



Carolyn in El Salvador

April

Prayer Requests:

* God has raised up six new interns to come next year! Wow! Please pray for my soon to be teammates as they are starting to raise support.

*It's difficult seeing the end of STINT approaching quickly. Please pray that we would remain focused on what we are doing here, but that God would also prepare each of us for the transition (parting ways, the uncertainty of what's ahead). Please pray that we would remain unified.

*Pray that God would help us prepare the students for the transition and that they will be encouraged and strengthened in their faith over the next two months.

Useful Information:

Address:
Senda Los Claveles 13
Colonia Primavera
Santa Tecla, La Libertad
El Salvador

carolyn.elisa@gmail.com

Blog:
<http://www.living-life-in-el-salvador.blogspot.com/>

Staff Account Number:
0618580

Giving Website:
Give.ccci.org

Happy Spring! I hope you had a wonderful Easter and are enjoying this beautiful season. It's been dry here since the end of November and we are now entering into the rainy season! Having caught the end of the rainy season when we first arrived, it seems like the Lord is bringing us full circle.

I have to confess that writing this particular newsletter is quite the challenge for me. I have a ton of things I can talk about... what God is doing in Vida Estudiantil, students, my team, and my personal life. Today, though, I have it pressing on my heart to let you into one of the greatest challenges I've faced this year: becoming a woman who gives grace and speaks truth. John 1:14 says that *Jesus came from the Father full of grace and truth*.

The community that God has given me here is one of the greatest gifts I have ever received. It's certainly been God's provision for me this year, as his tool to show me His abounding love as well as his tool for pruning. I can go on and on about what I've learned in this tight community, but for the sake of space, I will focus on this single reality: that there is no hiding. God took five broken people, with different personalities and experiences, and placed us in a new world. The good and the bad is exposed in all five of us daily. We work together, are teammates, friends, and, in Brittany's case, as roommates. When I first arrived in San Salvador, next to adjusting to the culture and speaking Spanish, living life closely with four other gringos was quite the shock. In order to protect our unity, one of the principles my teammates and I strive to live by is to not assume what others are thinking or feeling. Each of us is responsible to state our needs. We are responsible for our feelings, and it is our job to address them.

At our mid-year retreat, our coaches had us do an activity that prompted us to evaluate ourselves. Jamey and Cayla set up quadrants labeled: grace, truth, neither (apathy), and both (ideal). They asked us a series of questions and told us to stand in the quadrant that most represented us. One of the questions they asked us was "What do you tend to give to your teammates? Do you think they would agree?" All five of us were spread over the quadrants. I put myself in the grace quadrant; with my toe in grace and truth...I had been consciously working toward finding a balance. Henry Cloud states in his book, *Boundaries*, "As iron sharpens iron, we need confrontation and truth from others to grow." That is what each of us received as we gave one another feedback. It was hard for me to hear the affects that my lack of truth had on my teammates at the beginning of the year, but encouraging to hear that they had seen growth in this area in my life.

On a team where all five of us struggle with extending grace to ourselves, it's been a continual fight, especially with the ministry, to give ourselves grace when things don't go well. Events flop. We aren't and will never be perfect. We fail. But, there is so much beauty in the brokenness. Not only does God look at us and see us as beautiful, but He uses our imperfect, broken work...He makes it perfect. We serve a God whose power is made perfect in weakness. His grace is sufficient.

A daily prayer of mine since December has been, "Lord, help me cling to Your Word and mold me into a woman who speaks truth and gives grace." God promises us that the Truth sets us free. My teammates and I have experienced this freedom. Grace allows us to come as we are and be real, exposed even. Though this growth process has been challenging, it's been beautiful and worthy of celebration! Thank you for your prayers and for allowing me to share this personal aspect of life here in El Salvador. As God is moving on Matias University and in the lives of the students, He is also transforming my teammates and me.

With Joy,
Carolyn Gardella

