

The Smoker Family Newsletter

Serving the K'ekchi' in Guatemala

June 2020

God's Perfect Timing

In Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* he wrote about the importance of syncing our personal rhythm with the rhythm of God. Though each of us tends to push with impatience against the deliberate passage of time, we can find energy and vitality through being aware of God's perfect timing. When we become attuned to God's rhythm we develop a normal tempo within ourselves and energy flows freely.

During our five years on the field here in Guatemala I can testify to our Lord's perfect timing. Looking back it is clear to me that God placed the circumstances and the right people in our path at the perfect moment to fulfill His mission for us.

While we were in the States this past winter I put together a plan and began raising interest in a business plan for both processing the Kek'chi' coffee and providing additional assistance. The plan would not only allow us to buy Kek'chi' coffee at a fair price, but also provide the Kek'chi' families with much needed social services such as health care and education.

I was happy to see the excitement from our partners in the States for this project and the interest in funding this business idea. In January and February of this year, I further developed the plan with good and wise people in Guatemala who are aware of the challenges of starting a business in Guatemala. I made many trips during this time working out the details of the idea with a team of business people and leaders from the Mennonite Church.



Some of the business people in Guatemala City Ted met with early this year to discuss the coffee processing plant.



Ted and Carlos hand processing a sample batch of coffee cherries.

Also during this time I bought many pounds of coffee from various villages. I processed and sorted the coffee by hand to bring to coffee roasters in the States. I hoped to present these coffee samples to potential buyers in the States who not only demand high quality coffee but also have a clientele that is willing to pay more for the assurance of improving the lives of coffee farmers in Guatemala. In this way, these partnerships are more than just a business transaction, but an investment in the mission to truly improve the lives of the downtrodden and oppressed in our world today. A planned trip to the States to share these samples is now on hold.

In March coronavirus came to Guatemala and the administration here quickly restricted travel and put a strict curfew in place enforced by fines and imprisonment. As I write this in the middle of May, new restrictions are being announced such as the closing of all stores and the prohibiting of all vehicular travel during the weekends.

While our family is doing fine, as we are able to plan ahead and buy enough food to ensure provision for our family during the uncertainty of these restrictions, there are many around us who do not have that luxury. The challenges that the United States confronts is magnified for the people here in Guatemala. The transmission of the virus to the villages would be catastrophic, where many people already have compromising health issues. On the other hand, the mandatory shut down of businesses removes employment for those that were already living day to day with very little income.

The harvest season for coffee and cardamom ended in March, so we are thankful that many have that income to survive these months. And the corn harvest was productive during April which the Kek'chi' people rely on for their daily meals.

Please pray for the people who are suffering through this difficult time, a time that no one knows how long will continue. With 4,000 cases now and over a hundred added each day, we are preparing to endure this for what could be months ahead of us. Pray that travel will open up before the end of the year so that we can begin processing coffee for the upcoming coffee harvest starting in November.

— Ted



Quédate En Casa

That is the current catch phrase in Guatemala going on our twelfth week of stay-at-home orders. Luci even chased Nathan yelling it when he was riding his bike one day: "Quédate en casa. Stay at home!" We are so very thankful for our house back off the road in a tree farm. Because of its location, we are able to be outside and run a bit in spite of the ban on children (or those over the age of 60--Ted has been picking up groceries for a fellow older missionary as well.) being on the

streets unless absolutely necessary. Since the first case arrived in Guatemala, the president (who is also a medical doctor) has worked hard to keep it from spreading. It was successful at first, in spite of the many deportees who returned with the virus, but the last few weeks have seen sharp increases, bringing even more severe lockdown measures.

While frustrating, it has not been a major hardship for us. We are able to get out for groceries, which are fairly well stocked (no toilet paper shortage here). And schooling five children plus a baby keeps me very busy. Abby and Jacob are both homeschooling this year, so they saw very little change, except that their younger siblings are now around all day. Nathan, Esther, and Luci's school has been sending home guides via WhatsApp every 3-4 weeks with lists of work to do. With this past guide they added Zoom classes 3-5 times a week. It is challenging to keep up with all five different curriculums and zoom calls in two languages, but we are adjusting and getting into a routine.

Flights from the US are cancelled indefinitely, and flights to the US are few and expensive. Current speculation is that it could be next year until the airport is fully open again. We are disappointed about the many cancelled trips and visitors that we will not see, but we trust in God's plan and pray that He will be glorified through this time.



Some pictures from our "shelter-at-home" time: Family coloring night, Sunday morning worship with guitar and ukulele, Esther doing a video on something she studied, Cooking lessons, Luci learning her vowels, Zoom call!!, Nathan hard at work, Reading to the kitty, Malakai making friends with our new dog.

Praises:

- ~ A wonderful time reconnecting in the States and safe travels throughout home leave
- ~ Good meetings for Ted with business people in Guatemala
- ~ A new, faster, unlimited internet connection for our home allowing the kids to participate in the Zoom classes with their school
- ~ Health and safety for our family
- ~ Generous new partners who have joined with us in recent months

Please Pray For:

- ~ Guatemala as it deals with the pandemic and how to best beat the health crisis while not causing a hunger crisis as well. Pray that the governmental programs being put in place would actually get to those who need it most.
- ~ Our family's health (physical and emotional) and safety as we continue to stay at home and do school and life on our own
- ~ Wisdom and direction for how to go forward with our vision in the new economic climate that will exist when things open back up
- ~ The harvest this year--coffee and corn--that it would not be negatively affected by the current shutdown

Thank you so much for your faithfulness in prayer!

**Partnering***

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