

A Pastor in Chile Finds a Livelihood in Beekeeping
By Dwight Bolick

Thanks to generous gifts from White Cross each year for our Beekeeping Program, we are now not only working with Mapuche communities, but also with Chilean pastors.

Tomas Vivanco is a longtime pastor of the church in Lanco, in southern Chile. Lanco is an impoverished town, without many opportunities for employment. Tomas is a skilled craftsman, able to make fine furniture, and even guitars. However, his location and the fact that Chileans, in general, do not want to pay the price that his work deserves, means that making a living is a constant struggle.

We trained him in beekeeping last year. A friend of his lets him keep his bees on his farm, which happens to be next to a large blueberry farm. We gave Tomas three beehives and equipment. Tomas has a passion and love for bees and this craft that is greater than many of those we work with. Last summer his three beehives produced about sixty percent more honey than the average harvest.

This means that with the sale of his honey this year(remember, in Chile, January through September is summer and fall), he earned almost the equivalent of three months income. Imagine how as his apiary grows, he will be able to increase his family's income, and rise above poverty. He is conscientious about paying back part of the start-up costs and reinvesting in more beehives. This year, we will contract him to produce the beehive boxes that we will need.

It will take about four years for Tomas to become a good beekeeper. He has the usual setbacks, like bees dying off, due to disease, that strike even the experts. Tomas has the vision and drive, though, which makes him and some others I will tell you about a good investment of White Cross funds.

Thank you for your participation in this program.

“Eat honey, my child, for it is good.” Proverbs 24:13