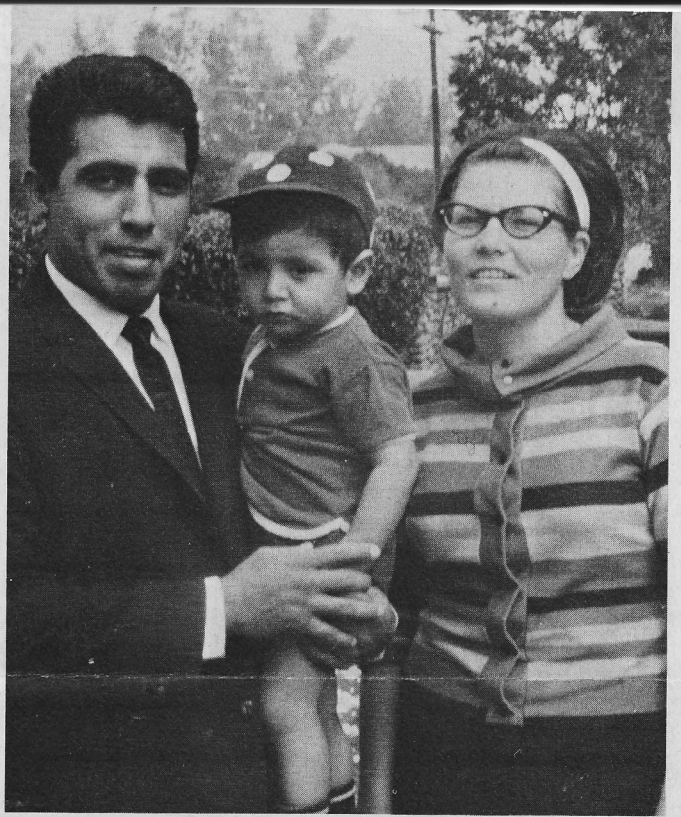


SIN SEPARATED MANNY AND ME, BUT—

# GOD BROUGHT US BACK TOGETHER



Manny and Helen Gonzalez and son.

A Story of Deliverance from Drug Addiction Told by HELEN GONZALEZ

I WILL NEVER FORGET the night of December 1, 1965. The phone rang. Fearfully, I answered it. "Manny is in jail for another narcotics violation," the voice said.

In jail again?

"Oh, when will this nightmare end?" I cried.

Manny was my son's father.

I remembered how he had started using heroin when he was only 17 and how he had suddenly changed. No longer did he want to go with the gang. Now he was a loner, his only companion—heroin.

This drug drove Manny into a life of crime. In and out of jails, hospitals, camps, prisons.

"I'll turn over a new leaf this time," he'd tell his parents and me whenever he was released. But his promises soon became hollow, meaningless words. He never kept them.

Finally, in desperation, I declared, "I've given up on you, Manny. I want nothing to do with you. Stay away—forever. Don't push me into the hell of heroin."

Manny stayed away. Yet one day I found myself cooking heroin, picking it up with a dropper and injecting it into my own veins. I was shackled by the same chain as Manny.

I hated myself for the mess I was in—especially when I looked into the sweet, innocent face of my six-month-old baby boy. I loved him so much. I just had to change—for his sake.

The road up is never easy, I soon found.

I asked a priest for help. He referred me to a nearby rehabilitation center. But I didn't have the kind of money they wanted. Nor could I spend the two years they suggested. After all, I had a little one dependent on me.

General Hospital suggested I go to a certain hospital for addicts. But I knew it was more like a jail than a hospital and that many of my friends who had been through this program were still mainlining.

One day, God in His mercy, allowed me to find a "Hook Card" that had the address and phone number of the Los Angeles Teen Challenge Center. On the other side, the card said: "Society says, 'Once an addict, always an addict.' But Jesus says, 'I am the way and the truth . . . and the truth shall set you free.'"

Curious to know what all this meant, on January 18, 1966, I went to the TC Center on South Hobart. I was a bitter woman. Mentally, spiritually, and physically sick. No purpose in life. But as I listened to the gospel of Christ, a glimmer of hope was beamed to my heart. Perhaps there was hope for me . . . maybe there was even hope for Manny.

At last, I decided to commit my wasted life to Christ. I asked Him into my heart. And He made me a new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things passed away. All things became new.

After staying five months at the TC Center, I decided to go home for a few days. It was there that temptation met me face to face. An addict friend offered me a fix. Deep down in my heart I was afraid. Would I yield?

But then the promise of 1 John 4:4 came to me, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

Suddenly I was no longer afraid. I knew the Lord was in me. The desire for heroin was gone—forever gone. Praise His name!

Imagine my joy when I heard that Manny had also accepted Christ as Saviour while he was in jail. Now we were both free from the sin that had driven us apart. The love of God brought us back together again.

Today we are married and serving the Lord at the Inland Empire Teen Challenge Center in Cucamonga, California, where Manny has recently been appointed supervisor. We have a happy Christian home.

It's over two years now since Manny and I have had a fix. We don't need any. We have Christ in our hearts and that's all we need!