

Engage the Nations Internship Update #1

Tijuana, Mexico

Saturday, June 10th, 2017



Below are a few verses God has highlighted to me for this trip:

For our team: Acts 16:13-15

For me personally: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Below are things you can partner with me in prayer:

- For **discipleship** relationships to develop with two friends I have met, Javier and Jonathan
- For continued growth and life-change in the youth group, **Revo**
- For the three new Friday night **lifegroups** that started last week
- For continued **protection and health** over our team and staff as we serve
- For a **teachable spirit**, so my thoughts, words, and actions look more like Jesus every day

Hola Todos!

What a month it has been here in TJ! It feels like just yesterday when I was hopping on a plane to Dallas to meet my team for Engage the Nations training. I guess time flies when you're serving the LORD! It was a month full of victories and challenges, and with each day God has made it more clear that spending my summer this way was exactly what I needed. Sometimes God calls us to move away and step out of our comfort zones so that we can depend more fully on Him. I'm reminded of the story of Abraham –

"For the LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. **I will bless you** and make you famous, **and you will be a blessing to others.**'" (Genesis 12:1-2)

Abraham's incredible adventure with God began with a change of locale, and God promised that blessing follows his obedience. My prayer this summer is that through deeper, more consistent obedience to God in my own life, I will be a blessing to those around me.

So where to begin? I guess I can start with my training in Dallas... and WOW. It was one of the most impactful times of my life. Myself along with 100 plus other interns came together to intercede for the various countries and cities in which we would be stationed, and we received vision for what it really means to "**go and make disciples of all nations**" (Matthew 28:19). I spent much-needed time building relationships with my wonderful team of 10, as well as much-needed alone time with Jesus. Coming into training, I was burnt-out from school and work this past semester, and I questioned whether or not I really had what it takes to serve God for three long, tough months! Thankfully, my teammates received me with such grace, and Jesus continually reminded me that "My yoke is easy and **my burden is light.**" (Matthew 11:30). When it comes to evangelism and sharing the Gospel with others, the pressure is off. I can't change hearts, and I'm not supposed to. Only the Holy Spirit working in the lives of those who hear can do that! Understanding this brought me so much peace and refreshment, so I was finally ready to head south of the border!



Sharing stories as a team at Training



Worship with all of the Engage the Nations Interns

After a short flight over to San Diego, Pastor Jonathan with **All Peoples Church Tijuana** picked us up from the airport and we drove a mere 30 minutes to San Ysidro, the busiest border crossing in the world! It is quite a chaotic place, with thousands of pedestrians and vehicles passing back and forth every day. The city of Tijuana expands endlessly before us (population just under 2 million), but comes to a bizarre, abrupt stop at the US border wall. In light of this observation God gave me a word – in spite of this wall’s constant, oppressive presence in this city, which represents so much hurt and pain, God wants to **break down walls** in people so they can come to know His incredible, **unconditional love** for them.



Our team about to cross the border into Mexico



The US-Mexico border wall extending into the Pacific Ocean

Once we settled into our apartments (right on the ocean I might add), and consumed the **best tacos** our neighborhood has to offer, we began our first week as official interns for All Peoples Church Tijuana! The staff here is amazing, and through their pursuit of **intentional relationships** with each other and the people of their church, the congregation has grown tremendously these past few months. The Sunday morning *reuniones* are so much fun, with everyone worshipping Jesus with so much passion and a lot of *spanglish*! A testimony from that first Sunday was something God did in this girl named Tania. She had heard about All Peoples almost two years ago, but never visited on a Sunday morning. Then through an ad on Facebook, she randomly decided to check it out. After church, she began talking with us interns and we all decided to go out to lunch. She was enjoying her time so much that she hung out with us for the rest of the day, coming back to the church to help us with the youth that evening! My teammate Mary was able to pull Tania aside while we were setting up and she shared the gospel with her. **Tania ended up giving her life to Jesus** through that conversation! It was just so crazy to see Tania's hunger and willingness to hang around for the entire day, even though it was her first time coming to church. Praise God for her life!



Sunday Morning worship at All Peoples Church Tijuana



My apartment for the summer

The next week was pretty tough, for the entire team was sick at some point. Through that time however, God taught us the **power of intercession**. For those of us that weren't feeling well enough for outreach that day, we stayed back at the church and prayed for the rest of the team as they were out in the city. We all had such a change of heart, and we realized that an increase in prayer results in an increase in the awareness of the Holy Spirit. It was such an encouraging and powerful time, and since then my prayer life has never been the same.

Later that week once I had fully recovered, I was able to help deliver tires to the house of a lady named Sara in our church. Her home is precariously perched on a hillside, and due to a recent landslide, a **retaining wall** needs to be built to keep the house from sliding away. I joked that as an architect, I never thought I would choose old tires to build a retaining wall, but they actually work really well! A testimony from that week was a new relationship formed with a guy named **Javier, who just so happens to be an architecture student** at a university here in Tijuana! He is so kind and so eager to learn more about God and about All Peoples Church. We went out to lunch to share each other's stories, geek out about architecture things, and talk about Jesus. I look forward to continuing to grow our friendship and ultimately inviting him into a life-long relationship with Jesus.



The tire retaining wall at Sara's house

The following week was very special to me because five people from Antioch Baton Rouge came to Tijuana for their College Ministry Mission Trip! One of the major goals of the week was to host a **Vacation Bible School** for the kids of a neighborhood up in the hills called *Cardenas*. It was blast singing songs, playing games, and teaching the kiddos that “nada es imposible para Dios”! Numerous niños were impacted by Jesus that week, as were their parents. Additionally, as the music was playing and the kids were screaming, people from the neighborhood would stop by to see what was going on. This opened even more opportunities to share the love of Jesus with people and pray for healing! One man **gave his life to Jesus** during that time and another woman was **healed of back pain**! Praise God!

Another incredible testimony occurred when I went with the Baton Rouge team to the **General Hospital of Tijuana** which serves the people of the city who do not have health insurance. Needless to say, the hospital is completely overloaded with patients and many people do not receive care. Due to security reasons, we do not have access to the emergency room to pray for and minister to patients. However, a way around this is to clean the restrooms and the waiting room for patients’ family and friends. It is

quite a depressing scene, for some of these people stay here for weeks, or even months, as their loved ones are waiting for treatment. Nevertheless, **what a privilege we had to bring the hope of Jesus to these people**. After we finished cleaning, someone on our team shared their testimony and the Gospel, and we began to pray for people and encourage them. I was with my friend Lucky who felt the LORD tell him that a man adjacent to us had pain in his right leg. This man was wearing long pants, so there was no way of telling beforehand if there was anything that ailed him. I go over to ask him if his right leg hurt and sure enough it did! Eagerly, Lucky and I prayed for him, and all of the pain went away in Jesus' name! This man was so shocked by this miracle, especially that we specifically knew about his pain in the first place. I shared how the Holy Spirit revealed that to Lucky, and that God desires to speak in similar ways to him. We prayed for the man to receive the Holy Spirit and to receive salvation in Jesus. I left that conversation in awe of Jesus and that **He is indeed a God of miracles!**



Breakfast with the team from Baton Rouge



Everyone in the truck headed up to Cardenas for VBS



The kiddos of VBS

This past week was another one for the books because the interns started three new lifegroups throughout the city. The one I am helping lead is at a lady named **Yadira's house**. She has the absolute sweetest family, which includes her parents, her four kids, and her brother with his two kids. Yadira is so eager to open her home to people so they can experience the radical life change she experienced when she began to follow Jesus. We are believing that through God's mighty work in this family, and their commitment to living out **Acts 2:42-47**, many people will be saved and welcomed into a community of believers who genuinely love and care. Also, Yadira's brother Jonathan has expressed interest in growing in Jesus, so I look forward to discipling him for the rest of the summer! In addition to this week's lifegroups, our team ministered to students at **Universidad Autonoma de Baja California**, as well as people milling around in **Plaza Bicentenario**, the historic center of Tijuana. We also spent a much-needed day off in beautiful San Diego as a team!



The first lifegroup at Yadira's house



Mi amigo Christopher at lifegroup



The team and I at Hotel del Coronado in San Diego

I could fill pages and pages with more stories of what God has done this past month, but I want to close with this: **Listening to the Holy Spirit is the wisest thing you can ever do.** My time here is teaching me that listening to my own thoughts and my own advice is really, really dumb. Listening to the Holy Spirit enables me to love people beyond my human capacity. Listening to the Holy Spirit enables me to see supernatural miracles actually happen around me. Listening to the Holy Spirit keeps my heart and mind pure and focused on Him. Listening to the Holy Spirit actively combats the schemes of the enemy. Listening to the Holy Spirit enables me to carry His peace wherever I go. Listening to the Holy Spirit is indeed the wisest thing you can ever do.

Thanks again for taking the time to read about my trip so far, I look forward to sending you the next update in a few weeks!

Much Love,

Christopher James



The beautiful alleyways of Playas, Tijuana