

Good Start to a New Year



I can say with certainty that 2021 has been a year of work filled with fruitfulness.

We began the year with presenting a new idea to move forward with the church after the change in ministry we had to have during this last year. What we are focusing on right now is the idea of consolidation, but on a more personal / spiritual level. There are now a good number of new people in the church - we are working alongside all of them, along with those who have been there a while, to prepare them, with their talents, knowledge, and hearts for serving within the church. With this goal in mind for ourselves, we are hoping that this will be the groundwork for the church when we leave at the end of this year. Truthfully, knowing that there is only roughly 9 months left here in the mission field fills me with a mix of emotions. But I am excited to see what God will do in the remaining time. Here is what has taken place since the year began.

January and February ... began with planning. We, the missionaries, along with the pastors and others from the church, planned out for the year things like events, encounters, camps, fasts, etc. And with that, I can safely say that we have a lot ahead of us for the year. With the theme of the year, I spent a fair amount of my time having meetings with new people in the church, and working with people who were already involved. One in particular, I have become very partial too. He has such an excellent heart to serve, whether it is with the youth group, within the men's group, trying to learn the guitar in order to play worship, or even just in Bible studies. He wants to do it all. I and others have been preparing him with guitar lessons, in-depth Bible studies, giving him opportunities to lead messages, and having one on ones frequently. He is who I see help leading the church for some time to come, and I want to give my all in preparing him for being a leader here. Side note, I celebrated 26 years on this planet. And actually, we have had several birthday parties these last several months.

March ... was filled with the same work flow. Though, we spent a lot of time in the neighboring city of Cerete doing lessons and games with kids that a wonderful lady from the church teaches. We have visited these kids many times throughout our time here, but because of the on and off curfew here in the state, lately it's been more frequent which I and the rest of the team always enjoy. Speaking of the curfew, since the middle of March, we have been back on a stricter schedule of coming and going. So, lately it's been difficult to plan around that, especially when we found out how serious the police here are about those rules of times. But more than anything, what I was doing from the month of March was try to invite people to our first Encounter of the year. It was a long and hard process if I am honest, with some disappointment thrown in simply because people you

work with don't want to go, or don't have the money or time to do it. Even when you do all you can to help. But, I was able to help a few people along in preparing and funding for it. And, because the men of the team hadn't gone to one yet, I was going to be a part of it as well. And all seemed to be going well. Until Alex got Covid. Yep. It finally happened where someone on our team received the virus, and though we all tested negative, we were quarantined in the house for 2 weeks. So this slowed some things down. One on ones were cancelled, some activities with the church were changed. It was a letdown at first, but it was a blessing as well with the spare time we had to use it for spiritual growth. And we completed the quarantine in time for the Encounter.

The Encounter ... was 27-28 March, and its main purpose like all encounters was to invite people new to faith what an encounter with God is. To invite transformation to those you don't know how to do it. Though this was not new for me, it was still good to participate and learn alongside those who did need it. It was held at the hotel where we rent space for Sunday mornings, and part of the fundraising people had to do was actually purchase a room and the meals that came with it. So I won't lie, it was kind of nice to spend a night there and eat some delicious food. But learning from Pastor Fernand from the Cali church, and the pastors from our own, we covered topics of spirituality, sex, family, among others during our time there. I can truthfully say in the last hours I was there, and entering into the presence of God, I was reminded as to why I am here in the first place. Reminded why I am a missionary. Alongside with 50 other people, the encounter was a time of healing, reveling, brokenness, revival, a wedding that I was hired to take photos for, and encounter. We deemed it a success.

Now ... as I am writing this, it is Easter. So first I want to wish you all a happy Easter, and once again declare that he is risen! As of now, I am still teaching guitar to a few students, teaching video editing to those in the media department of the church, doing photo shoots for people in the church, and beginning new relationships. There's almost too much to discuss with all I've been doing. From a new Bible study with a group of young men, to trying turtle for the first time on Holy Week. There's lots of interactions, many stories to tell, and not enough space or time to remember them all. But all has been well here. Perhaps the biggest news I want to share is that we finally have a new home for the church. It's an old car garage with offices up and down stairs, and as of right now just have to hand the money over. We are beyond excited for this news, and the work that lies ahead for construction. It is our goal to have a church building ready to before we leave. If any of you are interested in helping with process, whether it's labor or finances, feel free to email my back. Thank you all for your continued prayers. As many of you know this is a rough season I am in with some family issues, and many of you have been such a blessing to them already. And too that I thank you. I will be back home for a week on the 13th this month and I hope to see some of you during that time. Without you all, this would not be possible. Though your support, prayers, and encouragement I am beyond grateful to have amazing brothers and sisters in Christ such as you all. To that, I want to leave you all with this passage from 2 Timothy 17 and 18.

But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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Dios bendiga a todos!

Michael