

In Paul's Footsteps



COLOMBIA | August 24

Wilinton

“I have an idea,” he said.

“I also have an idea,” Jaime said. “Tell me your idea first.”

“I think that God is telling me to be a light in those bars where there is only darkness,” Wilinton said.

“Wow!” Jaime exclaimed. “That’s the same idea that I had.”

It seemed like more than a coincidence. The two men agreed that the Holy Spirit must be calling Wilinton to help alcoholics.

Over the next week, Wilinton invited people in bars to come to his house to study the Bible. Eleven people showed up for the first Bible study on Sabbath afternoon.

As the weeks passed, the group grew too large to meet in his home. Wilinton rented a larger house. When the group grew too large for that house, they moved to a hall. People were baptized, and the group kept growing.

Finally, Wilinton decided that the group needed to own its own place. He looked for a building to buy, but city property was expensive. As he prayed, he felt impressed to visit a bar that he had frequented from the age of 16. It seemed improbable, but if he could buy the bar, it could be remodeled into a meeting hall.

He prayed, “God, do You really want me to work for you in a bar?”

Wilinton sought out the bar owner and learned that the building was up for sale.

The owner immediately recognized Wilinton, and he was shocked to see him sober.

“Is that really you?” he asked.

Wilinton’s life began to change after he stopped drinking in Bogotá, Colombia.

He got a job, he began paying off his debts, and he married his common-law wife.

Then Wilinton, his wife, and their 12-year-old son decided to give their hearts to God in baptism.

A day before Wilinton’s baptism, a Seventh-day Adventist friend predicted that God had big plans for him. “You are going to be the next apostle Paul,” said the friend, Jaime. “You are going to help many people.”

It didn’t take long for Wilinton to realize that God was calling him to help alcoholics.

A month after his baptism, as he was walking to church on a Sabbath morning, he sensed a voice say, “Stop right here.”

He stopped. Looking up, he saw a city street lined with bars where he used to drink.

The voice said, “You are going to help all these people. You drank, and now you are going to help others who drink. I’ll give you opportunities, and I’ll help you not to relapse.”

At church, Wilinton sought out Jaime.



“Yes, it’s me,” Wilinton said.

“Do you remember how you used to come here to drink all the time?” he said.

“Yes, I remember.”

The owner shook his head in disbelief. “I know you,” he said. “I can’t believe that you have a new life.”

He named the price for the building.

Wilinton didn’t have that kind of money. He told other church members about the building, but they also didn’t have the funds.

Wilinton wasn’t discouraged. “The plans of God are perfect,” he told them. “Don’t worry. This building will be ours.”

He and the other church members started to pray and raise funds. A year later, they bought the bar and turned it into an Adventist church and center of influence.

Today, 50 people worship in the church every Sabbath. During the week, the center of influence offers life-skills classes and a program to stop drinking.

Wilinton, who is a church elder and deputy director of the center of influence, said that, through his small group, more than 15 former alcoholics have given their hearts to Jesus and been baptized. In addition, 85 people have been baptized through the new church and center of influence over the past three years.

“Now I am working for Jesus and seeking the missing,” Wilinton said. “I have decided to be like Paul, always sharing the gospel and asking God for His power to lead people to Him.”

He added, “God’s plans are perfect, and they never change.” 🌍

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.

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.
- 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 the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, “To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples,” and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives.” 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, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- The 1980s and 1990s were a period of brutal political violence in Colombia. In some places, church members and pastors were kidnapped, tortured, or forced to flee their homes.