

PURE RELIGION

Where There Is Work, There Is Hope

Here are some statistics for Ecuador: 70 percent of the people live below the poverty line. Inflation, which has been as high as 96 percent recently, cuts deeply into savings. Only 40 percent of Ecuadorian households have access to running water, and 44 percent have access to sewage systems. Almost half of the country's teenagers are not attending school.

Here is what they mean: families go without food, parents work from dawn until dark attempting to earn enough money to support their families, and sicknesses often go untreated because there is no insurance and families cannot pay for medical or dental care.

For many, there is little hope for change. Fathers and mothers look into the eyes of their children, knowing that they, too, will be poor, uneducated, and hungry for generations to come.

A continent away, in the city of North Logan, Utah, Clyne and Ann Long felt a desire to serve the Lord. They had been successful in business to the point where, still in their 50s, they felt they could take a leave of absence and fulfill a life-long goal of serving a mission together. The only thing they asked was that they be called to serve where the Lord could use them the best.

The Lord called them to Ecuador. Their task: to help lift the members of the Church out of poverty and into self-reliance.

Elder and Sister Long arrived in Ecuador the summer of 2001. Since arriving in Ecuador, the Longs have taught hundreds of people about finding work. They have also met with dozens of employers and explained to them that they represent a new employment office with hundreds of people who need jobs. They tell them that these people are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that these people don't drink, smoke, take drugs, or steal.



Was it possible? the employers asked. Honest employees? "I've hired many people before," one skeptical employer said, "religious people of many different denominations—they are all the same. All my help robs me, and the shoppers in the store steal anything they can. I have to spend my time watching them so they do not destroy my business."

Another employer said: "I have never hired anyone from your religion. But when I lived in the States, I lived with an LDS family, and they were people just like you described. If your people are really like you say they are, I have jobs. Right now I need 2 cashiers and 20 sales clerks. I also have many friends who are business owners who need people like this. I could give you 100 jobs almost immediately if what you say is true."

That night, as the Longs taught another lesson in finding and keeping a job, they emphasized the importance of honesty and integrity. They explained that in spite of the high unemployment rate in Ecuador, there were hundreds of jobs waiting to be filled and that the prime quality employers were looking for was not education, experience, or beauty—just plain old-fashioned honesty.

Hundreds of jobs! For many, the cycle of poverty could be broken at last.

After classes such as this, these beautiful Ecuadorian brothers and sisters would often approach Elder and Sister Long, sometimes with tears in their eyes, and thank them for loving the people of Ecuador so much that they would leave their home and family and come to help them.

"If the members of the Church will only live their religion," Sister Long later wrote, "the good report and praise will extend throughout the land. And the Saints will have work."

And when the Saints have work, there is hope that the future will not be so desperately grim. Where there is work, there is hope.