

ESL

English as a Second Language

Odilon's Story

The story of Odilon is an example of how God can use an ESL ministry to reach the nations in America for Christ.

Kingsland Baptist Church in Richmond planted a Hispanic church, **Iglesia Bautista Nuevo Esperanza** and, at the same time, started a new ESL class. Many members of Nuevo Esperanza attended the new ESL class, including the pastor at the time, Fernando Mangieri. The class had been advertised throughout the community, so there were also students from outside the church. Friendships naturally developed between the students. The students from Nuevo Esperanza invited other students to visit their church, and many did.

Odilon began attending Nuevo Esperanza. There he heard the Word of God taught in a way he had never heard before. Odilon said later that he never knew that a personal relationship with God was possible. He received Christ, and his life was transformed in very evident ways. "It's personal now," Odilon said, "and I've never been so happy! Now I must tell everyone about Jesus!"

Odilon started going out in his community every Saturday morning, knocking on doors, telling people about Jesus, and inviting them to Nuevo Esperanza. He also invited them to his ESL class. He knew they might be afraid to attend his church but, because of their language need, they might be willing to come to ESL. And Odilon knew that good things can happen when you attend an ESL class!

Nuevo Esperanza began planting another church to reach the 2,000 Mixtec people in the Richmond area. The Mixtecs are a close-knit group from Mexico with a unique language. Do you know who is a Mixtec? Yes, Odilon! Odilon led the outreach to the Mixtec people, sharing the Gospel and leading Bible studies in his native language. From unsaved ESL student to pastor of the Mixtecs in less than four years—only God can do that! Sadly, Odilon passed away in May of 2021, but his ministry continues through the lives he touched.

