

Greetings,

Well, the World Cup is finally over and we are here going toward the home stretch of our time here in Valencia, Venezuela. It is strange to think that, once again, I will be back in Columbus in about 2 weeks. With only a few more days on campus, we are really starting to feel a renewed sense of urgency to spend time building into the movement and sharing the Gospel with students on campus.

This past week was only a four-day work week for Venezuela because Monday was their Independence Day (which most Venezuelans could not care less about beyond the day off from work or class). Tuesday I had hoped to meet with Gabriel, the student who accepted Christ with me a few weeks ago, but he was not able to meet because his class that was scheduled to end at 2:30 went past 4:00 (I don't completely understand how that works). With no other plans, I was able to find seven of the Vida Estudiantil students sitting by the library and I was able to encourage them to go take a few minutes share the Gospel and I took one of them with me. I was disappointed to not be able to meet with Gabriel, but it was still cool that God was able to use that to send out 4 different groups of students to share the Gospel with their university. My group was able to have three conversations that day. The first was with a girl who said that she was very much secure in her current beliefs, but was still willing to talk with us (in perfect English!). The conversation was cut short when her dad came to pick her up, but she said that she was interested and wanted to look into Christianity more. Our next conversation was a guy named Jesús. As it turns out, he had once been involved with Vida Estudiantil, but had become too busy with school. He was now interested in getting involved again, so we were able to get him Vida's information and we hope to see him soon. Our last conversation of the day was a girl who was already a Christian, but looking for help in a few issues going on in her life. We were able to talk through those with her and then she said that she would be interested in getting involved with a Christian community and we were again able to give out the weekly activities for Vida Estudiantil as well as get her contact information.

Wednesday we had an English Club on campus to allow people the opportunity to practice their English with native speakers and also to be exposed to Vida Estudiantil as a community. We were able to get to campus early enough, though that I was able to go sharing with one of the other students in the movement. Luis is incredibly excited to share the Gospel with his fellow students and so I really wanted to take him with me (one of our goals is to encourage the movement to take steps toward independence from summer projects and STINT teams, and that involves the Venezuelans to be motivated to share the Gospel on their own). When we normally share the Gospel here, we start with some resource that we have (a survey, Soularium, etc.) as a way to start a conversation. The whole conversation is Gospel-centered, whether we are showing them God's love as we love and respect them by listening to what's going on in their lives or actually articulating God's Word to them. Luis was a little impatient at times as I would ask people about their family, their major, their career hopes, etc., but by the time we were finished he said that he liked how we directed the conversation and I hope that he sees evangelism now as more than giving someone a booklet and talking at them. I look forward to sharing with him more this week.

Thursday was another day on campus and I was able to meet with Argenis again. He brought a few of his friends with him, which was a little disappointing because I have been trying to meet with him alone to get a better idea of where he is right now, but it was still good to be able to hear what his friends thought about God and spiritual things. They both (Rosenys and Yohana) claimed to be Christians and thought that Soularium (which many Venezuelans think is some type of game) was one of the coolest things ever. They were also both interested in Vida Estudiantil and I was able to invite them to the weekly Bible Study and a party that we were having. Also, I was able to invite Argenis to church on Sunday and he said that he was very excited to go.

Friday was the weekly Bible study and we had a great turnout again (although most of the Venezuelans were the usual 30 minutes late), between 30 and 40 came as we discussed Luke 12. I was a little disappointed that none of the students that I had invited this past week came, but it is to be expected

that 1) Venezuelans will either forget things like this or 2) be so engaged with another person that they skip other events to continue to invest time with the first person. I have their contact information and I hope that I can meet up with them this week, we still have one more Bible study this coming Friday. Also, a lesson that I learned last year, I have to simply trust that God is sovereign in these situations as well and inevitably only He can bring someone closer to Himself and I have to remind myself that He is a better director of their lives than I am. Friday night we hosted the Venezuelans for a party at our apartments with some food, dancing and an awkwardly shaped piñata of Spiderman. We again filled the room that we reserved and had a great turnout from both the university and the community near our apartments.

Saturday we went back to the orphanage and again I do not really know how to put that experience into words, you may just have to ask me in person back in the States. Saturday evening, though, we were invited to the house of a family of one of the churches that partners with Vida Estudiantil for some food and fellowship. The family had accepted Christ together (all 4 of them at once) only six months before, but they were very excited to be able to host us and show their appreciation for what we were doing in Venezuela. One of the daughters in the family is even starting to come with us on campus to translate and even share the Gospel herself!

Sunday was a great day as well. Argenis was finally able to come to church with me (he lives two blocks from the church that we went to) and he said that he really enjoyed it. He is very interested in going back there, so hopefully I will be able to go with him again this coming Sunday. He also was interested in getting a Bible of his own and I was able to get him one from the supplies that we brought.

Yesterday, Monday, I was able to meet with Argenis again to debrief for a bit on his first recent church experience, we talked for about what he liked about it, what he got from the sermon and a few other things. The conversation was cut short, but I hope to meet with him again this week to discuss it more. After that, I was able to meet up with a friend from a different university (last year we spent some time at a school called UNEFA) who was at UC to visit his girlfriend. Wilson and his friends Omar and Alejandro were just sitting, waiting, and playing some music and we were able to catch up from this past year. Wilson graduated from UNEFA and Omar and Alejandro are both students at UC and they all three were interested in getting involved with Vida Estudiantil and I hope to see them on Friday.

As we approach the final days of time here, we now, more than ever need your prayers.

- Health: We have still been having trouble with health and multiple people have been sick in the past few days.
- Urgency: We have only a few more days left and so we really need to be motivated to get out to the students of the university to share Christ with them
- Motivation for Students: Two weeks after we leave, the current STINT team will leave Valencia and the Vida Estudiantil students will be in charge of the ministry until the next STINT team arrives in September. Pray for them to take ownership of the ministry and to be pro-active in sharing the Gospel and continuing to meet together in prayer, study and fellowship even when there are no Americans telling them to do so.
- Thanksgiving: So far, about 30 people have accepted Christ either through the Vida Estudiantil students or the project students! Prayers of thanksgiving to God are in order as well as prayers that these students can get connected to the ministry here at the university.

As always, I would love to hear from you all as well and I pray that God blesses you all this week.

-Ross Antonacci