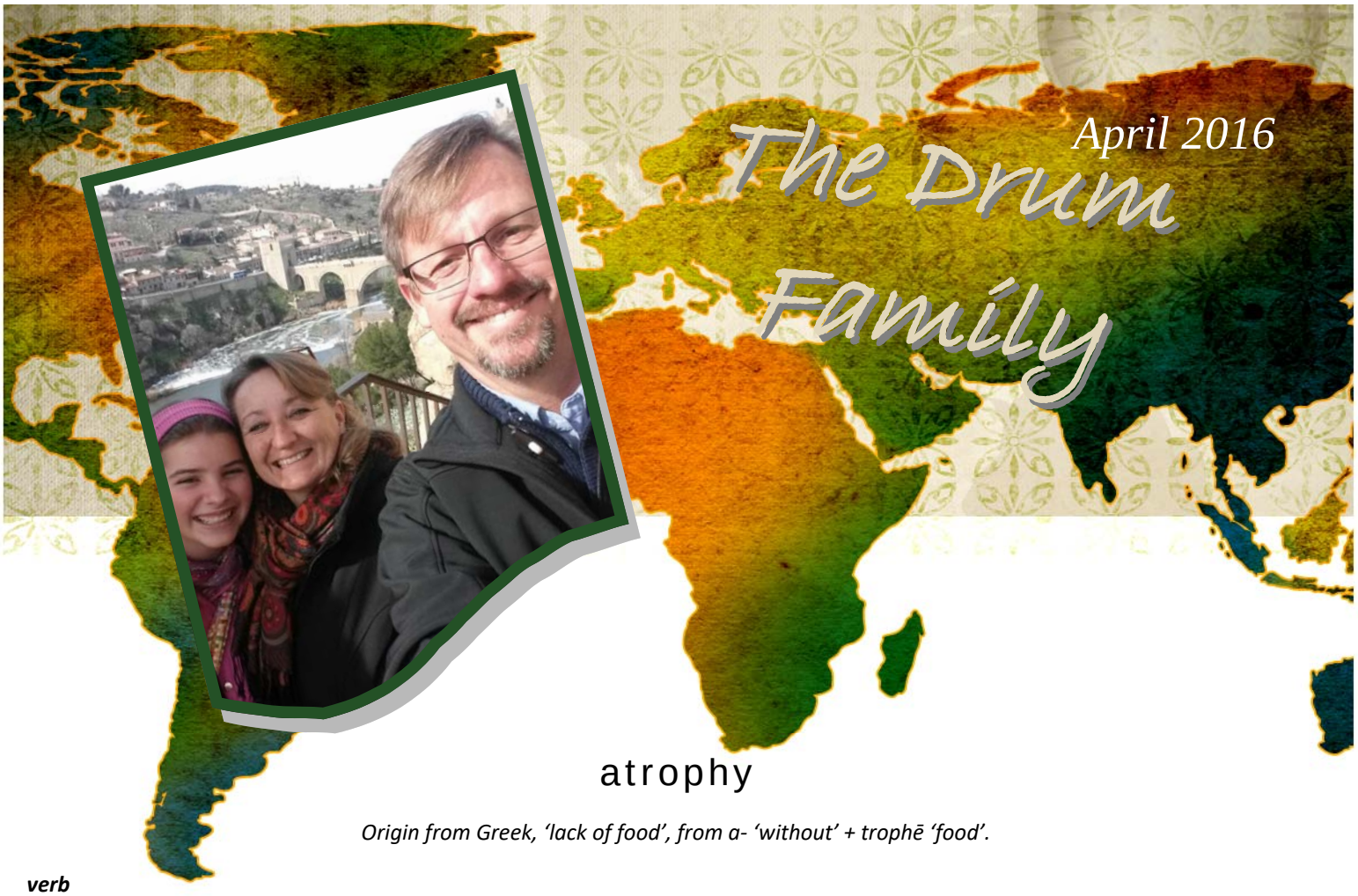


April 2016

The Drum Family

atrophy

Origin from Greek, 'lack of food', from a- 'without' + trophē 'food'.

verb

1. (of body tissue or an organ) waste away, especially as a result of the degeneration of cells, or injury "the calf muscles will atrophy"

synonyms: waste away, waste, become emaciated, wither, shrivel, shrivel up, shrink, become shrunken, dry up, decay, wilt;

2. gradual decline in effectiveness or vigor due to underuse or neglect.

Synonyms: peter out, taper off, tail off, dwindle, deteriorate, decline, wane, fade, fade away, fade out, give in, give up, give way, crumble, disintegrate, collapse, slump, go downhill, draw to a close, subside

noun

the process of atrophying or state of having atrophied.

synonyms: wasting, wasting away, emaciation, withering, shriveling, shriveling up, shrinking, drying up, wilting, decaying, decay;

I remember back to several years ago. I remember the fear that I had when my leg was not responding. I had a long-troubling back issue that became a major problem when I sneezed. Okay – no jokes here… it's true, a sneeze caused me to rupture a disc in my back and sent me in to severe pain. It was a pain like no other, like fire was searing my whole body. In the emergency room, they gave me the maximum amount of morphine they could give me, and I continued to feel like I was on fire. The problem was a nerve that had been compromised in the injury. When I was seen by my doctor and referred for surgery, my leg was already not responding. The signals to the nerve in my leg had been blocked and I could not make my calf respond. I had surgery a couple of weeks later to deal with the disc, but the damage was already done to my calf. In such a short period of time, the muscle had begun to atrophy – lack of use and lack of nerve signals had already caused it to begin the process of decline, of shutting down and giving up.

It took time, many months, but once my back was repaired and I began to work on using the leg again, I slowly regained what was lost.

I was reminded of this scenario recently when I heard a Spanish pastor discussing atrophy with regard to our faith. If we don't use our faith, it too, begins to atrophy. It begins to shrivel and fade away. Not unlike my calf muscle, when we are not maintaining a communication with The Source, our faith can dry up and we lose our ability to function as a part of the Body.

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...Atrophy

Romans 12: 4-6 Each one of us has one body, and that body has many parts. These parts don't all do the same thing. In the same way, we are many people, but in Christ we are all one body. We are the parts of that body, and each part belongs to all the others. We all have different gifts. Each gift came because of the grace God gave us.

We were studying this passage and the idea that Paul is using the double meaning of body and parts… obviously using the idea of our physical bodies and body parts, but referring to the Body of believers and our community of faith (the Church). The point was made by our friend, Oscar, "A body part only truly lives and exists when it is a part of the whole. When amputated or cut off, it ceases to truly live. When a hand is amputated, it cannot exist on its own. The same is true of the Body of the Church. We are only truly whole when we are a part of the Community. However, when we are cut off or when we isolate ourselves, we slowly atrophy and wither away."

I think this is also true of people not using their gifts and talents in service. When our gifts are not used and our talents are not being placed into service, we slowly begin to shut down, to lose interest, to fade away, and to be unfruitful.

John 15:4-8 Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit. He also trims every branch that produces fruit to prepare it to produce even more. You have already been prepared to produce more fruit by the teaching I have given you. Stay joined to me and I will stay joined to you. No branch can produce fruit alone. It must stay connected to the vine. It is the same with you. You cannot produce fruit alone. You must stay joined to me. "I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I to you, you will produce plenty of fruit. But separated from me you won't be able to do anything. If you don't stay joined to me, you will be like a branch that has been thrown out and has dried up. All the dead branches like that are gathered up, thrown into the fire and burned. Stay joined together with me, and follow my teachings. If you do this, you can ask for anything you want, and it will be given to you. Show that you are my followers by producing much fruit. This will bring honor to my Father.

Several years ago, I could not have imagined being able to spend 5 years walking the Andes mountain paths with Quechua women and children in Peru, or making the 791 kilometer pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago as a missionary to other pilgrims. Honestly, just going upstairs to my bedroom was a huge feat. But God has been faithful and merciful to me and allowed me more opportunities to bear fruit in His name. When I begin to allow myself to be "too busy" and I slowly feel myself falling to the wayside, not staying fully focused and connected to Him – to The Vine – I also begin to lose my ability to produce any fruit. "No branch can produce fruit alone." When I begin to feel those moments of atrophy in my life, I remember my leg. I remember how my calf was 'cut off' from my brain, and how quickly I lost my ability to function. The same is true with my spiritual life and my usefulness to the community of believers and to the Kingdom… as soon as I am not joined with Christ, I lose any usefulness I have for Him.



I am, by no means, the "perfect Christian". Ha! I constantly struggle with staying focused. I continually fall into my default mode, allowing my schedule and my to-do list run my life. It is a daily battle to remember what is most important and to not permit the clamor of busyness to overrun my priorities. Many days, what seems 'fruitful' is really just achievement and accomplishment and success at dominating the meaningless items on my list… but, when I'm honest, none of it was truly fruit bearing for the Kingdom.

Daily, I have to reflect and remember to focus, to stay connected to what truly matters. Because I remember how scary it was to become disconnected and begin to lose feeling, to lose ability, to lose hope.

Stay connected. Stay active in service. Stay fruitful. Don't atrophy and slowly fade away. Stay connected to The Body and to a community of others who are serving and learning and growing in Him.

Prayer Requests -

- **Pray for the global regions of Europe, the Middle East, and the Balkans**… we work as Care Coordinators for workers in these regions. This month has seen heightened security concerns for our areas. This month also began many changes to how the refugee situation will proceed in Europe. There is much tension on many fronts… political, humanitarian, terrorism, etc.

- **Pray for Spain.** Prayers for God to raise up workers who are willing to come to the areas of Spain where there is little to no witness. The large cities have a disproportionate amount of Christian workers and resources, while the small towns and regions have virtually no one and nothing. Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, and Malaga continue to be the areas that agencies send workers, while virtually no one is sending workers to the villages and pueblos. Spanish pastors in the outlying areas are struggling to carry the load alone and are subject to burnout and exhaustion. We know of 3 ministries that have closed their doors in the past two months, one who has had a major crisis and church split, and others who are overworked and underfunded / understaffed and frustrated. Pray for workers to come alongside local pastors in ways that will lift them up, ways that will lighten the burden, and ways that will glorify God.

- **Pray for Relationships**: We have been overwhelmed with the sad truth that several mission families we serve with are in various forms of crisis. Christian workers are NOT immune to hardship and struggle. Over the past few months, we have been witness to marriage struggles, depression, serious illness, grief and loss, looming financial crisis, and crisis of faith - all among our friends and peers. This takes it's toll on us as friends / workers / counselors, as well as on friendships, marriages, and families. Please pray for healing and reconciliation for all.

What do they do???

We serve in several roles in ministry, and each of those holds a variety of ways that we work and serve others. Our roles as ***Care Coordinators for Europe and the Middle East / Balkans*** *and as* ***local Cross-Cultural Workers to Spain*** *include coaching and counseling, teaching and mentoring, leading and equipping—and a LOT of loving others! This column will be dedicated to sharing parts of that work with you each month.*

One of the ways we minister in Spain is via church planting and leadership. Each month, we ask you to pray for Spain and for God to call people to come and help serve in the small towns, villages and pueblos. We pray for God to raise up workers who are willing to come to the areas of Spain where there is little to no witness. There are 7000+ towns with no evangelical or protestant congregation. Much of the Spanish population that was born after 1975 is unchurched and has no affiliation with any religion or congregation, Catholic or protestant. The small amount of growth that the Spanish protestant church has experienced has been mostly due to the influx of immigrants.

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	Brazos County	Grimes County	*Comarca natural* (county)de Antequera
Population	200,665	26,783	64,692
Land area Square miles	586	794	443
Registered evangelical / protestant congregations	131	39	10

One of the ways that we minister in Spain is via leadership and church planting. We serve a local congregation in a small town. Our church, Centro Cristiano, has a congregation of approximately 130 members. But all of those members are not from Antequera (the town). Our church has an outreach radius of 32 miles which encompasses 15 communities. We have active house churches and cell groups far outside of our city limits which we visit with and serve each week. Every weekday, the work is divided among the pastor and two missionary couples and we set out in different directions to teach, disciple, and pastor cell groups. Some groups only have two to three people, and some have up to 12. Some meet in the daytime hours, and some in the evenings.

Other ways: We lead an adult study group and a youth Sunday School group, as well as being the Sunday School Directors. Billy serves on the board of the church-affiliated NGO and we both work with the non-profit in various ways. The other mission couple leads the youth group, guides a women's workshop, and works with the NGO in the food pantry and other outreach.



Pastor's Leadership Team

We also serve on the Pastor's Leadership Team, helping to determine strategies and methods for more effective work and helping to alleviate the burden that the pastor carries. Maybe most importantly, we are good listeners and friends who support the pastor and each other.

Pray for workers to come alongside local pastors in ways that will lift them up, ways that will lighten the burden, and ways that will glorify God.



Billy and Laurie (Texas), Delilah and Axel (Puerto Rico)... part of the leadership team for Centro Cristiano Antequera.

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The Mission Society

- Sharing the Love of Christ with the least, the lost, and the left out… immigrants, displaced peoples, the lonely, the abandoned, those who need a friend.
- Nurturing and developing people to be healthy spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally - because "care" is not just an emotional feeling word, "care" is a verb - an action. That's who we are… the care-givers!



Oh Happy Day!!! Adventures with the Antequera Gospel Choir

Billy sings in a gospel choir in Spain! Our town has a municipal music school and offers this choir as a class and performance group. This has proven to be a fun activity for Billy (he misses the days of singing with his buddies in the choir in Navasota). It has also proven to be a great opportunity to share about Christ. The choir sings gospel songs in English. The choir is made up of Spaniards. So, as a native English speaker, Billy helps teach pronunciation, as well as translating the lyrics so everyone can understand what they are singing. On many occasions, the gospel message has been heard and received in choir as a new word to listening ears! Most of the choir members are not believers or are unchurched. Some are Catholic by birth, but do not associate with any congregation. This has been a fun way to build relationships within the community and to share his faith in a natural and non-threatening way.