

January 2023 Newsletter

Thank you so much for your faithful support this month. We truly appreciate you, and the Lord will use your giving for the kingdom as we place it in His hands with faith. Here's where we are in...

Circumstances

January has been a month full of change, somewhat painful changes for us. Stephen, our son, has been going to the daycare where I worked since he was a baby. We decided to move Stephen to Noah's daycare so he could become a little more independent and flourish. Praise the Lord, so far; he is doing very well (although going in can be a little rough some days). This was a positive change.

Along with this, Rocio has concluded a 4-month study course and has a CMA (Certified Medical Assistant) Certificate. She is working in an urgent care facility. I am getting used to her new work schedule by spending more time with the kids, which hasn't come easy. She has 12 hours for three days a week and once a month on weekends. The Lord, however, has reassured me in two ways that what He is doing is something good. Earlier this month, I felt it in my heart but had no idea it would be this hard; I felt that as a family, we have to grow together. So just like Stephen has taken a step to grow, this means I need to do that also so we can all be moving together in unity with the Lord's will and following His Spirit.

When I read Matthew 10:37-39, I felt a huge tug and breath-taking fright per se, "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will find it." This process seems completely unstable (I say this because until now, I felt like I have to hold it up, but God is not me), and I place it into his hands. I had to let go of Stephen so he could grow me, and we think it's working! The painful part of this process is the realization that just like Stephen depended on me a little too much, I was this way with Rocio. I might be too attached or dependent on her when sometimes I needed to seek that help and reassurance from the Lord. Anyhow, in the midst of all that uprooting and pruning, the Lord showed me a Facebook post from Darwin, a Peruvian who participates in and helps lead pastor Beto's online small groups. It had this verse Jeremiah 1:19, "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land-against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord." In other translations, it says God will basically make Jeremiah into a fortified city. An iron pillar gives the meaning that God will make him strong. But not only will God make him strong, make him into an iron pillar, but God will rescue him from those who fight against him. When I read this verse, I identified very much because every day this month, I have had to pull myself up by the bootstraps, mentally put on the army boots, and be strong due to all the loneliness I felt. But the Lord in his might reminded me, Josh, I am with you, and though you may not feel strong enough, I am, so trust in me. And the lie that I am all alone (which gave me lots of pain and anger) is slowly tearing down. I don't know a family with many trials as ours the Lord could use, but it is nothing less than his miraculous power that He has sustained us and helped us fundraise through all of you.

Fundraising/ Spiritually

We praise and thank the Lord and all of you and your hard work and generous giving. One thing that boosted the calculations is calculating for the third year and, for some, the fourth year of giving. We started fundraising in 2020 approximately, and some have updated their pledges. With one-time gifts and pledges as of December, we are at \$115,228.00. The cost of the two-year goal of \$105,000 has been reached; praise the Lord! The goal is to raise the money for a third year; each year costs \$50,067.44. (This means being launched to Peru and being

able to stay there.) The percentage of the third year is thus at 20.3%. This percentage is after the two-year costs of 105,078.44, which is at 100%! We continue to assist and participate in Pastor Beto's online small group ministries. Lord willing, we are hoping when we travel to Peru in March to ask Beto, my dad, Arthur, and other ministers there about the current needs in Peru and where we could assist. The Lord has been giving me lots of ideas for current ministries. Pray that I am able to follow through on them because life is hard/rough right now, but little by little, to take those steps and for God to open the way/ hearts/ and doors for that.

Another verse in Matthew that tugged on my heart was about the rich young ruler; in chapter 19, verse 21, Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." As I was reading this, I was thinking to follow Jesus is costly; it will cost us everything. As we get older, it seems to get more costly; however, Jesus is well worth everything! He's worth the extra time and effort despite all that is already asked of us. As we sang, "You are worthy, You are worthy, you are worthy of your name, Jesus," today, I sang that understanding that Jesus and his kingdom are worth every ounce of suffering that it takes to be obedient in a broken, difficult world. Not only this, but also, I came to realize that as I am giving lots to my kids as a parent (more than I can give or have is needed many times), as it says in Matthew. "What you have done with the least of me, you have done for me." It was Jesus hungry, thirsty, cold without clothes, and it is Jesus in my two boys and Jesus in those 22 students I teach, and He is telling me they are all worth your time, attention, and life. This is, in fact, the basis for discipleship, giving time, energy, effort, and service to others. Sometimes, I may lack love or run out when I am tired and its in those moments where I would want to withhold when it seems to be too much. But when I remember Jesus deems worth to you and me that we also deem it to others. Christ paid such a high cost for you and me, he deemed each of us worthy because of his love. It's the devil and accuser who constantly want to tell us it isn't worth it, but if Christ, the God of the universe, came down and died on the cross not only for you but for the person beside you, who are we to think that? So, when we become tired or overwhelmed, look at Jesus on the cross who gave it all, and let's be encouraged in Him to do the same for others as He has done for us.

Final Thought:

The basis for these sections above is Mt. 16 v.24: Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." As we deny ourselves and take up our cross, we are declaring our life no longer belongs to us but to Jesus, and He is Lord of it, not us. This brings freedom from the self, the flesh, the sinful nature- freedom from having to control our lives. A very similar verse that encouraged me this month is Galatians 5:13, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather, serve one another humbly in love." Let us walk in this freedom, surrender all to Christ, every area, and see how we can give our life (meaning our time, talents, treasure, etc.) away to others for His kingdom and a pouring out of love for those around us because it's truly then when we can be content. The world says to indulge the flesh to be content, yet Christ teaches us a better way, the cross, and losing our lives to find them!

