

# ACTION

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The Place I have Prepared for  
You

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## The Place I have Prepared for You

By  
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I am so passionate and heartbroken for those forced into situations they cannot escape. God gave my wife and I hearts for the poor in Colombia in July 2008, but I didn't know how to help. I didn't even know where to start, but God was preparing a way for us.

I recently visited the country of Colombia for the first time to make plans for moving there. I wanted to find ministry opportunities, locate a school for my four girls, and meet others already in God's service there. I also wanted to explore a country my family had never seen before so I could report back to them. I traveled with Bob Spencer from the missionary sending agency, Christians in Action.

Bob told me about people used as drug traffickers, called drug mules, who carry packaged cocaine or heroin in their stomachs into the United States. They do this to either receive a lump sum of money or free passage into the States. This is one of the extreme measures that parents

and even young children and grandparents will try in order to secure a better living for their family. They have no one to help them, and this often looks like their only chance. For example, an 82-year-old grandmother wanted financial security for her mentally disabled grandson and was told this was an easy way to do it. Like hundreds of others, she didn't make it. Once she left JFK International Airport, one of the packages broke inside her stomach and she died in the cab.

Once in Medellin, Bob and I were warmly greeted by Jim and Miriam Marquardt and Adan Varilla. The Marquardts are CinA missionaries who are working at the seminary, and Adan is a Colombian national who has a strong passion to see the Word of God spread through his country. After church on Sunday we met Pastor Javier in an area just outside Medellin. We visited families displaced by guerilla warfare and violence in a village near Popular 2. These people are the desplazados, or displaced people. The guerrillas, an armed group that terrorized Colombian nationals, ran them off their farms and now use the land to grow illegal crops.



I learned that the only place the desplazados are allowed to stay is along the tops of the cliffs where no one else would dare build their home, pictured here. Once a family establishes a home using long stilts that extend down the side of the cliff, other families build homes on top of it, utilizing the support of the stilts. Most buildings are three layers high and during downpours in the wetter season (I'm not sure they have a dry season), homes wash out and slip over the cliff, taking entire families to their deaths below.

We traveled through the valley. My insides leapt with joy and I heard God say, "This is the place I have prepared for you." The openness of the people to the Gospel, the rural and agricultural nature of the land (with which I have a great deal of experience), and the invitation to plant a church here was too much excitement to hold in.



It was here that I really felt a calling to help. I saw a people hurting and in desperate need. These are hard-working people who have tried everything to secure safe provision for their families. They lost their farms and have nowhere else to go, and they know of no one they can turn to for help.

I ached to be a part of this. I thought I might have a problem finding a school for my children, but Pastor Alex took us to a Canadian school 30 minutes away.

Everything was falling into place before my eyes.

Pictured here (L-R) Pastor Javier, Bob Spencer, children who live in Popular 2, Pastor Javier's daughter Yulieth (with hat on), Daisy (in white top), and I (kneeling). Daisy, a 13-year-old desplazada I interviewed, remembers her family grabbing their things and running for their lives. Once in Popular2, her mother became ill and died. Her father left to look for work and she hasn't seen him in a long time. It's just her elderly grandmother and herself.

I tried to put myself in her shoes – what would I do as a 13-year-old girl with no money, a grandmother who can barely get around, and poor living conditions? If someone promised me a huge sum of money, would I take what looked like my one chance at getting out of the slums, my one chance of taking better care of my grandmother? Would I become a drug mule? Would I turn to prostitution? Or would I fall for a boy in the village, begin a family in Popular 2, and watch heartbroken as my children faced the same choices?



I cannot wait to get in the field and begin the work my Savior has ordained for my family and me. The people are ready. The desplazados cannot rescue themselves from their disastrous situation, but Christ can. I didn't know how to help or even where to start, but God has shown me the way.

He prepared a place for me!

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