

July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010

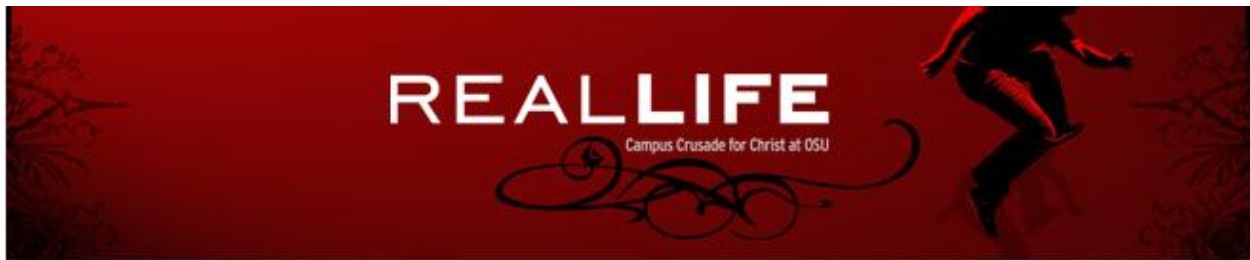
Greetings,

I can't believe that it has already been another week here in Valencia (actually, it has been more), but here I am writing to you again. We just reached the midway point of our time here in Venezuela and took that as an opportunity to rest and relax for the weekend. We just arrived back today. Our weekend away (from Saturday morning until now, Monday evening) was a great time for us to refocus ourselves not just on what we are here to do, but also why we are here to do it and under Whose power it is that we are able. We decided to make the weekend last until Monday because today is Venezuela's Independence Day and everything, including the campus, is closed.

The days leading up to our weekend were the closest to a "normal" week that we have had yet. On Monday, we were on campus just as we had scheduled. I met again with Argenis in order to get some flyers and posters translated for our outreach for Thursday. After he went to class, I was able to commit the rest of the afternoon to starting new spiritual conversations with people. Using one of our resources, a photo-survey called Soularium, I started a conversation with two students, Gabriel and Ruben. The conversation was a little awkward (they spoke no English and my translator was not completely fluent in English), but we eventually were able to talk about the Gospel. By the end of the conversation, Ruben was a little hesitant, but Gabriel was ready and accepted Christ, which was awesome to see. While this is not the first time that I have seen someone accept Christ, it is always a beautiful thing to see someone step from darkness into Light.

Tuesday I had the opportunity to go sharing with Anthony, one of the students in Vida Estudiantil that has been involved for a long time and has even stepped up to be on the leadership team of the movement to take ownership of the ministry at his university. We approached three students and used Soularium again to start a conversation. One of the students studies English, so Anthony did not need to translate for me. Soularium is a series of questions where the other person answers with pictures. Since a picture allows for deeper answers, it can be a great tool for getting to spiritual topics quickly and naturally. This conversation was no exception. I cannot tell you about all the conversation's topics, though. All three students study philosophy and the conversation turned very philosophical, but neither Anthony nor the English student could express these ideas in English and I certainly cannot in Spanish. While none of the students accepted Christ and I could contribute very much to the conversation, it was amazing to see the way that Anthony handled the conversation. While we want to share the Gospel as much as we can in our time here in Venezuela, one of our other goals is to spur the Venezuelan students on to

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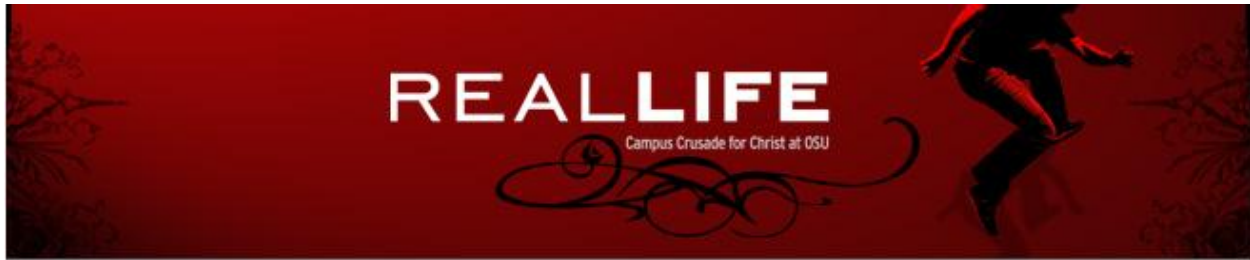
take ownership of the ministry and the Gospel, which is exactly what Anthony, and several other students like him, is doing.

Wednesday we were not able to go to campus because of rain. Despite the fact that half of the year in Venezuela is considered the rainy season, much of life stops when it rains. Students often will stay in classrooms, if they go to class at all, people skip work and cancel appointments. That day we used as an opportunity to have a final planning meeting for the outreach to make sure that everything was in order and tied up the final loose ends.

Thursday was the outreach and it was successful, but not in the ways that we had expected. We decided to have a World Cup theme for the outreach (you cannot get away from the World Cup here) and had three different soccer-related games set-up that we hoped could spark conversations that would lead to the Gospel. In addition to that, for people who may not have been interested in playing soccer, we had another area set-up for people to hang-out and make bracelets that some of our girls had brought, with the intention that natural conversation and small talk could lead to the Gospel. Finally, we had a table set-up with information about Vida Estudiantil and the pictures laid out for Soularium. We expected the most interest to be in soccer with a few people making bracelets, but the soccer games quickly became disorganized and chaotic, while at least 30 people were making bracelets at once and I was overwhelmed by 10 people trying to do Soularium at the same time. We had many positive conversations from the outreach and got many students' contact information. One of the conversations that I got to have was with two girls named Ana and Cosmeli. We went through the Gospel and at the end they both decided that they wanted to think more about it at home before they made a decision. While this could be seen as a rejection, it was very refreshing. Often, Venezuelans will do whatever we say simply because they are intrigued by the Americans and want to please us, but it was great to see the thought and investment that these two girls were putting into the Gospel and I hope to follow up with them soon about it.

The last day before our weekend, Friday, it rained again, but we decided to trek to campus anyway. On Fridays, Vida Estudiantil has a large group Bible study (the closest thing that they have to a weekly meeting) and we really wanted to be there in case people that we invited were there. No one that I invited came, but many students were still there (which was surprising due to the rain) and I enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with the Vida Estudiantil students, studying the Word and investing in their lives. That night we also hosted a variety show for the students and many Venezuelans, some involved in the ministry and some not, were there. We filled the room that we had reserved and most everyone had a great time. The next morning we packed up and went out to our weekend retreat, which brings us to this midpoint of the summer. I cannot

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believe how quickly the summer is moving and it gives me even more of a sense of urgency to be on campus to be sharing the Gospel and building into the ministry. At this point we could still use a great deal of prayer. More specifically,

- Health is still a minor issue. While we no longer have several people missing at any one time, there have still been only a few days where we all felt 100%.
- Strength and perseverance: We are at the midpoint, but there is still a lot of work to be done and not much time to do it. We will need Divine Help to keep our motivation up to press on to the finish.
- Argenis: He is terribly unspecific and I am not 100% where he stands in relation to God at this point, although this is a stark improvement from last year. I hope to continue our conversation this week to get a better idea of where he is in his spiritual journey.
- Gabriel: Prayers of thanksgiving that he accepted Christ, but also prayer is needed that he can stick to his commitment for life, and not just until I leave Valencia.
- Ruben, Ana and Cosmeli: Prayers that they continue to process through the Gospel and that God would lead their thoughts to Himself. Also, that our schedules would permit me to follow up with them.

As always, I would love to pray for anything that you need, answer any questions that you have or just to hear from you back in the States. I hope to get some pictures sent out soon, as well (it is difficult since I don't own a camera), but until then, thank you for your continued support of what God is doing here in South America!

-Ross Antonacci