

AMELIA

By: Michelle Borquez

“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40

“What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas” is the slogan that marketing professionals use to encourage tourists to view Las Vegas as a place without boundaries. As a kid growing up in “Sin City,” I had a very different view of it. While people were gambling away and slot machines were ringing, I was in a nearby meeting room with my family and several hundred other Christians worshipping God.

Looking back, I realize that church was part of my life every day. Mom would pull out her guitar in the evening and we would worship at home, or we would have friends over for fellowship and prayer. Our life was filled daily with some type of activity that led us back to our faith. We had prayer meetings in our home, and my parents would pray all night if a family member or friend was ill. We never knew who my parents might invite to dinner. More than that, you never knew when those dinner guests would be invited to stay in-definitely. The people my parents brought home would be considered by most the lowest of the low; broke, depressed, filthy, and definitely all alone and hopeless in the world.

I remember one woman who smelled so horrible I could barely be next to her. I don't think she had showered in months. Amelia was

an angry woman. But my mother saw beyond her pain, her smelly condition, and her “issues” and brought her to the house frequently. In time, Amelia became part of our family. Mom spent hours on the phone encouraging her with the Word of God. After a few years, Amelia became a totally different person. Because my mom became Amelia’s friend she was able to help her in both practical and spiritual areas of her life. As time went on, Amelia walked with a different attitude, and her inner beauty started to shine. I Can only imagine the patience my mom had with her. Through people like Amelia, my mom and dad lived out the gospel and taught us to do the same.

It wasn’t until the last few years that I began to realize what a treasure that lifestyle was. This Daily expression of faith is where the passion lies; it’s where the excitement is. Now that I am 40, my spiritual journey has become my own, and I try to be aware of Amelias along my path by allowing church to happening the most unique places.

For example, over Thanksgiving the kids and I went to Texas to see my family. While Visiting the mall we unexpectedly made a friend. Mary was sitting quietly on a bench. We could see the challenges of her life through the tattered clothes and the expression on her face. Mary’s story was a tragic one. She had to have her foot amputated after a bout with diabetes. The bandages were barely covering her leg, and she was not being well taken care of. She had lost her husband of 40 years just weeks before and someone had broken into her car and stolen most of her belongings, including a special cross he had given her to remember him by. Mary had not eaten in

days, and only had a place to stay because a local police officer had gotten her a room in a nearby hotel.

As I stood there with my parents and my children, I thanked God for this opportunity to teach my kids what it means to live out the gospel just as my parents had done. We bought Mary some food, and dad got her phone number so he could bring her meals later. My mom bought her across at a little stand near us. My daughter eagerly gave it to her. As we put it on her, Mary began to cry. My mom, my daughter, and I prayed for her right there in the middle of the food court. That Moment was church for all of us.

Mary would be fine. At the end of the week she would be on a bus to Tennessee where her sister agreed to care for her. But my daughter, my parents and I would be changed forever.

I am trying to be more aware of the Marys and Amelias around me. I can get so caught up with my family, work, ministry, and the everyday stuff of life, that I sometimes don't see the people right in front of me. I am learning to purposefully look for opportunity to serve people. This is my journey, and it is fulfilling to be the church as opposed to doing church.

I have four siblings, and we all have the same passion to be church wherever we go because my parents took the time to demonstrate Christianity on a daily basis. Now I want to hand that down to my own children, teaching them to serve instead of being served, to love beyond what is required, to recognize that our finances are just a tool to help support the work of God, to see worship as an

opportunity to connect with Christ, to find others with the same desire to be authenticated to do life with them. My life is simple, but I am very aware of the impact I am having not only on my kids, but also on those living life around me.