

December 2010

Dear Friends and Family,

**What a wonderful time of the year!** In Managua the rains have stopped, and a cool breeze is blowing making the weather just wonderful. In Menlo Park, CA where we are for now, the weather is cool and crisp which makes a fire in the wood stove feel great for those of us used to a warmer climate. A couple of weeks ago we celebrated Thanksgiving with a large group of friends from the English-speaking church that we often attend in Managua. At one point we were asked to share something that we were thankful for. I thought back on the last couple months and realized that I have a lot of things to be thankful for – life, God’s presence in good and bad times, surprise gifts, friends and family that often go over and above to help us out and many, many other blessings.

**A couple of months ago Sami, Anthony and I sat swinging in our new hammock chairs** on the front porch, and I was thinking how calm and good life had been recently. Little did I know that that was all about to change. That afternoon I received a call from a young gal saying that Thomas had just been in a motorcycle accident in Managua. She said that he was alright, but that an ambulance was on the way and it looked to her like he had broken his leg. As shocked as I was from the news, I was definitely thankful for life--Thomas’ life!

**“Joy is not the absence of suffering but the presence of God.”** My mom shared this quote with me soon after the accident, and I realized how true it is in life. I felt God’s presence down to the smallest detail on the day of Thomas’ accident. The young gal, who called me, works for the Red Cross. She witnessed the accident and was the first one to reach Thomas and call for an ambulance. She also held on to Thomas’ helmet, backpack and shoes until I arrived. This may not seem like a big deal, but unfortunately theft is a huge problem in Nicaragua and belongings are often stolen from victims of accidents. A co-worker of Thomas’ had been biking home when he saw the accident and stopped only to discover that he knew the driver. In Nicaragua in order for the insurance to be involved with an accident, none of the vehicles are to be moved until the police arrive. This can often take hours, and there is always a risk that the other party will move the vehicles to make the accident look better for them. Thomas’ co-worker ended up staying at the scene of the accident for about four hours until the police finally arrived. Upon arriving at the hospital in an ambulance one of Thomas’ bosses was in a board meeting at the hospital and was able to come over and be with Thomas until I arrived. I was thankful to God for using friends and a complete stranger to help Thomas and that nothing was stolen from him.

**After a number of x-rays, the doctors discovered that Thomas had broken** his right tibia bone. He spent five days in a cast and then, after seeing new x-rays, the doctor decided to operate. We returned a couple of days later for the operation only to find that there were no beds available and that the rod which would go in his bone had not yet been ordered. We then waited five days till everything was ready – the rod had arrived, both doctors were on call and a bed was available! Throughout the month as Thomas recovered, our home has been full of comings and goings of Thomas’ family, soccer players, neighbor friends, co-workers and many plates of Nicaraguan food. It really was a true blessing and a great encouragement to us all!

**As we finish this year and head into the next, we are reminded** of all the many blessings in our lives, the most important being family, friends and of course a relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May you enjoy the real meaning of Christmas and find joy in God’s presence despite what your circumstances might be!

Seeking Him for life,

*Amanda, Thomas, Samantha y Anthony Gutierrez*

*Eastside Development*

PO Box 301471 Portland, OR 97294

Email: [amanda@amandaythomas.com](mailto:amanda@amandaythomas.com) For more info, please check: [www.amandaythomas.com](http://www.amandaythomas.com)

