

Mexican Evangelist Says God Can Heal the Lesbian Soul

Isabél Contreras was the most unlikely person on earth to become a traveling preacher.

Raised in a Catholic family in southern Mexico, she became an atheist at 14, explored satanism during high school and began living la vida loca—the crazy life—when she became an amateur volleyball player. She drank heavily, embraced a lesbian lifestyle and even sold her body as a same-sex prostitute during the three years she lived in Mexico City.

But all that changed when she found Jesus at age 21. No one had to tell her to stop having sex with women. “Immediately the Holy Spirit told me this was wrong,” Isabél says.

After her conversion she invited 25 of her athlete friends to a dinner and announced that she was a Christian. “You are welcome to join me,” she said, after inviting them to her charismatic church. “Otherwise you can pretend you never knew me. The old Isabél is dead.”

Her lesbian friends weren’t happy with the drastic change. They even hired a girl to try to seduce her, but Isabél didn’t fall for the scheme. “I knew I would never go back into that life,” she says. “I knew my decision to follow Jesus was all or nothing.”

And thus began an unusual journey for a woman who has become a respected minister in a male-dominated country marked by its machismo. Now 54, Isabél has planted two churches. From her base in La Paz, in the Baja peninsula, she has preached in every state in Mexico and in five other nations.

At the ReeNueva women’s conference held in the city of Querétaro last week, her passionate preaching had women

cheering—and laughing at her frequent jokes. “Christ is in you!” she shouted. “God put you where you are so you can give people the anointing; Satan and his demons are afraid of that!”

Being a minister is not easy for Isabél, even though she has traveled for 20 years as a prophet and Bible teacher. When she visits a new city she often learns that she’s the first woman ever to preach there. Some male pastors have angrily confronted her, telling her that God doesn’t anoint women to share the gospel. She usually reminds them of the biblical story of Balaam.

“If a donkey can speak for God, so can I,” she says.

Isabél has become popular, especially among women, because she doesn’t even try to fit into the Latino cultural mold. She is not a fashionista, for sure. She doesn’t wear high heels or fancy dresses. When she stands at a pulpit she typically wears functional work pants, a sweater and a simple key necklace. Her hair isn’t styled. And she jokes about her weight—and then reminds people that she recently lost 116 pounds.

“I know what some of you ladies are thinking when you see me,” she told the crowd in Querétaro. “You think I look like a dyke. That’s OK. I don’t care what people think about me. I am going to keep looking at Jesus until I look just like Him.”

But it is Isabél’s plain appearance and brutal honesty that win her audience. They love that she doesn’t have a model’s looks. They feel accepted by her, not threatened. So they listen carefully to her testimony and her prophetic teaching.

“God has told me that I’m a sign,” she says. “The way I look, the way I am, allows people to feel comfortable with me and they receive what God is saying.”

Isabél believes her homosexual struggle began at age 11 when an older girl molested her in a dark closet. But she also

believes some women turn to lesbianism because they have been raped or abused by men—and therefore they view sex with men as painful or traumatic. This problem is especially serious in Mexico, where domestic abuse has become an epidemic and the rate of femicide is one of the world's highest.

While Isabél views homosexuality as sin, she has only compassion for people who struggle with same-sex attraction because it is often rooted in abuse. She has counseled countless people who found healing after prayer.

Some church leaders in Mexico believe God is using Isabél in a unique way, not only to offer healing to people who struggle with their sexual identity but also to the entire body of Christ.

“Isabel is breaking paradigms,” says Claudia Cupido, co-pastor of Unidad Cristiana, a charismatic megachurch in Querétaro. “It is not often you find the combination of prophetic and teaching ministry that she offers. Now that she speaks freely about her past, she will neutralize the battle that many girls and women are facing.” {eoa}