

## **Theme: Who Is My Neighbor?**

### **Life of Israel**

**Jeremiah 22:1-3** The LORD sent me to the palace of the king of Judah to speak to the king, his officials, and everyone else who was there. The LORD told me to say:

I am the LORD, so pay attention! You have been allowing people to cheat, rob, and take advantage of widows, orphans, and foreigners who live here. Innocent people have become victims of violence, and some of them have even been killed. But now I command you to do what is right and see that justice is done. Rescue everyone who has suffered from injustice. (Contemporary English Version)

### **Life of Christ**

**Matthew 25:34-35** Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...' (The New Revised Standard Version)

### **Warm Up Activity**

1. Name 5 Latino/Hispanic countries.
2. Name two people that you know personally that are of Hispanic or Latino origin.
3. Discuss how you met the Hispanic/Latino people you named.

### **Culture Study**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau there were 438,789 people of Hispanic or Latino origin living in Virginia in 2005. Daniel Carro states, "If ever, today is the day when relocating to a foreign country is not needed in order to be a cross-cultural missionary." According to Greg and Sue Smith of LUCHA Ministries, "Christians often think of programs as key to effective mission work. While programs provide needed structure, effective ministry best takes place at the level of personal relationships. Jesus touched lives by looking into people's eyes, holding their hands, and speaking their names."

Maria Benson is the WMUV Hispanic Consultant/Church Planting Specialist and is an inspirational model of ministering through personal, loving relationships with members of the Hispanic and Latino community. Following are just a few examples of how Maria has made a difference in the lives of members of that community.

### **Case Study**

With a look of concern on her face, Maria states, "When we held a health clinic at Groveton Baptist Church, we discovered many people with poor health problems. One of the ladies who attended the health clinic was diagnosed with breast cancer. We proceeded to find government help for her. Since then she has received 6 chemotherapy treatments. We also introduced her to a cancer treatment support group and they enabled her to receive help with hot food delivery service to her home. The

members of the church have started a donation drive to raise funds to help with the cost of the treatments." The excitement and passion that Maria feels about her work is obvious when she goes on to say, "Norma is another lady that attended that health clinic. She was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Norma is the mother of 5 children and her husband and 4 of the children had just arrived to the U.S. from El Salvador when the diagnosis was made. The cost associated with medical treatment for her cancer and with getting established in a new country was enormous and Norma had no means of meeting those expenses. Immediately, we went to work to provide the family with furniture, food and the other things they so desperately needed."

Maria's focus is not limited to caring for the physical and financial needs of her community. Her first and foremost goal is to bring people to a personal relationship with the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And to help accomplish that goal, she longs to see a new Spanish speaking church planted in every zip code in Virginia. She shares, "I decided to study the census in the Warrington Virginia area and I was lead by God to find a good number of Hispanics living there. Two recent seminary graduates are now helping me with home Bible study groups and visitation in the area. I contacted Sterling Park Baptist Church to see if we could use their facilities to start a Hispanic mission. They agreed to do so and in September we held our first Sunday school class and worship service." Maria concludes, "As you can see, this has been an exciting year for me in my service to God!"

### **Involvement**

1. Visit [www.almahunt.org](http://www.almahunt.org) and read *The Virginia Missions Magazine* to learn more about Virginia Baptist ministries with Latino/Hispanic people.
2. Pray for the Hispanic/Latinio Ministries of Virginia Baptist:
  - Maria Benson -- For her ministry with the people of Northern Virginia
  - Louis Orsatti -- For his work with LAMP (Latin American Mission Project) Ministry in the capital region of Virginia
  - Greg and Sue Smith -- For their work with LUCHA Ministry in the Fredricksburg area
  - Daniel Carro, Latino Kingdom Advance Ambassador -- For his work with the Virginia Baptist Latino Network
  - Ministers of Hispanic/Latino congregation churches -- For strength and courage as they minister to members of their communities
3. Find out if there are people of Latino/Hispanic decent in your community and invite them to join you in a meal or to attend church with you.

### **Commitment**

1. Make a personal commitment to pray for members of other ethnic groups.
2. Make a personal commitment to become more aware of the different ethnic groups in your community.
3. Encourage your church to make a demographic study of the community and pray together about hosting a language congregation or providing a multi-cultural worship service.

4. Encourage your church to offer ESL classes
5. Consider taking a Spanish language class or other foreign language
6. Encourage your WMU group or Bible study group to assist a Latino family who might be experiencing personal and/or financial difficulties.

**Websites:**

Christian Education materials available in Spanish:

[www.lifewaystores.com](http://www.lifewaystores.com)

[www.Cokesbury.com](http://www.Cokesbury.com)

[Christianbook.com](http://Christianbook.com)

<http://www.pcusa.org/spanish/christian-education.htm>

Medical resources written in Spanish:

<http://www.medlineplus.gov/spanish>

<http://www.medicare.gov/Spanish/overview.asp>

<http://www.hispanichealth.org>

Latin American Recipes - [http://www.ma.iup.edu/Pueblo/latino\\_cultures/recipes.html](http://www.ma.iup.edu/Pueblo/latino_cultures/recipes.html)