allows us to be part of His greater story of redemption and restoration, which will eventually reconnect us all to our heavenly Father.

Sincerely,

Timothy and Sharie Martiny

timothymartiny@gmail.com / 504-677-9033 / +502-3054-5433  
Tax-deductible donations can be given online at: [www.guatemalamissionary.com](http://www.guatemalamissionary.com)  
or via checks made payable to FIRE International and sent to:  
FIRE INTERNATIONAL, Timothy Martiny, P.O. Box 5306 Concord, NC 28027

