

May / June 2016

# Serving in Spain and around the globe



## 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 serving in youth ministry.**

One role that we did not anticipate when we came to Spain was that of Youth Ministry. One afternoon, while sitting in the garden at the church with the pastor, he approached us with the request of leading the youth Sunday school class for a short period... 3 months. He needed to give the current teacher a break (the teacher had been in the role for several years with no break) and asked us to step in for a bit. I'll be honest—my initial gut response was fear and trembling. The idea of teaching teens was a bit equivalent to Daniel in the lion's den... I just kept thinking about how they would eat me alive! But the poor pastor was a little desperate for a sub for those 3 months and we have a hard time saying no or letting others down (basically, we were sitting ducks and he knew it), so we decided that we could do anything for just 3 months. There was an endpoint and we would have an 'out', so we said okay.

Well, here we are, 2+ years later... still teaching the youth class and now serving on the youth leadership team... and loving every minute of it!!! The previous teacher did not want his job back, and by that time, we were smitten with these awesome kids! So, we stayed in the position.

Youth Sunday school mostly looks like a group inductive bible study / disciple group. These kids are smart and driven and eager to learn! They are willing to wrestle with Scripture and with ideas and with each other's opinions. They go deep... often deeper than we expect. They are growing every week. They are amazing! This past Sunday, we started a new discipleship study series with them (Life Transformation Studies). During the first session, they made connections and new discoveries like never before. One student shouted out, "Wait! Stop! I can't handle this. My head is exploding!" Another said, "I've learned more today from the bible than I have ever learned in all my years of Religion class! (Religion classes are mandatory in school here.) I always feel like I don't know how to respond or argue my point in class. I can't wait till the next time I get to say something! This is amazing! This stuff about Jesus and God and then Adam and humanity... What?! This is awesome!" Then, to top it all off, an adult came to us after class and asked if we would please personally help them to study the bible like we do with the youth.

Mind blown!!! Guess youth ministry might have been a good thing after all.

## ...What do they do???

We also serve on a youth leadership team with other CCWs Axel and Delilah (from Puerto Rico), and with a college student (Ana – Spaniard) who is passionate about youth ministry. Axel and Delilah lead youth group while we are responsible for youth Sunday school. Axel and Delilah are in their 30s and are younger and more gifted than us in many ways!!! Ana keeps us all straight, giving us the Spanish perspective and making sure we are culturally appropriate, as well as giving us the youthful insight of a twenty year old! She is 'youth leadership in training', an intern of sorts... indispensable to our team, for sure!

Our youth are diverse, to say the least!!! We have many Third-Culture Kids (TCKs). These kids come from Brazil and Nicaragua, Spain and Argentina and the USA. One has a parent from Ukrania, another has a parent from Canada. Three of them are missionary kids who consider themselves to be from several places and not defined by any one place... including Sarah from Texas / Costa Rica / Peru / Spain, another who has lived in Argentina / Peru / USA / Spain, and another who has lived in Mauritania / USA / Canada / Spain. So, to say that these kids make up an incredible mix of cultures and worldviews is an understatement!



This month, the team hosted an overnight youth retreat. The kids were so excited and we had great plans for teambuilding/community building games, debriefs, bible studies, and creativity activities. A crazy Spring weather pattern caused us to scramble for Plan B on several outdoor activities and re-arrange a few things for indoors, but the rains did let up long enough for a midnight campfire and marshmallow roasting.

To say that the retreat was a success would also be an understatement. It far surpassed our expectations! The kids were fantastic! They dug deep when it was time to debrief the community building games. They mined Truth from the bible study times that we never expected them to reach. They self-instigated times of prayer for each other. They played hard, studied hard, and loved deeply.

Because these kids are so diverse and come from a variety of backgrounds, and because many of them are TCKs, they relate to each other in very special ways. During one session in particular, several opened up about how much they missed family members in other parts of the world and about issues in school, at home, and about being in a different culture / language. Impromptu prayers for each other broke out and tears flowed. Youth hugged each other and talked about how much they understood each other and how much they, too, miss their family members or struggle with home issues or school things. It was really beautiful and special. (Okay... I was a little choked up, too! Sarah was in tears, but surrounded by others who also have a family far away that they miss.) I think that Billy and I, and Axel and Delilah are in this role for exactly this reason... we 'get it'. We get what it's like to leave home, to be immigrants, to leave family behind and to grieve that loss. We understand what it is like to be working and studying in a new culture, a different language, and a completely different set of norms and values. We understand families that are under special pressures as immigrants. It's hard. It takes work. It is stressful. And we can relate.

The theme of the retreat was **No estas sol@** (You are not alone). The kids latched on to it and are now using it in everything they do. We are a family - a new kind of family, a community, a team. It's fun to hear them remind each other, "No estas solo!"

We're moving forward with these youth. We continue with Sunday school and bible study time. We will be having a youth event on May 27<sup>th</sup> with some out-of-town youth ministry folks coming in. There is a region-wide youth event on May 28<sup>th</sup> in Malaga that many of the youth will also be attending. In June, we will have a youth pool party, as well as we will be having Youth Sunday in our church (pray for this!). A handful of students have bubbled up to the top and want to go deeper and begin some leadership training and mentoring. It's a lot of fun to watch these kids rise up and get excited and motivated to move forward!



# PRAYERS AND PRAISES

- **Praises** for a very successful youth retreat in May! Despite a rainy weekend and having to go to Plan B for many of our planned activities, we had lots of great fun, super relationship building, and really deep and meaningful conversations and prayer times. The retreat far surpassed our expectations! Thankful for the wonderful team of adult leaders who serve together... Axel and Delilah and Ana and The Drums, who work together to make everything fantastic.
- **Prayers** for this time we have dubbed "Visitor Season". Starting in April, we have hosted 3 separate CCW visits...two for vision trips to become mission workers in Spain, and one couple celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary with a trip to Spain to visit us and to see their adult son who is serving here. Coming soon, we will host another family for two weeks as they visit to learn more about Spain and about the possibility of coming to work with us and become a part of our team. We love hosting and serving other CCWs in this way! We are available to coach and counsel and mentor others as they walk through big decisions and learning processes. **Pray for us** to be good and gracious hosts. Also **pray for us** to find rest in between visitors, to be able to devote time to family and our own marriage relationship, and to give ourselves the space and the boundaries that we need in our schedule in order to care for ourselves in the midst of serving others.
- **Prayers** for the youth we serve... they are all entering in to a busy time of exams and end-of-school year stressors. Many of our youth are immigrants and are studying in school in their second language and second culture. Many have difficult situations in their homes (economics, family struggles, etc.) that cause even more stressors for them...as though the teen years aren't hard enough!



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- 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!



“We don’t need to change people. We don’t need to change their ideas or change them in to evangelicals. What we need to do is to learn how to *be*. WE need to change. We need to learn how to *be* people who live our lives in the streets and in public like Kingdom people.”

~Miguel, Spanish pastor

