

'QUENCH'

RECOVERY MINISTRY IN MONTEBELLO, CA, HELPS FORMER ADDICTS SATISFY THEIR SPIRITUAL THIRST

Story by Margot Bass
Photos by Amador Payan

Liz Cabrera had been an alcoholic for more than 20 years when her 11-year-old daughter confronted her in July 2013. "I felt a shame I'd never felt before," recalled Liz. She promised to change; that day she prayed: "God, if You're real, can You send somebody to direct me to You?" That week, her prayer was answered: her craving for alcohol disappeared, and she accepted Christ as her Savior. "I've never looked back," said Liz, who began attending a Calvary Chapel in Montebello, CA, that month.

But she knew she needed help to stay sober: "Temptation is always there." In September, she found the church's Quench ministry, a weekly Bible study for those struggling with addiction. Greeted warmly by Martha Lojero, Liz recalled, "I just started crying. I was shown love and Jesus." Liz still remembers the teaching on joy from Philippians, given by Martha's husband Armando.

"I had no joy in my circumstances, other than the joy of knowing Jesus," Liz explained. At the time she was estranged from her husband, a homeless drug addict. In the four years since she joined, God has restored their marriage, both are free from addiction, and they attend church and Quench as a family. She now serves as a small group facilitator "because of everything the Lord did for me."

Senior Pastor Pancho Juarez related why he named the ministry Quench: "You can only quench this appetite for drugs or alcohol with the Living Water from Jesus Christ." Jesus says in John 7:37b-38, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me ... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Between 60 to 100 attend Quench every Friday night, coming from a variety of backgrounds. Their addictions include alcohol, methamphetamines, heroin, and pornography. Some come from incarceration, by court order or referral from local agencies. Armando, the elder over Quench, said most attendees are now believers at CC

Montebello, now called The Ark Montebello. "Many of them love God but still struggle," he said. "They've tried other substance abuse treatments. The only thing that will change them is the Word of God." He added, "We ask them: what is your truth, and where are you getting it from?"

That's why each two-hour meeting begins with worship and Scripture. "We usually go through the Bible verse by verse," said Associate Pastor Abel Maldonado, who founded Quench. "There's application in the Bible for everything they're facing." Participants break into men's or women's groups led by facilitators. They discuss the teaching and share their struggles. Facilitators respond with biblical truth.

"You can only quench this appetite for drugs or alcohol with the Living Water from Jesus Christ."

Pastor Pancho Juarez

Restored Souls Give Back

Having been freed from addiction, the small group facilitators are key. "We encourage the more mature believers to

follow up with beginners," Abel said; most attendees have an accountability partner. When working with addicts, Abel offered, "Love them. Have patience with them. Be sensitive to what they are going through. Understand the problem is not medical but spiritual. They need Jesus."

Abel started Quench in 1998. After time in prison for armed robbery, he accepted Christ and began attending the Calvary Chapel in Montebello. "I went to any Bible study I could find. God restored my family," he said. Asked to lead a group for addicts, Abel said, "The Lord put it on my heart to help people with the same problem I had." When he became an associate pastor 10 years ago, Armando began leading Quench with his wife Martha teaching the ladies.



Assoc. Pastor
Abel Maldonado

Addicted to alcohol and cocaine for 40 years, Armando's marriage was in shambles. He completed the

U-Turn For Christ recovery program then joined Quench. Armando recalled, "God began to change my life only through His Word. I surrendered to Him totally. It was His love that delivered me, that motivates me to share His love." Believers from the church pray daily for those in Quench.

"The LORD has anointed Me... to give them beauty for ashes ... that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

ISAIAH 61:1b, 3b

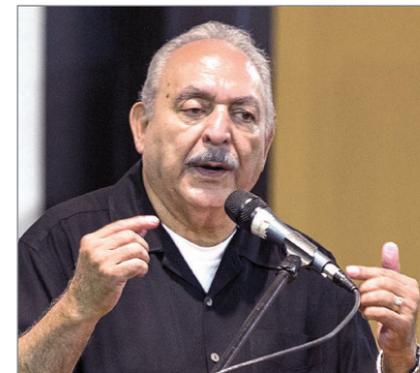
Though Steven Olguin accepted Christ 32 years ago, it was only 17 years ago that he became free from heroin, methamphetamines, and alcohol. After a series of what he called "God's interventions"—surviving two overdoses and receiving grace from the courts—he joined Quench in 2000. He has since earned his master's degree and now has a counseling business. He occasionally teaches at the meetings. "Quench keeps me accountable," he said. "I

give back what was given freely to me and share the special message of a second chance."

The Heart of Quench

The heart of Quench, Abel said, is to bring restoration, hope, and stability to the addicted. "We cannot save them, but we can bring the Word of God. He does the healing," he said. He has seen many lives and families restored, but sadly has also seen people who walked away, returned to drugs, and overdosed. "Mostly we see restoration by the grace of God," he added.

Families of addicts are encouraged to attend, and child care is provided for children under 5. In addition, the Mustard Seed ministry helps children ages 5 to 14 who have experienced the dysfunctions that come with substance abuse and trauma. Steven said that Quench works because struggling addicts are accepted: "We're going to embrace you and be there for you, not judge you." ✨

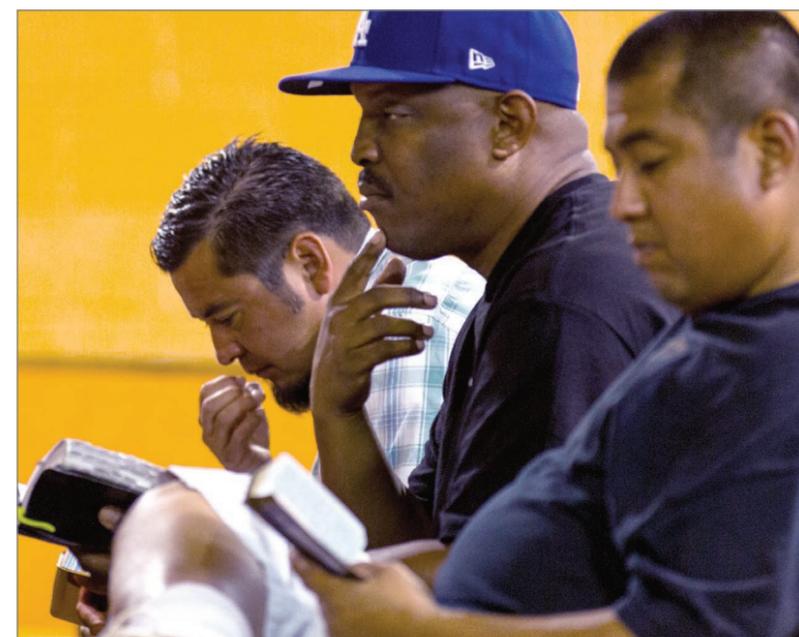


Top left: Leader Armando Lojero shares most of the verse-by-verse teachings at the Quench Bible study.

Top center: Armando (left) encourages two newcomers. Mature believers who have found freedom in Christ reach out to those still struggling.

Top right: Maricella Torres (left) and Nadine Hernandez take notes during the Bible teaching.

Bottom left: Vincent (left), Joel (center), and Danny follow along in God's Word. Between 60 to 100 people come every Friday night to receive encouragement against addiction.



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