

Rafael Manzanares and his wife, Loretta, returned to the island of his birth to preach the Gospel. While helping a farmer friend, Rafael was shown the realities of life and death while laboring for the harvest. Through these trials, God revealed to Rafael what it would take to truly have ...

# S<sup>a</sup> Shepherd's Heart

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photos by Tom Price

*Hundreds of windmills adorn the island of Mallorca, off the coast of Spain. Some pumped waters; others ground grain into flour. While most are inactive, islanders look for ways to preserve their national treasure.*



*Rafael and Loretta Manzanares struggle with unfamiliar worship songs in the mission hymnal.*



*Rafael initially found joy in helping shepherd a friend's sheep. Lessons learned there prepared him for the ministry ahead.*



Rafael teaches at the Santa Ponsa Community Church, where the population is mostly English.



Rafael encourages longtime Mallorca resident Sydney Potts.



A time for prayer is set aside after the service.



The island of Mallorca.

*He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.*

Isaiah 40:11

**T**he thought of becoming a pastor in his hometown of Capdepera, Mallorca—a small island off the east coast of Spain—had a romantic appeal to 30-year-old Rafael Manzanares. He envisioned himself shepherding God's people, feeding them His Word. What he did not anticipate were the diseases, storms, wolves, and death that go along with holding the shepherd's staff.

From the moment Rafael began pastoring the Santa Ponsa Community Church in April 2002, he and the sheep came under attack. Within a short period of time, Susan, a dear sister in the Lord, passed away. On the day of her death, Rafael also saw a 24-year-old woman lying dead in the street, the victim of a head-on collision. He led both funerals back-to-back.

From there it was off to the intensive care unit where he spent weeks on end watching friends, children, and church members suffer from ailments caused by car wrecks, heart attacks, cancer, and old age. Since Rafael had grown up an unbeliever in Mallorca, there were those who mocked his ministry. Previous friends and acquaintances laughed at the thought of this former cocaine addict leading a church.

"People who do not know God wonder—even in their laughter—if I sincerely have a relationship with the Lord," said Rafael. His stormy rookie year there reminded him of the weeks he spent helping a friend, Jeroni, shepherd his sheep and farm his fields.

At first, Jeroni's sheep brought simple joy. Rafael checked on the pregnant ewes daily and celebrated new life, especially while holding newborn lambs in his arms. But farm life is hard, as Rafael soon found. One of the pregnant sheep became sick, agonized for days, and died along with her two unborn lambs.

"When I was farming with Jeroni, it was as if the Lord was preparing me for the future. He allowed me to experience things that He could later remind me of when it got tough in ministry," recalled Rafael. "I was excited to take over the care of this church and was thankful for the privilege. But the intensive care unit, deaths, and funerals caught me off guard. The Lord reminded me of previous experiences on the farm—joy and sorrow mingled together. Watching life and death has made me realize our hope is not here but in heaven with the Lord. Our living hope is in the resurrection from the dead, the resurrected life."

Rafael's life is a story of endings and new beginnings. As a boy in Mallorca, he often caught crabs on the shores of the Mediterranean around 800-year-old castles. Catholicism is the main religion, but the majority of the people don't believe in God. At age 13, Rafael moved to Annapolis, Maryland, when his mother married an American military man. The family later moved to Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he learned English, graduated from high school, and joined the Army.

Having been stationed in Germany during Desert Storm, Rafael chose to stay in Europe after leaving the military. There he dabbled in cocaine and other drugs while working in a bar. Shuffling between Germany and Mallorca, Rafael was soon shackled by



The congregation is made up of families of expatriates from the British Isles. Rafael teaches in English on the west side of the island and shares in Spanish on the east coast.

his cocaine habit. Family and friends insisted he get help, so Rafael weaned himself from the drug. When he had kicked the habit, he flew to North Carolina where he hoped to get into college. A family friend who led Bible studies invited Rafael into his home.

“I didn’t really care what these people believed, but the Lord was working in my heart,” said Rafael. A 10-year-old girl asked him if he was a Christian. Not wanting to spoil her faith, Rafael responded yes. She questioned his honesty. “The Lord showed me that I was not a Christian through a little girl,” mused Rafael.

Months later, at a Southern Baptist tent revival, Rafael acknowledged his belief in Jesus Christ. Because he could not read English well, he began watching the Gospel of Luke video repeatedly. “Two days after I got saved, I met Dave Shirley (formerly the pastor of CC Fayetteville, NC). Dave had been praying for Spain and shared its need for pastors. I laughed and thought to myself, ‘You keep on praying.’”

Rafael began attending Dave’s church. He loved studying the Bible and having access to a myriad of teaching tapes. Six months later, Rafael served at the CC Bible College in Austria where he met many missionaries. He later moved to CC Westminster in London to serve with Pastor Brian Brodersen. He met his future wife, Loretta, while working at the Pizza Hut close to the church, and introduced her to a relationship with Christ. Less than a year later, Dave Shirley performed their wedding ceremony.

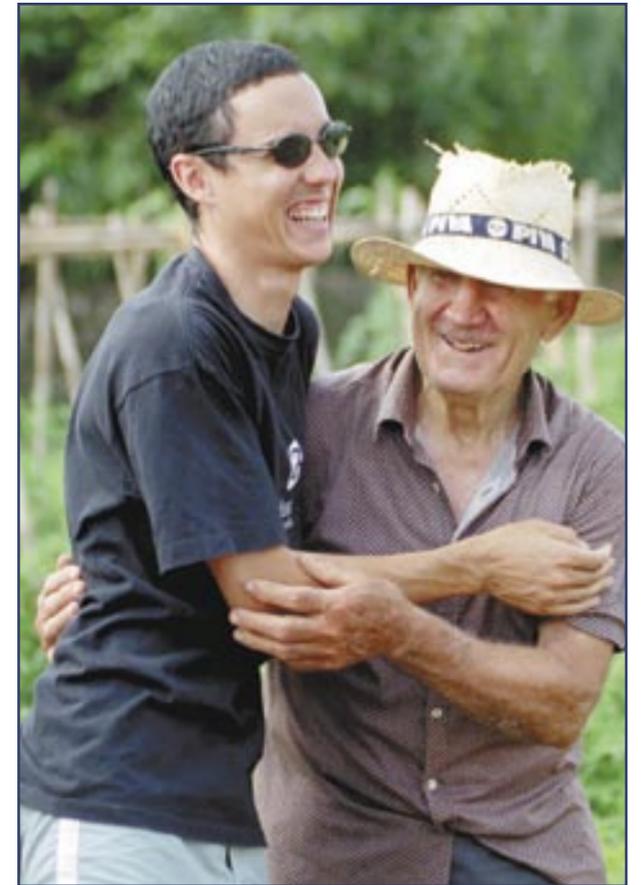
Soon after their wedding, Rafael and Loretta traveled to Mallorca to spend time with Rafael’s elderly grandmother. They encountered two of Rafael’s old friends, Betina and Marcos. “I used cocaine with Betina, and Marcos was one of the craziest guys in town. Both had become believers and gotten married.”

As the four spent time together, excitement grew to spread the Gospel on the island. Loretta and Rafael began to pray about moving to Mallorca. The Lord kept bringing to their minds the story of Jonathan and his armor bearer in I Samuel 14:6, “Let us go over ... it may be that the LORD will work for us.”

“That ‘may be’ really got me thinking,” said Rafael. “We could go back to England, but if God wanted us to step out, we would miss the blessing of being used by the Lord in Mallorca,” recalled Rafael. After making the decision to move to Mallorca, the retiring pastor of Santa Ponsa Community Church asked Rafael to consider becoming the new pastor.



*Rafael assists Jeroni, a Spanish farmer, who has been tending his fields and flocks for 70 years. Lessons learned from Jeroni have been instrumental in preparing Rafael for the ministry.*



*Jeroni laughs at Rafael's lack of farming knowledge.*



*Jeroni irrigates his vegetables by opening a small canal from a nearby stream, using only his shovel.*

Today, the church is becoming grounded as its members are being taught through the Bible, chapter by chapter. The church is growing and has helped feed the poor in the community.

“I’ve learned a lot from my farmer friend,” said Rafael. “When I become discouraged and begin to think, ‘It seems like nothing is happening! What’s going on, Lord?’ God reminds me of Jeroni. This man has been tending his animals daily for 70 years through good and bad weather. The circumstances of life never interfere with his duties. He has been plowing the ground, sowing the seed, watering the soil, hoping for the sun and rain, and waiting for the fruit. Jeroni works hard, and every year he enjoys



*A cell phone call is a good excuse for a break while Jeroni continues to work diligently.*

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*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.*

Matthew 9:36

Mallorca



*Rafael and Loretta Manzanares share the good news of Jesus Christ with local islanders.*



*Rafael talks with a friend from his youth, Marcos Alzamora, left, who was a drug addict before accepting Jesus as his Savior. Both now testify of great things the Lord has done.*

the harvest. Some years are more productive than others, but there is always fruit.

“Jeroni’s life reminds me to take heed to the words of Paul, **‘You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ... The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.’**”

2 Timothy 2:3, 6-7

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