



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

"Daddy," Bruce's sleepy voice came through the sultry darkness of the tiny room. "God sure has been good to us, hasn't He?"

If my trip to the South American Andes with my 14-year-old son produces no more benefits than this particular insight, then it has been a success.

We arrived in the village of Villavicencio late yesterday afternoon after a harrowing but indescribably beautiful four-hour taxi ride across the Andes from Bogota, Colombia. Tom Smoak, an old friend who is a missionary pilot in the jungles of the Amazon basin, was supposed to meet us in one of the Wycliffe Bible Translator planes. However, a radio message from the jungle base at Lomalinda (beautiful hills) indicated bad weather would delay the plane until the next day.

We returned to the village and found a room at the local hotel. The tiny room has two steel cots and a screenless window overlooking the maze of tin and tile roofs of the little town that is squeezed between the base of the mountains and the encroaching jungle.

We spent the evening wandering through the streets and browsing in dimly lit shops. The streets are crowded with short, brown-skinned people who turn to stare at our blond features. Poverty and filth are the dominant characteristics. After a meal of chicken, rice and Coca-Cola (only a fool drinks the water) we return to the hotel.

Outside the window the full moon reflects against the towering Andes. To the other side is the dark, ominous jungle. Below us are the sounds of goats, pigs, chickens and children in the crowded yards.

"Daddy," Bruce asked as we lay silently in the dark room, "if we had been born here we'd be poor too, wouldn't we?" Without waiting for an answer he continues. "I guess we're rich, aren't we?"

"Yes, son, we're wealthy. We have good food, a house, a car, clothes to wear. We have wonderful friends and good health. But most of all we have the riches of God through Christ Jesus." We lay in silence for a while and then we both prayed aloud in the darkness before drifting off to sleep.

Now it's dawn. The screaming of a parrot in a rubber tree outside the window awakened me. I'm standing at the window looking at the beautiful, towering mountains covered with lush, green foliage. Below my window an old woman is chopping wood behind her adobe hut. A brown, barefoot child is gathering eggs from under a bush. I turn and look at my son, still asleep, his Bible on the floor beside his cot.

"Thank you, Lord," I murmur, "for blessings I don't deserve. Give me wisdom to use ALL you've given me for your glory."