



LanghamTM

PARTNERSHIP

Equipping a new generation of Bible teachers

90 Days on Galapagos

The **Galapagos Islands** are famous for their turtles, and for the visit of Charles Darwin in 1835 on board *HMS Beagle*. Less well known will be the visit of 58-year-old Ecuadorian pastor, **Jaime** (pronounced Hymie) **Sempertegui**, in 2013. A small church of about 30 people invited him to come from Quito and help them with some serious problems that they had. He spent 90 days there (the maximum allowed). When he left, the church had multiplied more than five times. An extraordinary story, but then Jaime himself has an extraordinary story. Here it is as he told it to Chris Wright during the Langham Preaching seminar in Ecuador in November.

I met my wife when we were about 20 years old. I was a committed atheist, and she was a committed believer. But God gave her a command to marry me, with a promise from Jeremiah 24 that I was like one of the 'good figs' in the land of Babylon. I was 'in Babylon' all right. I was a left-wing atheist intellectual, a member of the Communist-Leninist-Marxist Party in Ecuador. I was head of their communications and part of their radical, violent section. I was involved in several armed actions.

'Kill me if you like.'

But the Lord began to 'close in' on me, bit by bit. I lost a lot of money. My parents died. I got very sick and ended up completely paralysed from my waist down. By that time I had been married already 18 years. During that paralysis, God said to me, "Give me your life! Surrender to me." But I said back to God, "You can kill me if you like, or cut off my legs, but I will not give you my life." The next day, I woke up completely healed and able to walk. I was checked by three groups of doctors and they could not explain it. So a big struggle started within me. Did God really exist? From then on, I found that I could no longer talk about the class struggle in language of hatred and violence. I could only talk about love.

8 months later, I was unemployed and desperate, with no money at all. So at last I prayed — "God, if you really do exist, and if you want me to have a job, you'd better get me one yourself." Within 3 months, I was given a job as a pastor of a church! And for the last 17 years I have been serving God as a pastor.

'How can I talk about you if I don't know you?'

I left Quito and went to another city and was pastoring there. I started to preach on the radio in that city. But I said to God, "How can I talk about you when I don't know much about you?" God replied, "Don't worry, I will put words in your mouth to speak." I used to be amazed, and sometimes terrified, at what he gave me to say when preaching on the radio. Then I would come home after I'd preached, and my wife would show me in the Bible the passages that I had unconsciously used to talk about the Lord.

*Some years later God called me back to Quito again and I joined other pastors in the city. At that time my son Daniel decided to go to seminary. Now he too is pastoring a church in the city. For a while he used to work for Compassion International, and in 2008 he was sent as one of their delegates to the **first Langham Preaching seminar in Quito**. He went along with my wife. I could not attend because of my pastoral commitments. But what my son and my wife were learning impressed me so much that I went along just to listen. But when the next cycle of seminars started, I joined and ended up leading one of the "escuelitas" [Preachers' Clubs in Latin America], with five other pastors.*

'Missionary preaching'

Langham helped me change my preaching a lot, for the better. Before, I was like a missionary when I preached. I knew where I started out from, but I never knew where I would end up. Now I know how to plan the

whole thing and close the deal at the end.

I then took that group of five pastors to do more training in the north of Quito and 35 more pastors there have been trained by Langham methods in Bible preaching. People are coming to their churches now, saying "We used to get just fantasies and stories in our churches, but you are giving us solid food."

My wife died in May 2013. I owe everything, under God, to my wife and my son.



Job done

So what happened in **Galapagos** — where Jaime went just a month after the death of his wife? He called together a group of 26 from the church and met with them every Friday and taught them how to understand and preach the Bible, using Langham materials. At the end of three months, 14 of them had completed the course. Meanwhile, as they had begun preaching in the church, the church rapidly grew from about 30 to 160 members. Before Jaime left, they held an all-night prayer meeting and all 160 people came. Through the night, every one of the 14 preached from the Bible, 'and every one was excellent', said Jaime!

After his 90 days, he left the church with 160 members, 14 lay preachers, and a pastor sent by the denomination. A month later one of the 14 phoned him to say, 'We've been teaching the new pastor how to preach from the Bible!'

Jaime just twinkles with a shy crooked smile: 'I said to myself, "My job is done!"'

'John Stott foresaw the rise of Christianity in the global south before most others. He got out there first and he saw the need for training. This ministry [Langham] has been a game changer.'

Tim Keller

Author and Pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York.