

A New Year

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Well, here we are... the end of the first year in Colombia!

First thing I want to say is sorry this update took so long to complete. I was writing one, and just as I was about to complete it, everything changed here in the country, and likewise within the church - everything I had written was pointless to say. Thank you again for your support. It has been a hard year to work in the mission field, but through your prayers and support, my team and I have seen many fruits of the Spirit come and have watched the Holy Spirit encounter people.

With all that has happened, I'll begin when the shutdown ended. Near the end of October is when we saw everything change here in the country. They began to open up the stores, banks, etc. to people without having to use a Pico de Cedula (which is a way to check license number to match the day you could be out). With that, the hotels, including ours was opened back up. We began to have church service again in person, only this time it was broken up into two instead of one to match the hotels Covid policy. It was good to see everyone again. To talk in person, even if it was from a distance at first. Being the culture it is, it wasn't long before some people could not help themselves and touch, hug and everything else in-between to each other. Thankfully, nobody we know has contracted the virus all year, so we praise God for that. Along with that, we began to do evangelism, and other church related events all around the city.

JNI Events:

We have been doing many active things with the youth group and young adults. Events are made up of us playing games or futbol, followed by a message. From these, we have made continuing relationships with kids and their families. We have also done home visits in the neighborhoods in JNI (mostly in Minuto de Dios and Santa Elena), going home to home in these neighborhoods to talk with people. These have been some of the most awesome times God has provided for us to minister to people around Monteria.

Campamento:

We recently had a youth group camp, which was more or less an encounter event. Though it was different that anything I had done before, it was something to remember! We began day one at a finca (farm) church building with a day filled with song, dance, and evangelism. After a night of worship, reading the gospel, and connecting with the people from the area, we enjoyed a hard earned sleep in hammocks with a rooster 25 feet away! The second day, we headed out to the beach. It was amazing... moments of worship, games, one on one connections, and a baptism. I watched a disciple, Victor, with whom I had been working, take to the waters of the Colombian sea, while I stood there with a guitar in hand, singing and water coming inside the guitar. Seeing Victor baptized brought me such joy, and I couldn't have been more proud of him. The whole encounter was an experience that the teens and young adults enjoyed, and provided an opportunity to grow in their faith and walk with God.



Everyday Life:

With the pandemic over, everyday work was more or less back to normal. If I'm not doing house visits or going to events or meetings for JNI, I'm doing phone calls with my contacts and disciples, planning out practices, songs,

and things for worship on Sundays and for events. Some of that entails picking the songs, finding the keys that works for the singers, making the slides for the songs, sending information out to everyone involved, etc. Though it is more difficult because of some Covid restrictions, I still meet and talk with contacts over coffee, lunch, or something of that nature. I'm not really doing videos anymore for the time being, simply because there isn't a need for it, but that may change with this new year. Aside from that, it's evangelism in the streets and parks, sharing the gospel and inviting people to church, and hopefully construct a relationship.



The Team:

As a team, we often work together. My partner, Samuel, works with me in worship on sound mixing, but occasionally plays an instrument or sings. The youth leaders, Mikayla and Marianna, have been hard at work planning for what they want to accomplish for the new year with JNI. Elisa has been “a trooper” with Mackenzie still stuck in the States with medical issues; she has had to handle everything for the kids ministry: writing and hosting the videos, preparing the messages, preparing the activities, connecting with the parents, and just simply having to deal with the kids by herself. We still are not sure when Mackenzie will return, but we are praying it will be soon. We always have a new ministry: Nazareno Juniors, for kids from 11-15. Led by Samuel and Marianna, it teaches lessons with a little more intentionality and maturity to them, but not to where it is like JNI. It is still an experimental ministry, and we are excited to see what God will do through it. Alex and Alle have been excellent leaders as counselors, directors, and mediators for us, day in and day out. We could not be more thankful for their unmatched support and try to pay it back by watching their girls once a week so they can have a date night. We are also eternally grateful for our pastors - they have been faithful and diligent this last year of difficulties. Being a pastor could not have been easy, with their role so vital to connection, but we saw the fruits of their labor. Sarah, a missionary from the Quito, Ecuador church plant



was here and a part of our team for about 2 1/2 months. Sadly, we recently had to say goodbye, but we cherished the time of ministry and friendship we shared with here (she is currently living at home in Idaho). While Alex and Alle were on vacation back home in California, Ardeo leaders David and Nicole Morrison came by for a few days to fill that role and to do a check up on us. During their time here, they were very encouraging and healthy for all of us.



The Holidays:

To start the holiday season, I was actually back home for Thanksgiving - the first time I had been off all year. It was good to be in Montana and spend time with family, friends, and the Montana wilderness. It was definitely time to get rested from life in Colombia and spend time with some of you. After those 2 weeks, the team and I still had some free time, and we took advantage of it with a couple days in Cartagena - it was amazing! To spend

some time in Old Town, and just to have some fun to forget about work. When we returned, we went back to work in preparation for the Christmas season. It was filled with a lot of home visits, novenas (us going to certain homes of people in the church and playing Christmas songs), and bringing the message of hope that a Savior has come. Those moments were so powerful and impactful not just for the people who came, but for us missionaries as well. We did those 3-4 times a week for about 3 1/2 weeks, and also prepared for the Christmas service for the kids. We didn't have an actual Christmas Eve service like the States usually have. Rather, it was more of an event for the kids and their parents. We did songs, there was a message, and the kids performed the Christmas story. On Christmas day, we did a Secret Santa gift exchange, combined with a breakfast and lovely dinner - it was a wonderful way to remember my first Christmas in Colombia. The year closed out with a quick 3 day vacation trip to Medellin for two of the chicas and myself. What a blast it was to experience one the largest, and most popular cities in Latin America. It was a trip of good food, a hike to a national landmark, and 3 kids forgetting about work for a time.

2021:

It's hard to say what is to come for this new year. Covid restrictions have come back up again, though not as aggressive as last time. We are still meeting in-person for our meetings, church on Sundays, and everything else, just with more precaution. We don't know how 2021 will turn out given the state of the world, but we know that by faith, and living it out through our words and our work, God will accomplish what he wants to accomplish. God can use us if we are ready and willing.

We can plan out all the events, encounters, services, practices, etc. that we want, but if we are unable to do any of those, God will still work and move. I think of the song Waymaker... if all fails in our eyes, he is still a way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, and the light in the darkness. Even when we can't see it, he's working - he never stops working. If I have any goals for this year,

it's to simply serve, obey, and share time with the way maker. I'm his tool, his instrument, and I'm ready for the work, however and whatever that may be. Something to think about for this new year is from my favorite verse in the Bible: Romans 5: 3-4 says, "Not only so, but we glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." I won't say that because this last year was a year of suffering that this year will be one of hope. We already have that hope. My challenge for you (and me!) is to recognize that our sufferings, whatever they may be, will produce a perseverance, a patience like no other. From that, our growth and character will show a reflection of Christ more and more to those around us, and that, is our hope. Christ suffered, to the point of death. And it's from that, that we have hope. I don't have a new hope for 2021 - I want to live in the same hope that brought me from valley to my walk with God right now, and grow in that more, and more. That is my challenge for us this year.



Prayers Requests:

- That everything we do, it is for the glory of God
- That we have clear direction, communication, and planning
- For spiritual growth within ourselves and as a team
- We find a permanent place to hold church services
- That Mackenzie can return quickly and safely
- For the city. That it may be safe and secure from another shutdown

Thank you all so much again. And sorry again that this is so late. I'll definitely try to keep these more frequent now that we are in a more consistent schedule. Through your continued support and prayers, everything I am doing here is possible. I just want to share again that because of your support, God has been doing amazing things here in Monteria, Colombia. I couldn't do this without any of you backing me. Thank You!