

Photos taken while on the Amazon River

Meet nine year old Mateo. He lives along the Amazon River in South America with his parents, two brothers and a sister. Life is full of adventure in his world. His house, along with many more, sit right in the middle of the Amazon River and the only way they can travel to town is by boat. When their boat needs gasoline, they just pull up to a little gas station that also sits in the river and get what they need. If they sit real still, they can see alligators and pink dolphins swimming in the river, along with many other interesting things.



Mateo

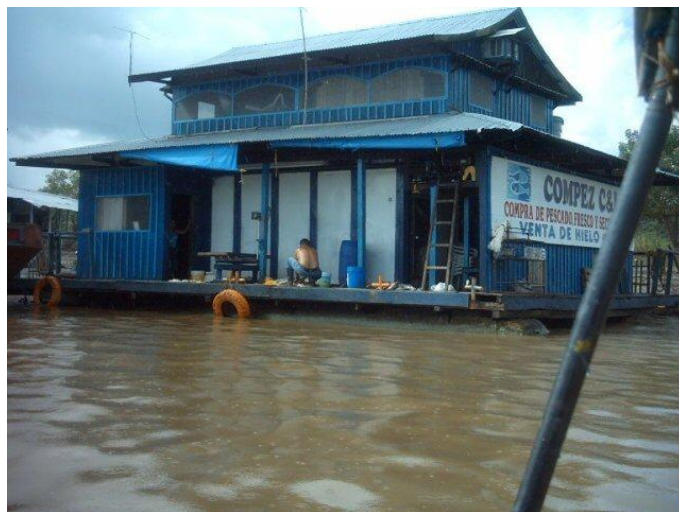


A home in the middle of the Amazon River is a common sight.



Today, Mateo is so happy! He has pleased his father by learning how to be a good fisherman and is now permitted to go on his first fishing trip without supervision. His good friend, Pablo, will be coming along. They put their spears and nets in the boat, alongside their water and fresh \*arrepas that Mateo's mom made. (Arrepas are a piece of grilled, buttered bread topped with melted goat cheese.)

Just as the two boys were stepping into their boat, Mama cautioned Mateo about some of the hazards of the Amazon...the alligators, snakes and other creatures. "If you go ashore, remember to stay away from the Yaruma trees," she warned. (The word "Yaruma" is a tribal word meaning, "watch out!") Mateo nodded as he recalled the many stories that his villagers have told about people who would not take heed to the warnings and were severely injured by the angry ants that lived inside the trees. It's been said that some have even died from their injuries. Mateo would certainly stay away from those trees!



A gas station in the middle of the Amazon!

Millions of ants live and work inside the Yaruma tree and will not hurt anyone if left undisturbed. However, if something or someone threatens their security, the ants will turn their attention to the predator by attacking with full force, their desire being to destroy the intruder.

Mateo reassured his mother that he would not disturb the Yaruma trees and Pablo nodded in agreement.



A Yaruma tree along the Amazon

The two boys were soon in the middle of the river enjoying the sounds of parrots that were nesting nearby in the trees. They passed by some fishermen who were happy to show them their catch of the day. It was an alligator and the men were on their way home so the ladies of the house could cook it for a meal.

Mateo was careful not to make too many waves when they passed some women who were doing their laundry in the river.



Laundry day



Fresh alligator meat

“Wow!” Pablo said. “Wouldn’t that be great if we brought home an alligator? Our families would be so happy!”

“That would be good.” Mateo answered, “but I don’t know if we could get it in the boat!” They both laughed at the thought as they continued down river to their fishing spot. Sharing stories of past fishing ventures made the time go fast. They soon arrived at their spot only to find that many others were fishing there, as well. Mateo was not discouraged for he knew of another good place to fish. They soon arrived and were casting their nets into the river. The water in this particular spot was shallow so that made it easy for them to use their spears, which delighted them both! They tried and tried to spear the lightning fast fish but after a few hours and only a few wiggly fish in the boat Pablo was getting restless.

“Let’s go ashore for awhile. My cousins live right over there.” he said as he pointed to a nearby village along the river. Mateo agreed that it would be a good time to eat their arrepas so they went ashore.



As the two hungry boys got out of the boat, Pablo's cousins came out to greet them. Ana couldn't wait to show them her pet sloth as Mama was inviting them to join the family for a meal. The catch of the day was fresh fish! Mateo gladly shared his arepas and after a nice visit, they were ready to try their hands at fishing again, at least Mateo was. Pablo spotted something on his way to the boat that he wanted to get a closer look at. Can you guess what it was? It was a Yaruma tree!



Ashore



Ana with her pet sloth



Curious Pablo!

As Pablo made his way closer to one of the trees, Mateo reminded him of the warning from his mother. "Oh, I just want to see it," he replied. "Maybe we can get a look at some of those mighty ants!"

"Not me!" stated Mateo, assuring himself that he had made a good decision. "I am staying away from those trees!" he said, hoping that Pablo would change his mind. Instead, Pablo picked up a stick and tapped on the trunk of the tree.

"See, Mateo, nothing is happening," he boasted as he took another swat at the trunk of the tree. It only took a few seconds before the ants were attacking this foolish boy with their stinging and biting.

"Help, help!" was the only thing that Pablo could yell. His aunt and uncle came running to the tree and quickly pulled him away. They headed for the river with Pablo and immersed him many times as they brushed away the ants from his wounded body. Although he escaped with his life, Pablo suffered pain from the bites and stings for many days following.

When the two boys were making their way back down the river, there was silence for a long time before either spoke.

"I am glad that I listened to the warnings of the people," Mateo said, truly thankful. "I will tell many people that the stories are true, indeed!"

"I am sorry that I didn't listen to the warnings from our people," Pablo said with his head bowed low, "but I am so glad that my aunt and uncle heard my cry and rescued me!"

### Decision time:

Are you a wise person like Mateo, who listens to the warnings of the wise or perhaps you have made some decisions that have ended up hurting you and bringing shame. God gives us instructions on how to be wise. We can choose to obey His Word and enjoy the blessings of our obedience, or we can choose to go our own way and suffer loss and shame. If you have gone your own way and find that you need rescued, call out to Jesus. He will help you and set you on the right path.

**Proverbs 1:5** "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:"

**Proverbs 1:7** "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

**1Thessaonians 5:22** "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

**God gives us many warnings; the most important one being how to escape the judgment to come.**

**Romans 3:23** "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

**Romans 5:12** "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: "

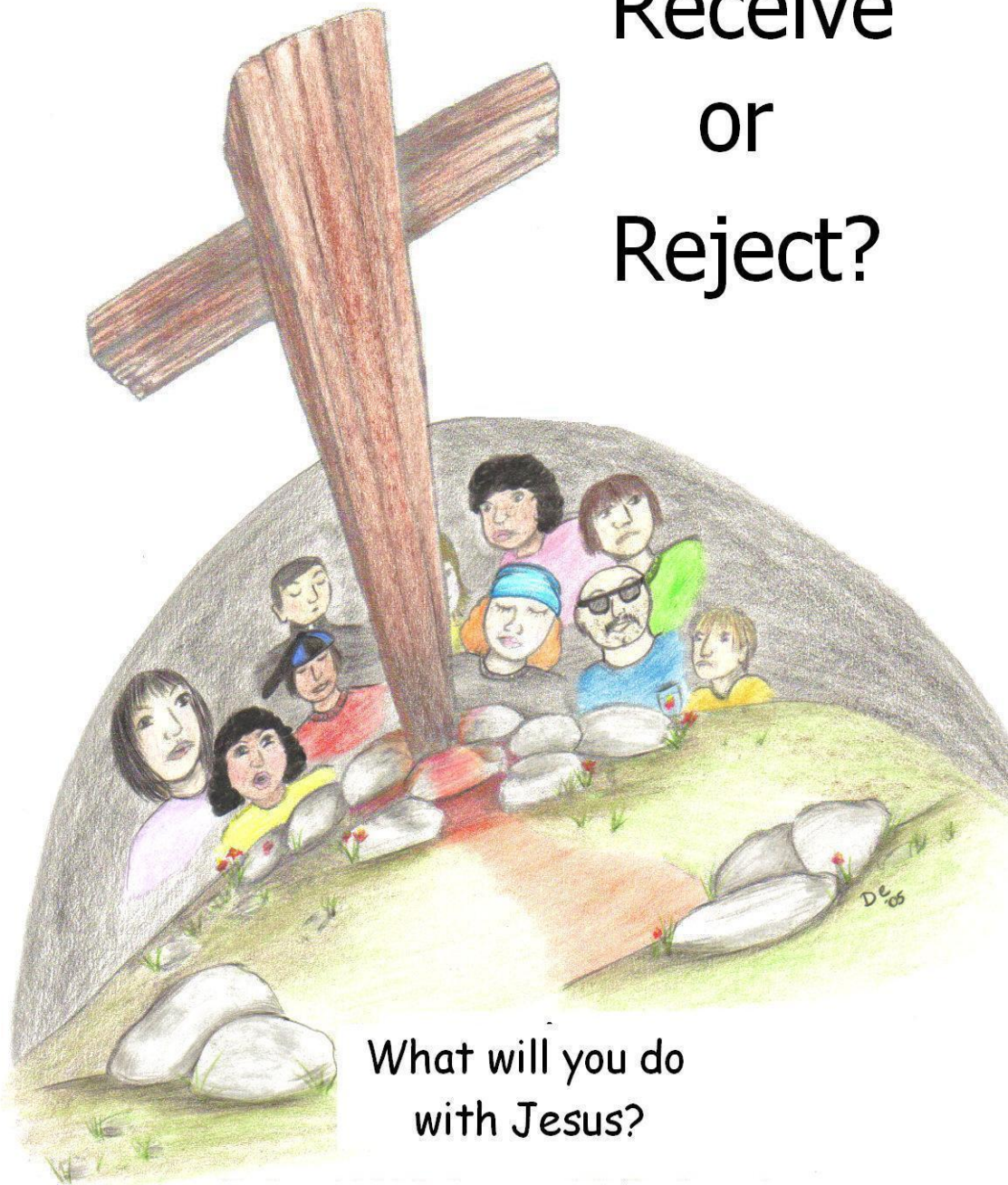
**Romans 6:23** "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

**Romans 10:9** "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

**10** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

**13** For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

# Receive or Reject?



What will you do  
with Jesus?

Acts 16:31 "Believe on The Lord Jesus  
Christ and thou shalt be saved.."



**Isaiah 6:8** “ Also, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me.”



An aerial view of life along the Amazon.



Beautiful Macaws

**Titus 3:8** “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”



Lucho, our guide



Boys fishing along the Amazon

**Matthew 4:19** “And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Special thanks to Lucho who shared the story of the Yaruma tree as we glided down the Amazon.

**Yaruma-** Amazonian word meaning “watch out!” Also a name for a tree along the Amazon.  
**Arrepa-** a grilled bread concoction, buttered and topped with goat cheese.



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