



Prayer Requests:

*Follow up with the ~300 freshmen. That each student would see Jesus reflected in us (Staff and VE students).

*We will be presenting the opportunity for every student in VE to serve on a ministry team...pray for the student leaders as they will be leading teams of their peers.

*Team Unity as we are navigating what it looks like to communicate well with this new leadership structure.

*Mid-year: We will be traveling to the Dominican Republic in February to have our mid-year retreat with the D.R. STINT team. Coaches from the U.S. will be coming to check in with us.

Dear Family and Friends,

I hope you are off to a great start in 2011! My teammates and I kicked off the New Year on our vacation in Roatan, Honduras. We enjoyed our week together: seeing Mayan Ruins, spending time at the beach, resting, and spending time with the Lord. We returned to El Salvador to spend about 3 straight days in the Immigration Office getting our temporary residency...so thankful this process is over! We then went on a retreat with staff from Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Some of the student leaders from the university came with us. The retreat was a great time to bond and share stories of God's faithfulness in Central America. Layo, the Director of Campus Crusade in Latin America, took us through the book of Nehemiah and explained that movements start with one person, called by God, who sees a need and responds. I was reminded of the need here. The future generation of leaders is bombarded by the pressure to do well, and has little hope for the future in the state of their country. While surrounded by "religion," many students haven't experienced the true, life-changing love of Jesus. El Salvador, having one of the highest homicide rates in the world, the majority of the wealth owned by the minority of people, and many broken families, is in desperate need of Christ.

After the retreat, we spent the following week putting together freshmen survival kits for the new students at Matias. The purpose of the kits was to connect, have conversations with, and share God's love with every new student. The kits included a bag, pencil pouch, pen, New Testament, Rojo CD (a Mexican Christian band), and information about Vida Estudiantil.

Highlights from the start of the new semester:

- I was so encouraged by observing the steps of faith that many of the Vida Estudiantil students took to initiate conversations.
- We met over 300 freshmen and are now in the process of following up with each student.
- It's incredible to see the Bible studies, Weekly Meeting, and prayer times being fully student led!
- During the second week of the semester, we had some community events to get to know new students and connect: a photo scavenger hunt competition and lunch one day.
- We were invited to a local high school. Zack and I got to share how God has changed our lives with 55 students.

Meet Stephanie... a freshman design student. She received a freshmen survival kit and was invited to the Welcome Party. I got to know Stephanie at the party as we ate pizza together and talked about our past. With a challenging childhood, she found hope in Christ and gave her life to Him after her parents divorced. She expressed how excited she was to find Vida Estudiantil at Matias because she only had one friend at the university and didn't have a lot of support in her faith. During our conversation she was asking me for advice on how she could share her faith and God's love with her friend. Since then, Stephanie has gotten plugged in and is a light in the design department. As I talked with Stephanie, I was reminded of my first week at Cal Poly...the loneliness I felt, my desire for community, how I had recently started walking with Jesus and was in need of support...then I attended the welcome party and got involved. God used Campus Crusade at Cal Poly to help me grow in my walk with God throughout college. I feel honored to be part of God's provision for students here in El Salvador.

Thank you so much for being part of this provision as well. I'm excited for this semester ahead of us, which I'm confident will be full of stories of God's faithfulness, his pursuit of his children, and transformed lives.

Carolyn Gardella



Stephanie and me

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