



# MESSAGE OF LIFE



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## ***Wow, It Has Been Great!***

During this furlough God has granted us many opportunities: renewing our relationships with you, creating new friendships, meeting with sixteen churches and sharing what God has done in Ecuador through our partnership with you, traveling 12,000+ miles, helping people in our free time with things such as roofing a church, fixing a water heater, rewiring a basement, helping with the video setup and takedown of a huge Christmas program, solving computer problems, fixing cars, and really enjoying talking, drinking a lot of coffee and Dr. Pepper and eating with you. We have been blessed by you praying for us and participating in various Bible studies. As we have traveled, you have made us feel welcomed and have fed us well. The extra pounds are a proof of that ☺. We thank you for this time and the blessings of all kinds that God has bestowed upon us through you. It has been a memorable furlough. We head back to Guayaquil on December 29<sup>th</sup>. That will be just in time to celebrate their LOUD New Year's customs.

## ***The Challenges Ahead***

Knowing that God has brought the work in Guayaquil so far and that He promises to be with us keeps us from being overwhelmed with what lies ahead. Here are the major challenges that we see. There may be some unseen ones which always makes the "walking by faith" an adventure with God.

- Reinforcing the **Discipleship** programs in the churches. Each church is at different level of development. Some have tutors that teach the first two levels and Karleen is preparing someone to lead the third level. Other congregations have struggled with being consistent enough to make it through the first level. We have a lot of encouraging and continual preparation of the discipleship tutors to do.
- Having an apprentice for each module that I teach in **Advanced Training**. Now with us being the only missionaries on the field, it is not an option for the Ecuadorians not to come along side of us to learn to teach and mentor at this level of leadership training.
- Mentoring the three congregations that have begun evangelizing for new **Church Plants** and encouraging the other two congregations to take the first steps in this vital part of being a church.
- Hosting an **Internship** this summer from Team Expansion with up to twelve people. This is vital for training new missionaries and acquiring potential team members.
- Sorting out the political changes taking place in Ecuador after they have adopted a new constitution. We already know that we have to re-register the legal entity that the churches work under.

Sounds like an interesting year with much potential. As I just re-read those five points, it says to me that my self-sufficient tendencies are not going to be able to do all that. It is almost as if I hear Jesus saying to me for the umpteenth time, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."



## ***Merry Christmas***

We are looking forward to having what will probably be a rare blessing for Christmas. Since our family is spread out among three continents, it will not be often that we will all get together for Christmas. We are in Knoxville now with Jonathan, Laura and Javen. Jennifer, Andy, Michael John and Nathanael will be arriving here this week! We thank God for this unexpected opportunity! We pray that your Christmas will abound with such blessings from God as we celebrate the greatest gift and blessing – His Son Jesus Christ.

### ***They are carrying-on while we are gone.***

It may be more exciting to hear about the progress that is being made while we are not there than when we are there. This is a time when the Ecuadorian Christians are bearing fruit, and the missionary is not prodding them along.

- Baptisms – The Orquideas and Vergeles congregations have had a total of 9 baptisms;
- Evangelism for new churches – The Samanes congregation continues with their evangelism in Bellavista (Data), where 70+ people have been doing the evangelistic home Bible studies each Saturday. The Orquideas congregation is following up on 30 people that attended their 3-night evangelistic campaign and indicated their interest in studying the Bible;
- The discipleship groups have continued in four of the churches to varying degrees of success.



### ***Prayer requests***

- For God to work in the hearts of the men who we will train to teach in the Advanced Training. Preparing the Ecuadorians for this may be a six to eight year process;
- For the churches to be consistent in their follow through with the discipleship ministry. Pray especially for the Vergeles and La Fuente congregations;
- For Victor, one of our leaders, who will be looking for a job this next month;
- For God to give strength and perseverance to those who are evangelizing and working with the new church plants;
- For a safe return to Ecuador at the end of December;
- For Jennifer and family to quickly renew their visas.

### ***Praises to the Lord***

- For the nine people being baptized;
- For God blessing our time with you and the churches and giving us safety as we travel;
- For Samanes and Orquideas making progress in the evangelism for the new churches;
- For our family being together for Christmas.

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