



## **Through the Doors God Opens**

By Esther Alcantara

If you were to ask me to give you a brief overview of *Producciones Infantiles Fronty* (Fronty Children's Products) in Maracaibo, Venezuela, I would struggle to find the words to describe both the trials we are facing and the blessings we are enjoying. For, you see, when I close my eyes to our incredibly difficult circumstances, a soft voice whispers in my heart, "...grace upon grace" (John 1:16, NASB).

When Fronty was established in 1998, we began with a dream of publishing materials to introduce children to Jesus Christ and to affirm moral, ethical, and spiritual values. So we decided to create storybooks, coloring books, bookmarks, cards, and school supplies—all featuring the company's namesake, Fronty, a friendly cartoon bear.

Unfortunately, these products did not sell well. In fact, many remained in our warehouse for several years.

We see now that we made several tactical errors, especially in marketing and in financial management. Sadly, these errors

were combined with fierce competition from similar products in the marketplace and limited interest from parents as well as the Christian community.

In the end, we had to donate our books to schools, churches, and children's ministries in our city. We even took Fronty stories with us on vacation and gave a copy to each child we met along the way. So these books have been placed in the right hands, even though we were not able to cover our costs.

On a personal level, this situation has been painful for me. As the author of many of these books, I wondered if the writing quality had contributed to our failure to sell them. Over time, however, the Lord allowed us to hear testimonies from children who had been helped by these stories. As I heard these, I concluded that my pain was nothing other than wounded pride. Now I have great joy when I see the expression on a child's face when he or she receives a storybook for free!

Looking back on this entire experience, we have learned many lessons, resulting in some major changes in the way we think. In the first place, our team lacked the knowledge we needed to be successful in an undertaking of this magnitude. We lacked appropriate knowledge in the areas of marketing, finance, publicity, and basic business practices. In addition, we did not understand the basics of managing a profitable business. Worst of all, we already had our products in hand when we discovered this.

Nevertheless, God has been extremely merciful with this publishing company. He has sustained us, provided for us, and motivated us—even as we have attended training institutes and classes to shore up our deficiencies. The people and institutions he has placed around us who have given us much more than we could have ever wished.

We can see the hand of the Lord in our families, our churches, and in the community of friends who encouraged us. Among them was the “family” we discovered at Cook Communications Ministries International. Their support has been an example to us—they helped us to understand that even though we are small, there is much we can do to both help ourselves and help other groups like ours.

We have learned to give through grace what from grace we have received.

We are simply managers and stewards of this ministry and business God has entrusted to our care. Someday we will need to give him an account for the use we made of our resources and talents.

Today Fronty remains committed to sowing values in children and youth—in Venezuela and wherever the Lord allows us to have an impact. We are thrilled that God is allowing us to do this—in a way that is remarkably different from the human vision we had. It is exciting to follow God through the doors he has opened.

We hoped to reach children directly, but God has made a way for us to reach them in more significant numbers through teachers. For the past 18 months, we have worked to train Sunday school teachers at workshops and conferences. The knowledge God gave us in Christian education changed and improved our performance as teachers. So, we now provide seminars, teaching tools, and resources for teachers and leaders of children’s and youth ministries. We are working with Youth Specialties, through conferences entitled *Generación Líderes* (Leaders’s Generation), directed by Lucas Leys.

This year Fronty also published *Poder en acción, Jesús dinamita para tu vida* (Power in Action: Jesus, Dynamite for Your Life.) This is the fourth evangelistic product we have published—and it is being widely used throughout our country. Many churches use our Vacation Bible School material. Through it, thousands of children are now hearing about God’s great love for them.

Most children in Venezuela may never hold the kinds of storybooks or coloring books that we published at first. However, we rejoice that they will likely hear about God’s love from a teacher working with Fronty’s interactive lessons, custom music, games, scripture memorization activities, and scientific experiments. Fronty has developed all of these products to reaffirm the truths of salvation throughout a single week.

In the days, months, and years ahead, we are committed to improving—and we are also striving to pay off our outstanding debts. We are developing strategic alliances. Most importantly, we pray each day, asking God for wisdom to fulfill the mission he have given us.

There are still many projects we want to accomplish. For example, we would like to publish a series of evangelistic booklets for

children; we would like to develop a whole year’s worth of discipleship materials for children. Our goal in all of this is to introduce children to the Lord Jesus Christ during the first few years of their lives so our country can have godly, Christ-focused citizens.

Presently, Fronty is leasing our most spacious offices ever—about 500 square feet. This is a beautiful place. We thank God every day for providing the resources we need to pay the rent. Nevertheless, we continue to dream of having our own building. We would like to open a children’s lending library—a place where youngsters can participate in reading and writing workshops and explore the riches of God’s Word and other books developed especially for them!

Of course, we do not have the funds to move ahead with this. But we have great confidence in the Lord, the owner of all things, who is our greatest resource.

Clearly, the political, economic, and social situation in our country is anything but secure. But our God is the same One who performed great deeds in ancient times. We believe that if He has called us to this ministry, he will be faithful to “carry it on to completion” (Phil. 1:6).

And when times of testing come, we only need to close our eyes and listen to the Holy Spirit, who reminds us our successes and triumphs are not due to our own merit. No, everything we have and accomplish comes from God. Therefore, we make level paths for our feet and take one more step on the long road that remains before our vision is fulfilled.

Our vision? “To be a self-sufficient enterprise offering opportunities to children, teens, and youth to know God, through the

production and distribution of materials of excellent quality.”

*Esther Alcantara is the chief writer and founding partner, together with Zeida Severeyn, of Producciones Infantiles Fronty in Maracaibo, Venezuela.*

*CALLOUT: We are sowing Christian values in children and youth—in a way that is radically different from what we first envisioned.*

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