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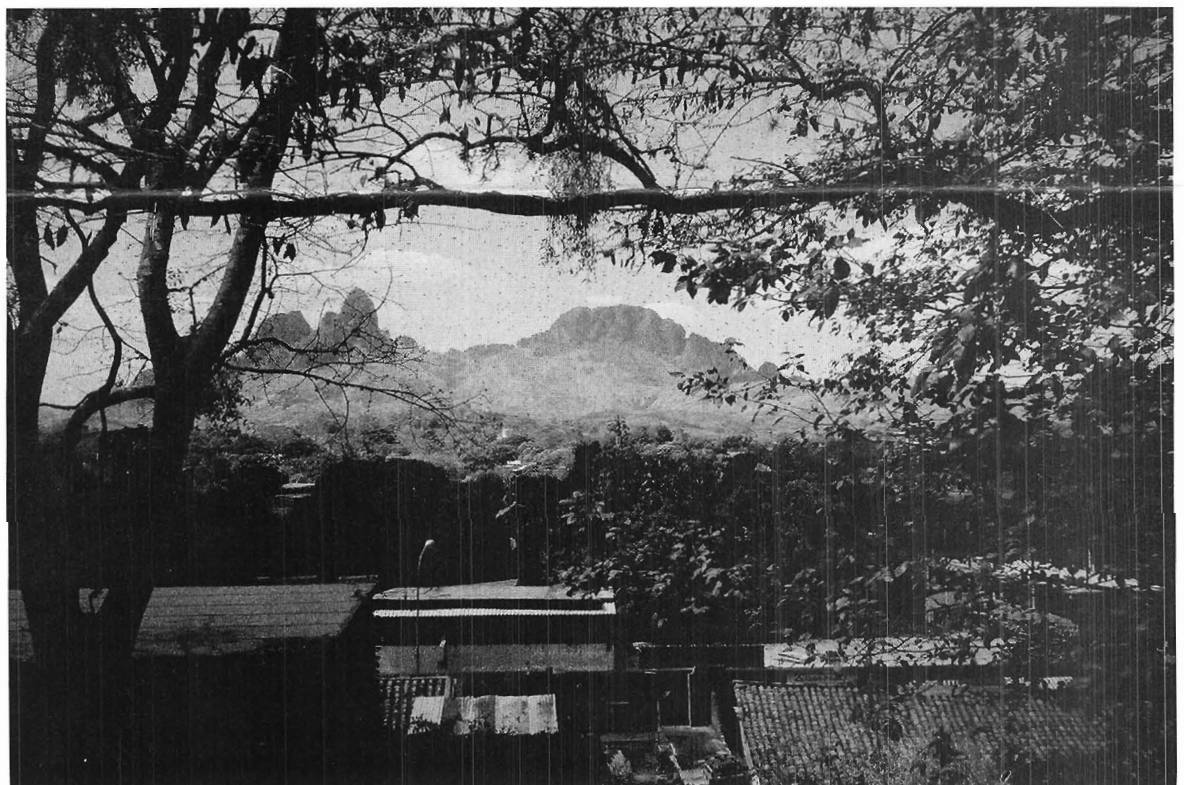
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How can a country so rich, be so poor? Venezuela has one of the largest known oil deposits in the world as well as huge quantities of coal, iron ore, bauxite and gold. Yet in this resource rich country, up to 85% of Venezuelans live in poverty in shanty towns, the most infamous of which sprawl over the hillsides around the capital, Caracas. Few Venezuelans have gained from its wealth. The oil boom largely benefited the middle class, but the subsequent collapse of world oil prices condemned many of this class to poverty while eroding the living standards of the already impoverished.

A culture of non-accountability has combined with official corruption and political appointments in state-owned industries and government bureaucracies to produce a cumbersome, inefficient and poorly-maintained public sector and public services. In 1998 Venezuelans elected Hugo Chavez, a former army officer who promised to eradicate corruption and reform the public sector. But political unrest and deep divisions have characterized the president's term in office. His supporters and detractors staged street protests, and a general strike called by the opposition left the oil-reliant economy reeling.

As Mr. Chavez grew more powerful, his critics said he was leading Venezuela towards a Cuban-style authoritarian government. He was also criticized for courting countries which attract US or international disapproval, namely Cuba, Iraq and Libya. In 2001 he introduced controversial economic measures which gave rise to mass protests and strikes. This climate of chaos has left this rich and beautiful country destitute and hopeless.



Hope is what Christ is all about. Our Venezuelan representative, Juan Jose Decena (pictured at the far right) currently states that there are approximately 850 students studying in our Video Bible School.

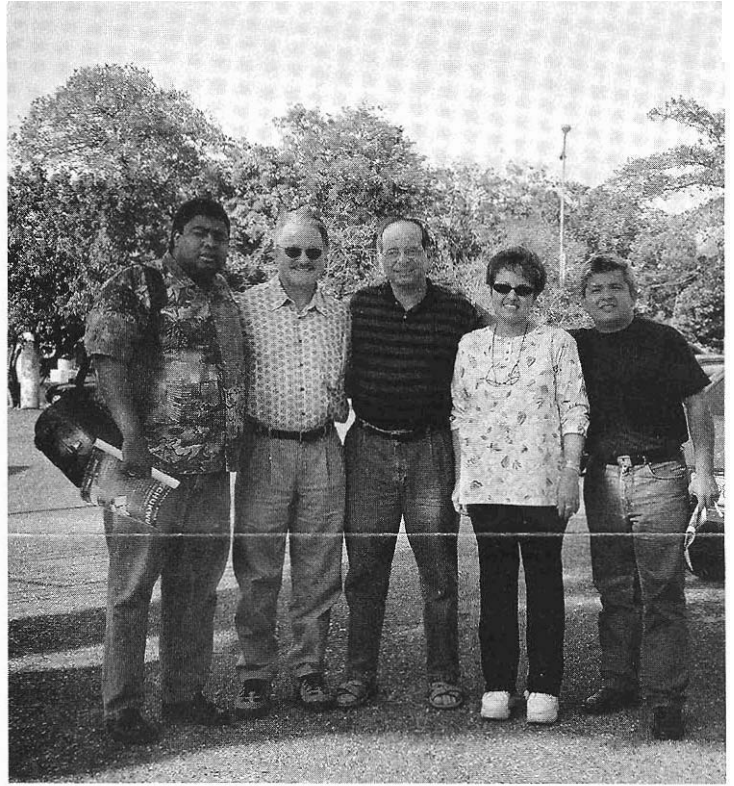
Several years ago, we set up lending libraries throughout many parts of the country. Our representative has reported to us that 160 churches were using our materials. There is tremendous spiritual hunger as the people of this nation are struggling for survival.

Jorge Gamboa, Pastor Randy Barr and I were able to take seven different DVD courses, just finished by Jorge in the studio. Three of these were new releases, and four were courses that have been digitally re-formatted thanks to your contributions.

Would you help us to produce more courses on a DVD format? It costs \$1,000 for 10 lessons. If you sponsor a 10 lesson course we will acknowledge that on the video production.

Together We Touch the World!

*Ju & Carol*



All contributions are tax deductible  
Make checks payable to L S M I  
(Lee Short Ministries International)



Looking for

**HOPE**

*Venezuela at large*