



Victoria and Isaac here for Christmas. Just missing our Zachary.

Praises:

- The Lord is always with us. Emmanuel!
- Christmas was a blessing with so many get together and having family here.
- The suspension of work has been lifted.
- We had Grace Christian Academy visit through Living and Learning and did our first community outreach in the new location. Over 220 plates of food were served, and the gospel was shared in the morning and afternoon.
- We are thankful for such sweet friends here and in the States that continue to check on us. We are safe.
- The Lord can be trusted in all things.

Prayer Requests:

- Wisdom for the President of Ecuador as he has declared war on the cartels and gangs. Protection for all involved.
- Stability for the country and that people come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
- Wisdom to know when to return to the foundation to work and how to move forward as the cartel war goes on.
- Pray for provision for the foundation.
- Pray for Rafael as he jumps from house to house back here in Quito. His father sent him back.
- For all three of our health – physically, mentally and emotionally.
- Pray that more would know the Lord.

UPDATE ON THE COUNTRY:

Normally, I do the newsletter in mostly chronological order but we are going to get to the hot topic first. Tuesday of this week, 2 leaders of very large cartels and gangs escaped from prison which ignited attacks on police stations and a take over of a TV station. The cartels basically said they won't be stopped or silenced. The president returned the fire with declaring 22 different gangs and cartels as terrorist groups. This allows for very strong action to be taken on them. The next day the president declared war against these terrorists' groups. The country has been put in a state of emergency for the next 60 days. This week most things were closed Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday with the schools and government offices closed till Monday. There have been some explosives that have gone off in the larger cities and over 180 prison guards that are still being held hostage. But otherwise, it is very calm right now. This information is to the best of my knowledge. We are safe and have provisions to stay home for probably a month if it comes down to that, but it is not. Samantha actually went to youth group last night that is how normal it is. I have told people that it feels like an old western movie with the good guy and bad guy in the street getting ready to do a show down with all the people of the town looking out their windows and from behind the buildings. Pray for the country. Pray that people will come to know Christ in the process. Pray for protection of the President and his family, the military and police with their families. Pray the gangs and cartels come to know and love Jesus as this is my greatest hope. Thank you for so many people reaching out and checking on us. We appreciate it.



Most of our team and a group from Grace Christian Academy from Tennessee



Dan and I enjoying the outreach day.

Tuesday January 9th, Grace Christian Academy served with us again this year. I love when people return and get to know us and what is going on. Coach Bob even remembered that Samantha loves beef jerky and brought her some. This turned out to be our first outreach to our new neighborhood. The neighbors, government, our staff and all of us were so excited to have a day together. The States government sent a brigade of medical staff to do voluntary checks on the neighborhood and an inflatable for the kids. The community came and we told many people about the foundation. Grace Academy played games, performed a drama, made bracelets, played with playdough and so much more. Our staff well, we were doing what the Lord has called us to do which thrilled us beyond belief and put some wind back in our sails. The day was beautiful with over 220 people eating. The gospel was shared in the morning and afternoon. Many people were prayed with. Several people said it brought hope to the community which is exactly what we all needed. We still had about 100 people at the foundation when we got the call of what was happening in the country. It was time to get everyone home. After 2 ½ hours in the car, in crazy panicked traffic, we arrived home safely. Samantha was at her youth group/tutors house and was stuck there for the night and one of our staff lives in the same area was stuck with us. But that was all rectified the next day very early. I love how the Lord brought hope to a community that has seemed hopeless for so long right when they needed hope most. Thank you Grace Christian Academy for being a part of that. Thank you Lord for your perfect timing ALWAYS!



One of our few pictures of the day. We were all just in the moment.



Thank you Coach Bob! See you next year, Lord willing.

We enjoyed the Christmas season with people in the house. Samantha had a 50's themed Christmas party for her friends. Our small group came one night and we cut snowflakes together. Our staff came over for our annual party with our families that includes praising the Lord for who He is. Our neighborhood came over for a time to share and enjoy each other. We had our card playing friends/family and 2 Chinese over for Christmas dinner. It was touching to hear their stories and praising the Lord in the process. But I do have to say I was most thankful that our daughter Victoria and her husband Isaac were here for 11 days. They also brought Julia (V's best friend from Lynchburg) and Nan (Julia's sister) with them for 5 days which was a blessing. I just drank up the time with them. Just never enough time with our adult kids.



Staff Christmas Party



Family at the hummingbird place in the rain.



Julia, Nan, V, Isaac, Dan and I at Quilotoa.

The other big event during the last month was a small Christmas party for our kids that have been a part of the foundation for the last two years. We had it on one of the patios of one of the families as we couldn't have it at the center in December. It was so wonderful to see our kids and share a little joy for the day. We gave each one a Christmas present and food bags that would last a family of 4 for about two weeks. The families were thankful and full of smiles. It was so fabulous to see them. The stories are hard and for some of them it is only getting worse. They kept asking when the foundation would be open full time. We don't know the exact answer to that. Maybe March? We need electricity, plumbing, permits from the fire department and child protective services but it is in the works. The country closing down again doesn't help but the Lord knows.

There was a surprise the morning of the Christmas party for the kids. Rafael's aunt called and said he was in town and asked if he could come to the party. Well of course! Last month, we featured his story, that his grandmother, mom and sister have died in 2023 and that he was going to live with his father in another city. His father's girlfriend said he had to choose between her or Rafael, of which his father put Rafael on a bus back to Quito. He is bouncing around from family member to family member. Pray for him and what the best solution is for him. It sure was good to see him.



Camilla and I goofing off at the party.



Didier and family opening gifts.



Victoria playing with Kenny for hours.



Rafael receiving a soccer ball.

Please pray for Dan, Samantha and I's health as we are figuring out many things. Some things as simple as an ear infection to being held up again to needing some help from a team of psychiatrists / psychologists. We are thankful to be here as we have found a lot of help. The Lord has us right in the palm of His perfect hands. Not always easy but good. We trust Him with all of it.

For years, I have choose a word for the year. I am returning to one I had a couple of years ago. It is JOY. No matter what is happening in this world or in my life I want to choose the joy of the Lord. The passage that comes to mind is Nehemiah 8:10. Ezra is reading the Law to the Isrealities. The times were so great that they were weeping as they listened to the words of the Lord. Nehemiah said, "... for the joy of the Lord is your strength." I want to choose the joy of the Lord to be my strength. What are you clinging to in life right now?

Happy New Year. May the joy of the Lord be your strength. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Many blessings,

Dan and Gina

PS. We will be in the States the end of May and into June. We plan to be mostly in Texas this time but will swing by to see our kids.