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*'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Sir,' he replied, 'let me see again.' Luke 18: 41*

Dear Friends,

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, Santiago Caal Chen, a 40 year old Q'eqchi man from the village of Sierra Monterrey, arrived at my door. Three weeks earlier, I joined a local mission team of about 15 – catechists, musicians, women, and children who hiked the rigorous 2 hour trip (I rode mule) to Sierra Monterrey, the most remote village in our pastoral area. The views were breathtaking! The path consisted of exhausting inclines, but finally, tired but happy; we entered the humble community consisting of 15 families nestled among acres of cardamom, rain forest, and hills. Sierra Monterrey had been founded 11 years ago by 6 families and Santiago and his family were one these. I



I informed the people that there would be eye exams and vision testing at my home in Santiago Ixcán by a trained eye care promoter at the end of June. I encouraged Santiago to participate because he was one of two catechists in the village and was having difficulty reading the Bible due to failing vision.

One goal of Ixcán Ministries is to offer the community short-term health clinics from our mission base. About a year and a half ago, I contacted Dr. Scott Peck, an ophthalmologist from Portland, Oregon, who is doing eye care in the Ixcán through Enfoqueixcán, a non-profit organization he founded and directs. One of Enfoqueixcán's local, trained promoters had been scheduled to do a one-day eye vision clinic at the end of June in my home mission base. Two days prior to the scheduled eye clinic, the promoter was forced to cancel due to a family emergency. I had advertised the clinic by word of mouth but did not remember who I had told. Now here was Santiago from distant Sierra Monterrey for an eye exam. My heart sank. I apologized profusely while explaining the situation. He graciously replied, "No tenga pena, hermana." (Don't feel bad, sister.) I offered him a cold drink and inquired, "Can you see distance?" "Yes, but I can't see words or letters close up," he replied. My heart leapt! "Perhaps I can help you, wait a minute!"

About a year ago, Lynn with Familias de Esperanza/Common Hope in Antigua, a non-profit organization based out of St. Paul, Minn., had given me some basic reading glasses with a hand held vision eye chart and a 20 minute explanation of how to do a vision test. I scrambled to a back room and pulled out the plastic bag with the glasses! In minutes Santiago was trying on various strengths of glasses while he held the eye chart at reading length. Finally, he chose the glasses that he could see with best! I ran to the chapel and grabbed the Bible in Spanish. Placing the open holy book in his hands, I asked him, "Can you see the words? Can you read the words?" "Yes, perfectly!" He responded. We both beamed! I was delighted that his vision needs were simple enough that I was able to help him, thanks to the help I had received. I invited him for lunch and he began to share his amazing journey that led him and his family to Sierra Monterrey.

Tens of thousands of Guatemalans fled systematic army repression between 1980 and 1983 during the devastating 36-year civil war that flooded southern Mexico with refugees. Santiago was one of these, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at the time, who was forced to flee with his family to Chiapas, Mexico from their home in Santa Maria Dolores in the Ixcán. There they lived for 15 long years during which time he met and married Rosa.

