

COUPLE

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Herrera's bold step pushed Bahena toward self-examination and prompted him to seek guidance.

"He started going to church first," said Herrera, mentioning that Bahena initially attended Comunidad Cristiana on West Oxford Street. "Then I started going to church (at Iglesia de Dios de la Profecia on Fifth Avenue) and reading the Bible a lot, and when I read what it says about not being married, I realized marriage shows obedience to God."

Herrera and Bahena consented to counseling sessions with Profecia's Pastor Javier Romero and Romero's wife Dilma.

"That helped us a lot," Herrera said.

Working together to learn from a Christian perspective what it takes to maintain a successful relationship and marriage, and how to foster a healthy family scenario, helped the pair turn a major corner in their lives.

Herrera attests that Bahena truly became a new person.

"He changed a lot," she praised. "You can't believe how much it helped. He learned how to treat us right as a family, and it was wonderful."

A men's church retreat was pivotal for Bahena.

"He came back from it and said, 'We're going to get married,'" said Herrera.

"I said, 'I agree,'" she said, recalling the proposal. "I mean, it wasn't like it looks in the movies, but it meant something to me and it was very special — and the kids were very happy."

After their official engagement, the couple considered a June 2022 wedding date.

"I wanted to make it big and nice," said Herrera, who relished the idea of a full-fledged wedding complete with a beautiful white dress.

But reality once again intruded. Their son Jesus is serving in the U.S. Marine Corps and has limited leave time.

"Jesus called about a month ago to tell

me when he would be home on leave (before being stationed elsewhere for four years) and said, 'Mom, I'll be home in October and we will all be together; why wait so long? Why not do it then?' and we thought, 'Why not?'" Herrera shared. "So we pushed up the wedding date because you never know what is going to happen, and I wanted all my kids to be with me on that special, important day."

They quickly set Oct. 16 as their wedding day, which happened to be the day after Herrera's 40th birthday.

Pastor Romero officiated the ceremony, which took place at Iglesia de Dios de la Profecia. A reception was held at a private rural residence, where Herrera and Bahena were thrilled to be surrounded by their children, friends and family.

Honoring their Mexican and Guatemalan heritages, the couple's wedding feast included beef Birria de Res, tacos de carnitas, asado de Puerco and tres leches cake. Friends and family helped with the food.

Herrera found her strapless wedding dress at David's Bridal in Sioux Falls, S.D.; Bahena wore a traditional Mexican hat and boots, coupled with a bolo tie. Herrera's bouquet consisted of white flowers with burgundy accents, and the bridal party — comprised of the couple's children and their sons' girlfriends — wore either burgundy dresses or burgundy shirts.

The reception also included an El Baile del billete (a dollar dance) and the game known as La Vibora de la Mar, which results in the groom being tossed into the air, in celebratory fashion, by male guests.

In advance of their big day, Herrera and Bahena said they were excited about the wedding but even more eager to begin a new life together as a happily married couple grounded in Christian principles.

"He has changed," said Herrera, "and I started treating him



Photos by Zechariah Martinez

The wedding party of Ingrid Herrera and Jose Bahena consisted of their children and their sons' girlfriends. Pictured are Michelle Montelongo (from left), Jose Antonio, Estrella, Ingrid, Britanie Barajas and Jesus.



Ingrid Herrera and Jose Bahena are shown with some of the family that shared in their special wedding day.

better too. I appreciate him more, and we have more mutual appreciation and responsibility.

"It's awesome when they treat you good," she continued. "Who doesn't want to be living in a happy relationship? Nothing is perfect, but at least we're happy."

The newlyweds' enthusiasm overflows. "I'm in love again," gushed Herrera. "He's like my new boyfriend."

Said Bahena simply, "I'm in love with Ingrid — a lot."

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INGRID HERRERA

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