

“Come Back to God”



COLOMBIA | August 17

Wilinton

When the song ended, Wilinton recited his favorite Bible verse. It was John 3:16.

That day marked the beginning of a new friendship.

Over the next three years, Jaime kept visiting Wilinton and telling him, “Please, come back to God.”

Wilinton always had the same reply. “Yes,” he said. “Don’t worry. I will.” But he didn’t.

Jaime offered Bible studies, but Wilinton wasn’t interested. He liked Jaime, but he didn’t want to spend time with God.

Still, he defended the seventh-day Sabbath to his wife and two sons, who went to church on Sundays.

“You don’t need to go to that church,” he said. “It’s a waste of time. If you want to spend your time wisely, you should go to a Seventh-day Adventist church.”

As Wilinton kept drinking without a steady income, he sank deeply into debt.

One evening, Jamie arrived at Wilinton’s house with an Adventist pastor and several other church members. The front door was open, and they entered the house before Wilinton knew it.

The pastor gave a five-minute sermon, but Wilinton didn’t hear the pastor speaking. He felt like he was hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. The sermon touched his heart.

Then Jamie invited him to evangelistic meetings that had just begun at the Adventist church.

“Your mother asked me to tell you, ‘Come to God,’” he said.

After the visitors left, Wilinton decided to

Wilinton drank alcohol for the first time after church one Sabbath in Bogotá, Colombia. He was 14, and he gave in to pressure from friends.

After the first drink, he drank nearly every day for the next 24 years.

Wilinton moved out of his parents’ house when he was 17. Then he moved in with his girlfriend and lived with her for 21 years. They had two sons. He drank at every opportunity. Because of his drinking, he couldn’t hold down a job.

One day, a friend of his father came to his house and found him drunk.

“Wilinton, I know your father,” said the friend, whose name was Jaime. “You can return to God.”

“Are you an Adventist?” Wilinton asked, his speech slurred.

“Yes, I’m an Adventist,” Jaime said.

“If you are an Adventist, sing to me Hymn No. 500,” Wilinton said. The hymn was “Far Beyond the Sun.”

Jaime sang the hymn, and Wilinton wept.



Story Tips

- Show Colombia on the map. Then show Bogotá, where Wilinton lives, and the cities of Buenaventura and Puerto Tejada, where the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open centers of influence for at-risk children.
- Pronounce Wilinton as: WILL-ing-ton.
- Pronounce Jaime as: hi-MEE.
- Watch a short YouTube video of Wilinton: bit.ly/Wilinton-IAD.
- Read more about Wilinton next week.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Inter-American Division: bit.ly/iad-2024.
- Know that this mission story illustrates Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan, "To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives." The evangelistic meetings illustrate Mission Objective No. 2, "To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions," and the Thirteenth Sabbath projects illustrate Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, "To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults," and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, "To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview." For more information, visit: IWillGo2020.org.

stay at home with his family.

Then his 12-year-old son came up to him.

"Father, you told me that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the true church," he said. "Please take me to that church."

The words broke Wilinton's heart. He decided to take his family to the evangelistic meetings at the Adventist church.

That evening's presentation surprised Wilinton. He thought that it was about him. He thought, "How does this pastor know so much about me?" Then he began to weep. He thought about his alcoholism and his debts. His life of sin weighed heavily on him.

When the pastor made an altar call, Wilinton said to himself, "I can't go to the front. When I leave, I'm going to go to the bar to drink."

He decided not to go forward.

But before he realized it, he was standing at the front with 17 other people.

He prayed silently, "God, I can't be here. You know that I'm going to drink tonight."

After the meeting, he went to the bar. As he drank, he reflected on the sermon. He felt something inside him was different.

Three weeks passed, and he kept drinking. Every time he drank, he sensed that the Holy Spirit was saying, "I will help you to stop drinking if you make a firm decision to quit."

On the fourth week, he told himself, "I can't keep doing this. I have to make a decision, either for God or for alcohol."

At the end of the week, on Saturday night, he chose God. He prayed, "God, I don't want to drink anymore." In the morning, he prayed again, saying, "God, help me today, one day at a time, to stop drinking."

To his surprise, he didn't drink all that day. It was his first day of victory since he started drinking at the age of 14. He thought with surprise, "I thought that I would never stop drinking, but God has helped me."

When Jaime heard the news, he was delighted. Wilinton was coming back to God. 🌍

This mission story provides an inside look at life in Colombia and missional challenges

there. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open two centers of influence to help children who are at risk of alcohol and drug abuse in Colombia. The centers of influence will be in the cities of Buenaventura and Puerto Tejada. Thank you for planning a generous offering on September 28.

By Andrew McChesney