

Editorial

God brings us out of crises



The war in Ukraine brought a worsening of the COVID-19 crisis. Both events have brought death and economic recession. According to World Bank forecasts, the economy will shrink by 5.2 %, which will be the worst recession since World War II. The projected decline in per capita income of 3.6% will push millions of people into extreme poverty.[1] Are we on the verge of a new economic recession bringing inflation and high cost of living? Panic and despair affect both the stock market and developing countries. Around the world, governments are making multiple efforts to find solutions to the crisis. What should be the attitude of Christians? Without neglecting financial analysis, undertaking projects and taking economic measures, it is essential to remember God's action in history. It requires looking to and trusting in the God of the Bible who has all things under His control.

In order to strengthen our confidence in the Lord in the midst of crisis, we look at the case of the siege of Samaria by the king of Syria (728 B.C.). The siege of the city brought a terrible famine, collapsed its economy and brought death to its inhabitants. Food became scarce, drove the people to inhuman actions and blinded the understanding of their leadership. The crisis was not the result of the Syrians' ambition for power and conquest; it was God's deal to make the people who had abandoned him reflect. The crisis came when they least expected it (2 Kgs. 6:24-33). The pandemic, irrespective of any human explanation, could also be interpreted as God's dealings with a sinful humanity and a Christian people in the midst of a nominal religiosity. We can affirm with C.S. Lewis that "Pain is the megaphone that God uses to wake up a deaf world". In this context, we ask, how do we deal with the crises that are looming in life? Let us look at the details of the drama of the people of Samaria in order to draw some lessons for ourselves.

Increasing faith in the midst of crisis. In the face of the siege of death and famine God promised to bring the people out of their crisis through the prophet Elisha (7:1-2). The prophetic word states: "Thus says the Lord". It is not the interpretation of the prophet, but the voice of God. It underlines his intervention just when his people needed him most. Elisha affirmed to the king of Samaria's official that God would turn the crisis around: they would have plenty of food and buy it cheaply. However, the official did not believe God's word. In his unbelief he said that even if God opened the windows of heaven, such things would not happen. The prophet stressed that God would keep His word, but he would not enjoy the miracle. First challenge. Believe what God has said, trust that he has the power to change circumstances, and that all things are under his control. Our lack of faith in God and his word often prevents us from seeing beyond circumstances. The challenge is to grow in trust in God, in what his word says and in his intervention in the world and in our personal lives and society. Scripture affirms that faith is the reality of what we hope for. It is the tangible proof of what we cannot see (Heb.13:1). Acting by faith is not acting blindly, but acting on the basis of what God has said. This involves believing God and walking by faith not by sight in our daily walk (2Cor.5:7). How did God act to bring the people of Samaria out of the crisis of siege and famine?

God is not tied to any crisis. God caused great confusion in the Syrian army. He made them flee after hearing the sound of chariots and cavalry. They thought the king of Samaria had hired an army of mercenaries against them. The fearful Syrians fled and abandoned all their belongings. God had intervened in Israel to deliver them from their enemies. They went into crisis because they had forgotten their actions in their walk of life. God fought battles on their behalf from their departure from Egypt, in their passage through the wilderness, in the conquest of Canaan, and in the time of the judges. The second challenge is to affirm God's action and power in history. God is above all crises and is not subject to human schemes or strategies. God is present and involved in history, sustaining the universe and the life of his people. He is the "I am" who makes the things that are not come to pass; and the things that we do not see become a reality. God remains the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8). In the worst of crises we must look to His miraculous working, and be ready to participate with God to bring us out of the crisis. This means opening ourselves to God's action, and taking care not to tie him to our strategies, theologies or human resources. It does not mean standing idly by, but trusting that God is ready to save us with the right hand of his hand.

Taking risk in the midst of the crisis. The flight of the enemy army was not known to the king until lepers made it known to him. God had destroyed them. They were living outside the city because of their isolation due to their illness. Faced with the siege of the city, they thought, What are we doing sitting here? —they said to each other —. If we stay here we will starve, and if we go into the city we will starve too. So we may as well go out and surrender to the Syrians. If they let us live, fine; but if they kill us, we will die here anyway (7:3-4). They preferred to risk their lives, rather than see themselves die in their misfortune. Third challenge, taking risks. They took risks that the king and his decimated army did not take. The lepers were not intimidated or crushed by circumstances. They went to the Syrian camp, found it empty and full of the things they left behind. Today it means not allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by fear, obstacles, deprivation or uncertainty. Confident in God's power and action, we must take the risk of undertaking projects at the personal, family, church or societal level, in order to become agents of transformation in the context of the crisis. If we do not act, we will in any case be overtaken by the crisis. Our responsibility is to move in the certainty of God's work.

Opting for solidarity in crises. The lepers found food, clothes and many other things in the Syrian camp. In their eagerness to hoard what they found, they realized their selfish attitude: "This is not right. Today is a day of good news, and we are not spreading it. If we wait until dawn, we will be guilty. Let us go to the palace right now and give notice" (7:9). They returned to the city and told the king, who did not believe the lepers until he saw that they were telling the truth (7:13,15). When the people heard the news, they went out and plundered the Syrians' camp. Their solidarity opened the doors to deal with the famine of their people. The narrative states that the cost of food (flour and barley) came down to affordable prices. It happened according to what God had said (7:12-20). God had acted to deliver them from their enemies, but the lepers were the instrument to make the good news known to the people.

Fourth challenge, being solidarity. In today's consumer society, individualism corrodes the sense of solidarity and makes us strangers to each other. The tendency is to look out only for our own advantage. The Lord in his word encourages us to be in solidarity and to share generously, following the example of Jesus. In his incarnation he took on the likeness of his creatures and stood in solidarity with a humanity in distress and in need of salvation (Phil.2:5,8). He challenges us to turn individualism into solidarity for the well-being, development and spiritual and social dignity of our fellow human beings. This involves proclaiming and living the gospel that demands us to be in solidarity, to be agents of advocacy to bring about change for those most in need, to call to repentance those who do not know the gospel of the kingdom, and to be compassionate to those who suffer. It is a call to solidarity from the countries that have the most to the developing countries, and a challenge to all Christians to share according to the resources that each has (Acts 13:29).

Conclusion: The Word challenges us to evaluate how much we believe God. Especially in the midst of life's crises. It reminds us that there is no crisis that God cannot solve and that God is beyond circumstances. It challenges us to trust in his power and act in the world. With God we can turn crisis into opportunity. Trusting in

the God of history, we must undertake actions or projects to confront crises, taking risks if necessary to propose solutions, whether familiar, ecclesial or on behalf of the community. In the search for solutions, we must be careful not to fall into an individualism that loses sight of human solidarity. In the midst of the crisis, we are called to think about the well-being of the most vulnerable. The Word reminds us that God can bring us out of any crisis, be it spiritual, social, emotional, economic or political. God will always fulfill his purpose against all odds, and bring us to new states of maturity.

1 <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/press-release/2020/06/08/covid-19-to-plunge-global-economy-into-worst-recession-since-world-war-ii>

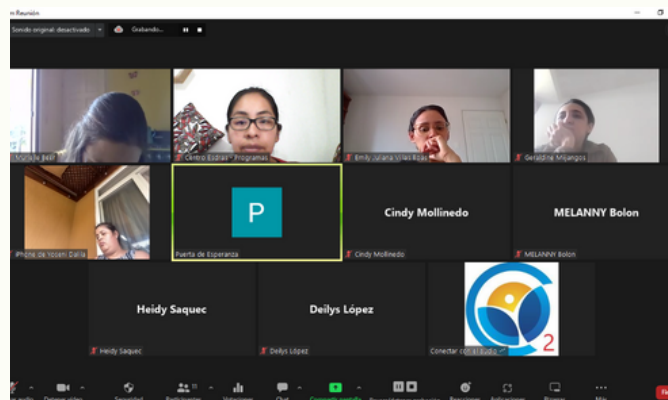
Programme of Children, Adolescents and Family

Karen Sipac

Coordinator of Programme

The objective of the Childhood, Adolescence and Family programme is to train Christian leadership in issues of protection from violence and upbringing with tenderness and positive discipline in children and adolescents from a biblical basis. With this objective in mind, the curriculum of the Diploma in Integral Development of Children and Adolescents was developed, which has already had 7 graduates and workshops on various topics that have been given to churches and Christian organisations that work with this population.

This year's diploma course has 10 students, who are being trained in the areas of Theology of Childhood, Child and Adolescent Development, Prevention and care in situations of violence against children and adolescents, and Project Development. This has allowed them to obtain tools to implement in their daily work with children and adolescents.



Theological Studies

Jeison Rodríguez

Coordinator of Diplomas

Despite how difficult it has been to coordinate each of the diploma courses that began this year, we have managed to consolidate each one of them and we have a good group of students in both Pedagogy of Jesus and Mission in the Way of Jesus. They have been trained and given support on the platform they should use to submit their assignments. In the Jesus Pedagogy diploma course, the students, most of whom are pastors, have been taught the topics of Jesus' Pedagogical Principles, Biblical Worldview and How to teach the Bible to others. On the other hand, the students of the diploma course Mission in the Way of Jesus have received the topics: The Incarnation of Jesus, Kingdom of God and The Church as Kingdom Community.

By the grace of God, we were able to develop the last modules of the Theology for Life diploma with leaders from Huehuetenango and the graduation will be in mid-July.

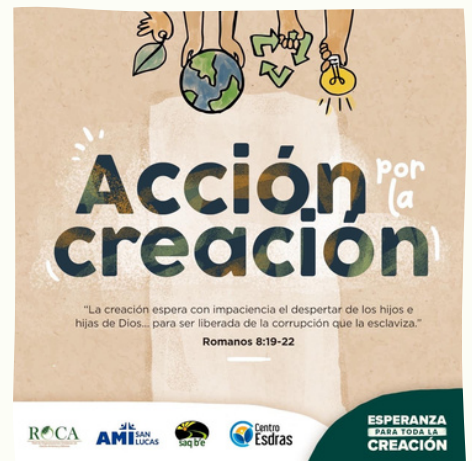


Programme of Environment

Benita Simón

Coordinator of programme

The virtual campaign "#AccionporlaCreacion (ActionForCreation)," promoted by the Environment programme, aims that, in the midst of so much consumerism and habits that damage the common home that God has created, as a Church we assume the responsibility of caring for creation, to which the Scriptures invite us. Through simple publications, we share technical information and practical ideas that can contribute to this transformation of habits. You can find more on the Facebook page: Esperanza para toda la creación / Centro Esdras.



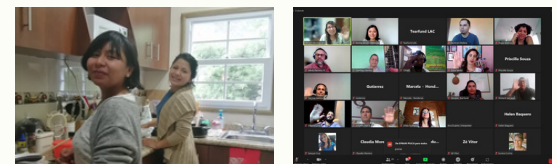
We share in the Centro Esdras blog the article "La Iglesia y el duroport (The Church and the styrofoam)", which challenges us to rethink our dynamics of coexistence within faith communities, and mentions some seemingly simple elements through which we could be seriously contributing to the socio-environmental problems of our immediate context and more global impact. You can read the article from our Facebook profile, or by going directly to our blog:

<https://centroesdras.blogspot.com/2022/04/aniversarioscultos-especiales.html>

We have much gratitude for the beautiful team of volunteers in the programme, each young person with their own concerns and discoveries, but in unity, in the same feeling and desire to see and be part of the restoration of all things, including creation. Here at our first retreat.



Workshops: We are about to share the fifth session of the material "Hope for all creation" with our dear friends and brothers of Tearfund. In each session it has been a gift to be able to share with members of your team at regional level, deepening the biblical foundations, technical bases and examples of initiatives that already exist in different regions.



EXCHANGES AND COOPERATION

In April and May we received some visits from friends, brothers and colleagues from other organizations. In April we were visited by a research group studying the growth of Christian Zionism in the Global South, led by Paul Freston. In May, we were delighted to welcome our colleagues Alexis Pachecho and Santiago Benites from Tearfund to share with members of the team and to present the consultancy report to learn more about Centro Esdras' theological and interdisciplinary Bible study programmes for church leadership to respond to the spiritual, social, economic and political challenges of their context. Finally, in May we were joined by Brian Dix and Allas Cuthbert from Horizon Education Network. They gave two face-to-face workshops to teachers at the Centre to implement the use of Moodle and other related issues.

Members of the team contribute to key groups. Robert Reich and Benita coordinate the Roca Network in which we support with biblical inputs, the director Israel Ortiz participated in the webinar "information, disinformation and transformation" organized by the Theological Fellowship of the United States, and we are working on the construction of a focal network "agents of transformation" to empower a group of former graduates of the diploma courses.



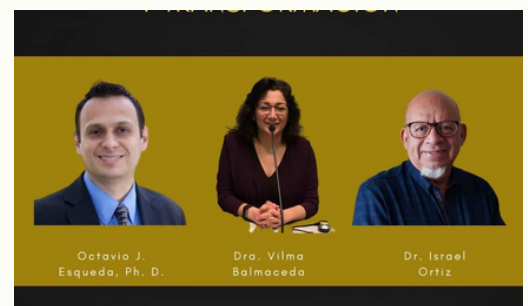
Tearfund visit



Horizon visit



Sur Global visit



Gratitude:

- For the Environment programme. The first volunteer retreat was held and 4 trainings were provided to Tearfund facilitators and several organizations have been interested in the "Hope for all creation" material.
- The Diploma in Childhood, Adolescence and Family is going very well and the students are very committed to their learning.
- The modules of the diploma courses that are being taught continue to progress.
- Thanks be to God, the Theology for Life diploma course in Huehuetenango has been completed. Despite the difficulties faced, almost 50% of the students graduated.
- The faithfulness of donors and their commitment to Centro Esdras. God has been good and allowed us to develop relationships with organizations and individuals who identify with our vision and mission.
- Thank God the COVID infected team members have recovered very well.

We thank you dear brothers and sisters inside and outside Guatemala for your spiritual accompaniment and support in the journey of the ministry.

Please, PRAY for the following:

- For the good reception of God's people to the "Action for Creation" awareness campaign launched by the Environment programme; and for the programme's volunteers who will receive a preparation course to deliver the material "Hope for All Creation."
- The planning, promotion, students and logistics of the course "Jugando nos Fortalecemos" which will take place in September.
- For the team, coordination and elaboration process of the School for Parents material.
- For the teaching staff, their preparation and spiritual care, for the good performance of the students and for those who are having difficulties with the Moodle platform, and for the coordination of the follow-up logistics.
- For the development of key projects of Centro Esdras to be presented to foreign donors. May the Lord give us much grace and open doors.
- Continue to pray for the Lord's provision for the ministry of the Centre, the staff, and especially for the recruitment of teachers through missionary or local agencies and the resources to cover salaries.

Do you enjoy reading?

We have some books on sale (in Spanish)



- Diccionario Bíblico Contemporáneo Q.150.00
- El Shalom y la Justicia de Dios Q.50.00
- Esperanza para toda la Creación Q.60.00
- Reinventando la Misión en América Latina Q.150.00

**Home delivery at additional cost



DONATE!

Be part of the vision. Together we can do so much for the formation of the leadership of the people of God.

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