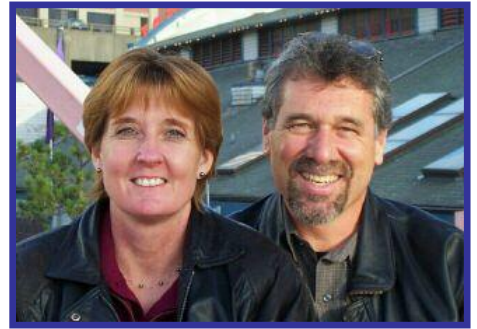


Hal and Cheryl Large

Ministering in El Salvador

VipSal #1993 PO Box 02-5364 Miami, FL 33102

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In a world with such technical abilities, amazing inventions and dazzling attractions, the one thing we cannot seem to create is peace and security. That doesn't mean we don't continue to try. Each one of us believes we are entitled to peace and quiet, freedom to do or say whatever we want and that everyone else should listen to and appreciate our ideas and desires. But, instead of creating peace between us, we live in a world empty of love, mercy and compassion and filled with conflicts, anger and fear. It's not a pretty picture. Yet, our hearts still long for peace; even dream about it - that is, if there are still dreams left in our hearts.

Jesus said He could give us peace. But, it isn't the peace of this world or of our own selfish desires. It is the peace that comes from above. It is spiritual. It is the fruit of a relationship we have with God. It is real. However, the peace of God does *not* come into our lives automatically for participating in a religion or magically for saying a few words with our eyes closed or painlessly without dealing with the pride, selfishness and fear in our hearts. Jesus said, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

The internal spiritual peace in our hearts (the *only* lasting peace possible in this world) is given to us by God as we learn and live in Jesus, His meek and humble spirit. Meekness and humility! What strange words hardly uttered today and rarely, if ever, practiced between us or - and this is much more serious - in the way we relate to God. Meekness is the yoke of submission, as Jesus submitted to His Father in every detail of His walk and work here on earth. He declared, in meekness, *"The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner"* (John 5:19). We cannot see God without meekness. He is Lord. I am not. As a pastor or father or husband, I have not been called to impose my will upon another (*"shepherd the flock of God . . . not as lording it over them allotted to your charge"* 1 Peter 5:2,3) but to spiritually govern - govern by the Spirit (*"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* Galatians 5:22,23). However, if I do not have the Spirit of Christ, His gentleness and humility, I am left only with the law. And, it is usually the law that prevails in church and at home, as it does in our own relationship with God. It is the law of doctrines and religious practices that cannot produce life or peace. It is the law of human wisdom, personality and will, revealed in pressuring people, church programs and a heart empty of love. We are left with the shell of a marriage, the corpse of the body of Christ and a cold, lifeless, joyless, powerless relationship with God. There is no spiritual peace because what reigns is the pride, rebellion, dissension, division and vainglory of my fleshly desire - the law of my own will.

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me" (John 12:24, 25). Meekness is submitting to the will of God and glorifying Him. Humility is looking at others as better than and superior to us (Philippians 2:1-8). This is the way of rest and peace for our souls. It is only learned, however, by the things that

we suffer (Hebrews 5:8). It is how Jesus learned the way of peace. It is the same for us. *"The Lord tests the righteous"* (Psalm 11:5). God, in His dealings with His children, declares, *"I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly and will by no means leave you unpunished"* (Jeremiah 30:11). This is how we *learn* the way of the yoke of Christ, living in meekness and humility, *in Him*. This is the only way of knowing the peace that Jesus promised to leave us; by choosing to glorify God as God, honor Him as Lord, submit to Him with thankfulness and die to willful pride (Romans 1:21; Malachi 1:6-14; Job 42:1-6). These are truths that God has been teaching us since the beginning of the year as His beloved people. We are learning to walk in a way worthy of the vocation to which we have been called - by trials.

Harold and Marcela (a young married couple in the church) have a two-year-old epileptic daughter, **Belén**, who still does not walk. Belén is God's angel; His messenger and servant to her parents. She brings light, not only into what is hidden in their hearts, but also reveals the love and holy purpose in God's heart for them. After terrible spiritual struggles that were painful and agonizing like a woman giving birth, there was born in them submission, thankfulness and faith in God. Five months ago, Belén was touched by God. After almost weekly episodes where the seizures had to be stopped by a trip to the hospital, she was now quiet, alert, standing, taking steps and exhibiting normal development. On her second birthday, her parents gave public testimony of their thanks to God and covenanted to return to ministry. (Harold is a musician and Marcela choreographs mime and dance.) Three weeks ago, after five months free of seizures, Belén had a seizure - a fiery trial of faith. You can't imagine the pain it brings to face it all again. You know there is no other answer but submission to God, giving Him thanks and *living* in Christ: meekness and humility. More dross is burned up. The relationship with Christ is tested and made stronger. A week later, Harold stood in front of the congregation to praise God for His love, grace and faithfulness to them, for *He* is their life.

Mario was a young man who came to Christ about six months ago because of problems he was having in his marriage. After attending church for a month, he declared his decision to follow Christ and was baptized. He received weekly discipleship visits in the home. In December, he began to be absent from the church meetings and made excuses for not being able to meet with Leonel. In January, we received a phone call that he had committed suicide after having had a fight with his wife. I shared the Word of Christ in the funeral services, calling people to repentance. With much grief and pain, several members of the family came back to Christ with the purpose of walking with Him. But what will the life of a young mother and a year-old little boy be like now without Mario? Satan is cruel and we are foolish.

Jesus came that we might live each day in His eternal life. We would be blessed if we were daily forced to make a conscience decision to choose between living in His eternal life or living according to the desires of our flesh and the vainglory of this world. God pleads with us to accept the yoke of Christ, to walk in meekness and humility and so find rest and peace for our souls. *Where do we find our life?*

We ask you to **thank God with us that He has sent the earth-movers** to finish the excavation of the property. We can now go forward with our building project. **Pray that God will provide a person to do the design work. Pray for the bringing together of the necessary building materials. Pray for a contractor to do the actual construction.** It will be an open-air tabernacle. This work is important and necessary; however, **pray even more for the spiritual building of the body of Christ here in Santa Ana. Pray we might walk together in the life and power of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Thank you.



Yours for Souls,

Harold & Marcela