

May 2017

Dear Friends and Family,

We hope this finds you doing well and enjoying whatever the Lord has you doing right now. As I type this, the rainy season has started and the humidity is quite high. With no A/C we have learned how to cope in the hot months of March and April and then in the humidity of the first rains in May. While I love how fast everything turns from brown to green in our yard and in the rest of Nicaragua, once the rainy season starts, I could do without the humidity. Somehow though it doesn't even phase my kids. One of them still wears long-sleeve pajamas to bed. Another wears leggings when out and about, and then there is our dress-up queen who can still put on three layers of clothes and not be hot. How great it is to be a kid!!

Speaking of kids, though, I have come to see firsthand how many kids here in Nicaragua are forced to grow up fast. Lydia, a friend of mine who just moved here last year, and I started a girls' Bible study last fall. We meet with up to eight girls every other week. In the fall we did a typical Bible study but found that the girls would hardly talk or offer much in the way of discussion. This year we decided to just meet and talk more with the girls in order to get to know them better and just see where the conversations would go. They have been much more talkative this year. In doing so we have counseled the girls on their friendships with each other since there are often fights between them about petty things. We have also rejoiced when a 14 year-old girl returned home to live with her mom where there is more accountability than at her dad's house where she had way too much freedom and was at risk to lose a very good scholarship that she has worked hard to earn. Some of the questions these girls ask are way beyond what I was thinking about at 12-16 years of age. While they may feel "grown-up," I feel for them in having lost their childlikeness at such a young age. As we continue to meet, our prayer is to speak Godly counsel into their lives as they make decisions at such young ages that very much affects their future.

With my own kids I hope that they can enjoy being kids for as long as possible. I love watching the four of them play together, including Sofi, who is the token baby whenever they play house! And while they have their disagreements and can be quite competitive with each other, for the most part they get along well and know that they are each other's best friends. Sami is finishing up third grade and is quite involved in the swim club, Nica Nadadores, here at the sports center. Anthony is almost done with first grade and just recently joined a soccer club that practices three times a week at another private school in Managua. Nicole is completing her first year of preschool and has learned so much this year. Sofi turns one in a couple of weeks. It's hard to believe that her first year has gone by this fast. Thomas and I love watching their growing personalities and how their faith continues to blossom. We so appreciate Nicaragua Christian Academy for their schooling because we know they are being taught well and being disciplined in Christ at the same time.

Education in Nicaragua is what will mostly shape and define the future of today's children and youth. A couple of weeks ago I was at meeting where statistics were shared about the education in Nicaragua. These numbers are not easy to come by, but it was astounding to hear that 52% of children who begin studying in preschool or first grade will actually finish sixth grade and 38% will finish high school. Many who finish high school will not go on to college or any other educational program. For those who do, only 42% of those who enter college will actually graduate. In looking back at all of my records since starting to offer college scholarships, 64% of the students who have finished their first year of college have gone on to graduate. Over half of those who did not graduate were very close to finishing; most of them had classes they had not passed the first time I had paid their tuition, and therefore, had to make up on their own. I continue to encourage those whom I see from time to time that I will pay for the final seminar if they can finish their coursework. This year I have 57 university students of whom I am paying their tuition or helping with supplies and transportation. Ideally, five of them will finish their final course this year and graduate. This is an exceptional accomplishment for many of these young students, especially those from poor families and/or whose parents never finished sixth grade. Please keep them in your prayers and continue to support their efforts by contributing to the scholarship program.

Seeking Him for life,

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