



## Finding Refuge

**A**fter Juan and his wife, Josefina, placed their faith in Christ in 2015, they stopped drinking and participating in their village's Christo-pagan religious festivals. When leaders of the southern Mexican village realized a few years later what had caused the couple's change in behavior, they gave Juan an ultimatum: Return to the traditional religion of the village or lose your house, land and belongings.

"We decided to follow God," Juan said. "I accepted Christ. I couldn't leave him. Is my land greater than God? Isn't he the owner of my life?"

The village leaders took all of the family's possessions, banned them from the village and removed their names from the village's official list of residents, effectively revoking their Mexican citizenship. At the time, the couple had three children with a fourth child on the way.

Juan also spent a day in jail. "It became a crime to accept the Lord," he said.

While Juan was in jail, villagers ran his children out of town and they got lost in the mountains for a day. After the family reunited, they spent months living outdoors under a tarp.

The family's situation eventually came to the attention of Ruth and Aurelio (see "Finishing the Job"), who invited the homeless Christians to stay in one of their temporary shelters, which they call houses of refuge. Ruth and Aurelio also provided the family with food, work and schooling for their children, among other basic needs. And they encouraged their spiritual growth through regular Bible studies.

"We were in really good hands," Juan said. "We thanked God from the beginning."

While staying in the temporary shelter, the family received tangible help to rebuild their lives, grow in faith and further recover from the persecution they suffered. Juan and his family now have their own home, land and means of transportation, and their legal documentation of citizenship has been restored.

Perhaps most important, they have grown in faith. "I was a man of little faith," Juan said, "but thanks to the Lord, his Word is coming alive. I have seen many things after I left here — that God is real, God is true, he is faithful." ■