

July 2012

Dear Friends and Family,

Patience is a virtue. We have all heard that saying, but it sure can be a hard virtue to learn. Learning patience has been something we seem to be continually learning! Two weeks ago one of our teams had 27 of their suitcases held by customs, and we spent numerous hours waiting in lines and offices to finally get them out duty free. One of our cars has been in the shop for the past four months, and we are still waiting to hear from the mechanic that he has finished his work. We are going on one and a half years of waiting for some resolution from the accident Thomas was in on his motorcycle. The other driver was found guilty, and then he disappeared for about 9 months. And finally our biggest trial in patience - we bought our land six years ago and have yet to receive the titles to the land. The funniest part is that we paid extra to have the title transmitted faster. Below are some more stories of how we are each learning to be patient. Enjoy!

From Samantha

A couple of weeks ago Mommy told me that we were going to take a bus and go to Costa Rica to visit some friends. Every day after that I asked Mommy if we were going to Costa Rica that day. She kept telling me to be patient. First, I had to finish my school year. I made some really good friends this year and enjoyed learning. My favorite thing in school was “doing colors.” I really enjoyed singing songs up front at our school assemblies. Someone told Mommy that I am quite a ham. I am not sure what that means, but I do like to sing and dance. Once summer vacation started we received a team of high schoolers. They were so much fun. I really enjoy staying up late for youth group nights.

Finally, after waiting for sooo long, the day came to go to Costa Rica. Mommy had said we were going in a bus, but I did not expect it to be a 9.5 hour ride! I really had to be patient on that ride. We spent four days in Costa Rica with Marvin and Tania and their daughter, Angelica. My favorite part was “playing with Angelica.”

From Anthony

My favorite activity right now is whatever my sister, Sami, is doing. I am learning to count and how to sing the alphabet. I am also learning all of the songs that Sami has sung at school because she teaches them to me. I love my big sister! Sometimes, though, I have to wait until she is done playing with a toy before I get to play with it. I do not like to wait very long though, and sometimes I throw a fit.

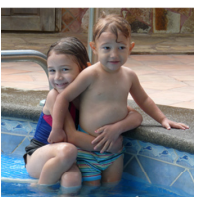
I also love playing outside with our dogs or going next door to play with our neighbors. Whenever Papi goes to the sports center in the afternoons, I usually go with him to play with big kids. The other day I finally got a soccer ball away from the bigger boys, and then I tried to keep them from getting it back. Papi made me give it back to them. I cannot wait until I am bigger so that I can play soccer at the sports center.

From Thomas

In the past couple of months I realized that I have finally developed some good friendships here in the neighborhood to the point that I was ready to start inviting some of the guys over to the house. Now that might sound like a weird statement to you – of course you would invite friends over to your house, right?

Well, in a world where poverty and theft can go hand in hand, it is sometimes hard to know whom to trust. Who will come into your house, see everything you have and then tell someone else and together they will figure out a way to break in and steal? It might sound a bit melodramatic, but we know people whom that exact situation has happened to. It can take some patience, but really getting to know people and earning their trust is one of the best ways to begin a real friendship. In starting the soccer league here at the sports center and then having my own team, I have begun some deep friendships with a great group of guys. Along the way, though, I have also realized who is not exactly trustworthy. The guys have come over a couple of times to watch some big soccer matches. Other times they have come over to play video games or do some work on the computer. Being patient in getting to know the guys here in the neighborhood has really paid off.

Speaking of the soccer league, most of the guys on my team were quite young were I started coaching them. In the last three seasons my team has played in the championship game for the league, but each time they lost and got second place. They wanted so badly to win. It has taken a lot of patience and teamwork on their part, and this past May we played once again in the championship game but this time we won!!





The guys were so excited. I think they realized that being patient and continuing to work hard earned them this victory.

About a month ago our family was able to go visit Lesbia and her two daughters, Alexandra and Nathaly. In our last letter I wrote about losing my best friend, Freddy. Lesbia was his wife. She is doing amazingly well for all that she has gone through this year. The girls seemed happy and are doing well in school. They are living at Lesbia's parents' home and have added a room onto the house for them to live in. Amanda and I plan to continue to check in with Lesbia from time to time. We have let Lesbia know that we would like to help with the girl's education over the years.



From Amanda

Be careful what you pray for, because you just might get it. I must have prayed for patience in the last year or so. If you pray for patience, you just might end up with experiences like ours – waiting for our land titles, waiting to get money from the insurance company to fix our motorcycle, waiting to get our car back from the mechanic, waiting at customs, waiting in bank lines, waiting at immigration, waiting, waiting, waiting! Argh, some days I am just tired of waiting. I grew up in a culture in which everything is done so fast, and we are not exactly trained to wait. Lately, though, I have wondered if God ever gets tired of waiting on us. Waiting for us to seek Him out, waiting for us to believe in Him, waiting for us to take that step of faith, or waiting for us to ask for forgiveness. I believe that God is patient, and that time is in His hands so maybe God does not feel the same way about waiting as I do. If anything, He says in His word, “Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.” (Proverbs 8:34). In all of my waiting I have slowly learned that often God has other plans that would not come about if everything was done as fast as I wanted it. I have met people waiting in lines. I have had to trust more that God is in control and not the government or insurance companies. Mostly, though, I have learned to be patient.



As we prepared for this upcoming busy summer, I have been busy getting t-shirts printed locally for our sports center, printing my sixth batch of postcards and continuing to pay scholarships. Just recently a small hair salon was built at the entrance to our neighborhood. We drove by the other day, and I was excited to see one of the gals who had received a scholarship to learn hair styling is now working at that hair salon!



Just recently we hosted our fifth team from Maranatha High School from Pasadena, CA. We always enjoy working with these youth and their leaders. They painted three different murals, played a lot of basketball with the youth, hosted three youth nights and did lots of work around the sports center. They come to serve and are a real blessing to our ministry!



The day the team left we took a short vacation to Costa Rica. We went mainly to see the family whom I had lived with before I moved to Nicaragua. We had not seen them in over 5 years so it was great to reconnect with them. The weekend was filled with lots of laughter, good food and seeing old friends. It was definitely worth the patience it took to sit in a bus for 9.5 hours!



Seeking Him for life,

Thomas, Amanda, Samantha y Anthony Gutiérrez